Living *other*wise

Students with profound and multiple learning disabilities as agents in educational contexts

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He gives the world an unbearable intensity.

Nia Wyn, 2007, p.43

I can hardly understand, for instance, how a young man can undertake to ride to the neighbouring village without wondering whether – even if everything goes right – the span of a normal life will be enough for such a ride.

Kafka, 2007, p. 208

The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it.

Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p.17

Abstract

Living *other*wise: Students with profound and multiple learning disabilities as agents in educational contexts

This thesis address the question of agency that children with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) have in educational contexts. Teachers and educators do not usually regard children with PMLD in terms of their agency, because of their profound and multiple impairments. Discourses on children and adults with PMLD are linear, systematic, defining and closed to contingency. The discourses normally applied with regard to children with PMLD attending school are mapped out in the beginning of the thesis.

The thesis provides an account of my becoming-teacher and my becoming-researcher It is my journey with students whom I worked with directly as their teacher in a segregated specialised school for children with PMLD, and also as a participant observer in two mainstream primary classrooms. The works of Jacques Derrida, Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze were crucial in reading the lives of these children together with mine. Nine stories with comments are the central focus of this thesis, where through the writing of these stories my own becoming-teacher is mapped out.

The thesis shows how students with PMLD are able to provide teachers with spaces of possibilities in the linear and closed discourses mentioned above. Students themselves are able to introduce in the life of teachers, their classroom and at times even at school level, the 'non-sense' that help teachers 'think again' the discourses that they are working with. They are able to help teachers open up discourses, and see that they are 'assemblages', characterised by contingency, contradictions and aporias. Students with PMLD provide possibilities (potentials) for engagement in these assemblages. The identity of a teacher is shaken when she experiences her identity as an assemblage, but even more so when such an identity is seen as a process of becoming by engaging with the possibilities. Here the end is not important and is unknown; what is important is the process. What is argued is that the teacher's identity is seen as becoming-teacher through becoming-PMLD. This thesis concludes that there needs to be a desire to engage with students with PMLD to continue the process of becoming-teacher.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

A number of characters are the main protagonists of this thesis: five students, three French philosophers and myself. All of these will be introduced shortly. Let me start by giving names to these characters: the students are Ruth, Nina, Charles, Luke and Matthew. The three philosophers are Jacques, Gilles and Félix (to keep it on a first name basis). I am the author of this thesis and the person who has conducted this particular research, and has brought the nine people together, forming "folds of friendship" (Stivale, 2000, 2003). The nine people "seize upon the extremely distant relationships to nourish their thought and thereby to maintain a vital, if dispersed, community of friends of thought" (Stivale, 2003, p. 25).

This thesis focuses on students with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) between the ages of six and eight years attending school. Two students attend mainstream primary schools; the other three attend a special school for students with PMLD in Malta. The subject of this research was chosen from my own personal experience. After working for some years as teacher in a primary school, I then worked for six years as a teacher in a special school in Malta catering for students with PMLD. Like many teachers working with a number of students with PMLD over a period of six years I questioned myself and some other colleagues about my experience of working in these situations, often termed as exclusive environments, with a particular group of students. The questions that I was asking, and which are a concern in this thesis, are questions that focus around the agency that students with PMLD have in educational contexts.

Thinking linearly about students with PMLD

It is important to consider agency of students with PMLD against a background of current dominant discourses about such children. I have chosen two examples through which I will show that most thinking about students with PMLD are linear, systematic, defining, defective, and closed to contingency, therefore oppressing Ruth, Nina, Charles, Luke and

Matthew. This usual thinking about students with PMLD is contrasted in this research with the idea that students with PMLD have agency. These two examples were chosen for their popularity and importance in the field of children and people with PMLD. The two documents: an internet site of the MENCAP organisation and the book *People with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities. A collaborative approach to meeting complex needs,* edited by Penny Lacey and Carol Ouvry (1998), both favour the respect of the PMLD community and their families and have been influential in the Maltese educational community. However, I am aware of the influence that these two texts have in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

- Children and adults with PMLD are like everyone else, unique individuals.
- At the moment the needs and rights of people with PMLD are frequently neglected.
- It is vital that we understand the distinctive needs of people who are often excluded from society. That's because, in doing so, we are respecting their right to be included. It is only by focusing on their needs and rights, and working to remove the barriers they face, that people with profound and multiple learning disabilities will achieve their rightful place in society.
- Like all of us, people with profound learning disability will continue to learn throughout their lives if offered appropriate opportunities.

(MENCAP webpage)

> This book is designed to be useful to practitioners working with children and adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD). It was born out of a need for a practically-based text book for participants on a course devoted to the study of PMLD but became a project to provide discussion of interest to anyone wishing to reflect on their work in this field. The chapter authors were chosen for their expertise in PMLD and they were asked to write about some of the more difficult or contentious aspects of their topic, bearing in mind that the book should not become outdated too quickly. They were also asked, as far as possible, to try to write from the point of view of people with PMLD.
> (Lacey and Ouvry, 1998, p.ix)

I am part of the discourses that are represented above; in no way do I want to seem that I am foreign or strange to these discourses. I live, work and plan in these discourses. In this section I will take a glimpse of the effects of such discourses on students with PMLD for it is in relation to these discourses that this thesis is situated. This thesis is part of these discourses, but does not want to be, or better still, it acknowledges these established discourses and wants to resist them. What I understand by discourse is defined by Blake *et al.* (1989) as a "collection of statements (involving knowledge or validity claims) generated at a variety of times and places, in both speech and writing, and which hangs together according to certain principles as a unitary collection of statements" (p.14).

I think that discourses about students with PMLD have established themselves as certain. Who would not agree with the quotations in the beginning of this section? If one reads the whole MENCAP document but has never worked with students with PMLD, one could still get a good idea of who students with PMLD are. For the reader who has worked with students with PMLD, a written description of the students can be found in the document. The presence of professionals, as is being suggested by Lacey and Ouvry (1998), also helps in preserving and perpetuating this idea of certainty. These documents therefore become universal in nature. They apply to the majority (if not all) of children and adults with PMLD. One reads about children and adults in these documents and yet none really come across: every child and adult with PMLD is swallowed up in these documents so that a feeling of Sameness can be felt in them. These documents also become cross cultural and cross-place. The possibility of them being used in Malta, the United Kingdom and in the United States highlights their universality. It would be difficult to find words which convey this certainty and universality more poignantly than those in the Lacey and Ouvry quotation: "bearing in mind that the book should not become outdated too quickly" (p.ix).

It is the simplicity of the assumptions of the texts which concerns me. According to my reading of the MENCAP document, every difficulty that children and adults with PMLD encounter can be solved out nicely by doing something that sounds really simple. For example: "The important thing is to understand what the behaviour may mean and to respond accordingly, such as checking out any possible health causes or making changes in the environment" (MENCAP website). The message is that if one 'understands' and 'knows', one can make the lives of people and children with PMLD easier, thus also making one's own life easier and simpler. It brings to mind that this is some sort of "idiot's guide to…" or some sort of skill book, or as suggested in the above quote: a practice-based text book. The simplicity comes about through the assumption that someone can talk in the name of the other in order to help the other. Lacey and Ouvry want their contributors, as far as possible (at least they admit that it is not always possible) to try and write from the point of view of people with PMLD.

Risk and complexity is reduced in discourses of students with PMLD and are replaced with ideas which imply control, aims and knowing what to do in almost every circumstance. Even if the MENCAP document makes reference to complex health needs, yet 'skilled

support', 'medical needs' and 'specialised health support', and being 'proactive' seems to solve the complexity. I read this as a therapeutic document – a document that proposes solutions, fixing and healing,

Usually texts on children and people with PMLD move linearly from one point to another. The foundations in the MENCAP document are that people and children with PMLD are like "everyone else, unique individuals", they have needs and rights, but they have distinctive needs, and so on. It builds up its momentum progressively until it arrives at the moment of conclusion: people and children with PMLD engaging with their world, achieving their potential and valued as people. Here is the last paragraph of the document:

> It is important that everyone understands that people with profound and multiple learning disabilities have the same rights as every other citizen. We must enable each individual to engage with their world and to achieve their potential so that their lives go beyond being 'cared for' to being valued for who they are as people.

Big and gesture words haunt these texts. First of all there seems to be a celebration being promoted, although at times this is painful. For example: rightful place in society; right to be included; focus on their needs and rights; collaborative multidisciplinary teamwork. But what is being celebrated here? As evidenced in the last paragraph of the MENCAP document quoted earlier, big words like: 'potential', 'engaging', 'valued' and 'people' are used. What is the meaning of these terms for children and people with PMLD? What is the level of commitment that these words and the document want from the reader? What level of engagement are we being asked? What kind of political or ethical commitment are we called to take up? I think that such documents are neutral and are without value. They belong to all and to no one. I believe that this neutrality harms people and children with PMLD. It makes them look sterile, needy and disabled (in the sense of the tragedy model, Oliver, 1990).

My last reflection on these texts is that the discourses presented in these documents seem to be atemporal. These discourses either remain the same or can improve. Very often their limitation is not acknowledged, and if a limitation is encountered that cannot be swallowed, then a newer version of that discourse is developed (very similar to the Microsoft versions). If something is not engulfed or adapted, then it is removed from these discourses. It is silenced and assumed not to exist. Any form of contingency and individualism is made silent and is removed.

Students with PMLD as agents

Moving in the philosophy of Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari, I started to see agency in students with PMLD as that which can sometimes make us think or as Blake *et al.* (1998) suggest, *think again* (p.1). Blake *et al.* remind us of Jean-François Lyotard's point that success is identified with saving time, therefore thinking has a fatal flaw of making us waste time. "To think *again*, then, will be to waste time twice over, unless the presuppositions of the modern world are themselves faulty" (ibid.). The agency that students with PMLD have is to help us think *again*. It could be seen as wasting time, but maybe it would be time well wasted.

In this thesis I will try to show that students with PMLD in educational contexts move us away from this linear kind of thinking. Students with PMLD have agency over us to help us think *again* about what in our thinking is linear, defective, labelling, simple, universal eternal and closed to contingency. I argue in this thesis that it is through the students themselves that we can think *again* about our discourses. Students with PMLD facilitate our thinking. They help us think *again* about those things that we have left out in our discourses, the silences that we opted to leave out of our discourses, in the name of clarity, certainty and consistency, what is considered *non-sense* in Deleuze's terms and the *Other* in Derrida. This thesis argues that this *leaving-out* could be a possible space where students with PMLD live in educational contexts, and where we adults could possibly live. I will argue and show that students with PMLD provide us with spaces that help us to *think again* about our thinking.

This *thinking again*, however, is only the first aspect of the agency that I think students with PMLD have over the educational staff. What I call the second aspect of agency is that, through our engagement with the particular spaces that these students create, we are being offered forces of becoming – these spaces created by students with PMLD, are possibilities of creativity and desire for us educators. This implies that the identity of educational staff is put to question and challenged by *thinking again* and seen as changing by *becomings*. Teachers working around students with PMLD become creators and inventors of ideas as a result of their engagement with students with PMLD. This is more than getting involved in *thinking again.* The students' agency is that they provide teachers with spaces where they can be inventive and creative (see Deleuze, 2006, p.313). It is not only acknowledging

non-sense and the *other,* it is going beyond making spaces for these, but to make sense of these, very often making sense of *non-sense* and the *other*.

How is this possible, when very often the concept of agency is not even considered an issue in students with PMLD? Or have we a limited understanding of agency when it comes to these students, where the narrative of students with PMLD is missed out as it is assumed that such children cannot tell their own story? In this thesis agency of children with PMLD is being neither conceptualised nor theorised as a term of entitlement or empowerment over oneself or others. It is, instead, understood as an attraction, a pull into the world of children with PMLD, where we are invited to make sense of ourselves in relation to the possibilities given by the students.

I am a participant in the linear discourses mentioned earlier. But when I (who know and rehearse these discourses) am faced with these children, and the children face me, as Derrida, quoting Levinas, argues, "the birth of the question" (Derrida, 2000, p.3) takes place. The neutrality and the boredom that linear thinking brings with it is challenged and put into question by the presence of the child. The sterile and atemporal discourses become dynamically vibrant. The children call us to engage in the intensities that they are able to produce. Engaging in this call helps us to think again and become. The birth of the question involves an urgent need to embark on it (ibid.). As Derrida reminds us, the birth of the question is unbearable and parasitic (ibid., p.5). It begs an answer and all too often we try to deal with it through linear discourse. The presence of the child calls us and we are drawn within it. Notwithstanding our resort to linear discourse, we cannot escape it, as though it is a force of attraction. Furthermore, Deleuze talks of blocks which have different intensities and one is drawn into the other if there is a variation of intensity as will be discussed in Chapter Three. In this thesis I show how I have been drawn into the lives of the children who have a different level of intensity from the linear discourse that I rehearse daily. It is almost a movement without volition, yet a movement that, if engaged with, gives us possibilities of becoming. The birth of the question comes from "close to the close" (Dufourmantelle, 2001, p.2): the foreigner standing in front of me and me standing in front of the foreigner. This is the question - the standing in front of each other. The foreigner is

> *the one who* puts the first question or *the one to whom* you address the first question. As though the foreigner were being-in-question, the very question of

> being-in-question, the question-being or being-in-question of the question. But also the one who puts the first question, puts me into question (author's emphasis, Derrida, 2000, p.3).

Similarly the students with PMLD are those that put into me into question. They ask me the first question. They are foreigners due to the fact that they do not speak like us educators; they speak (live) an odd sort of language (ibid., p.5), yet they are participants within our lives (ibid., p.7). Derrida reminds us that any question creates a system. The system that the foreigner/student with PMLD provides is that of "the risk of the other" (Dufourmantelle, 2001, p.34). The questions of the students with PMLD "make us desert those dwellings of the mind where reason lives as master, when for an instant astonishment makes reason a guest" (ibid, p.36). In spite of the linear thinking that has developed around the educational contexts of students with PMLD by educators, finding oneself in front of the student with PMLD involves being grasped by astonishment that makes linear thinking impossible. This is what Derrida would say is blindness and madness (ibid., p.9.) The agency that these children have over me is to call me to the life of the child, ask me to enter in it and make sense of it.

It is here that the marriage between the five students with PMLD and Derrida, Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari becomes important. These three philosophers were needed to view the five students in a particular light. Through the works of these philosophers I view the students with PMLD as those who help us *think again* and *become* (to grow, or come to be, to be more appropriate or suitable). On the other hand, the texts of Derrida, Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari are being challenged in their application through the lives of the five students with PMLD. I float in between these people and form my own space. The mediation that occurs through me between the philosophers and the students, which in the opening paragraph of this Chapter I called "folds of friendship" (Stivale 2000, 2003), is necessary in order to facilitate "the series of mutual resonances that contribute to thinking and writing otherwise" (ibid, 2003, p.25). This thinking and writing *otherwise* is for Heidegger "a way of living, of 'dwelling'" (see Peters, 2000, p.338). The title of this thesis therefore implies this living as thinking and writing *otherwise*.

Students with PMLD have the capacity, condition, state of acting and exerting power to provide stimuli, incentives and happenings that transform educational contexts, and also

the people within these contexts. Students with PMLD provide us with intensities and spaces of *thinking again* and *becoming*.

The way in which students with PMLD are envisaged in the light of Derrida, Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari is important for I argue they provide a possibility to go beyond what we usually want within disability studies, that is, to access particular voices of students with PMLD that were silenced. I argue in this thesis that students with PMLD provide us with opportunities that show us, or better still make us experience, a lack in our thinking, a deficiency in our thinking and living. But at the same time they offer us a possibility to fill this lack, to live beyond what we are living now. Therefore I am suggesting a reversal in our thinking and becoming: it is not the students with PMLD that are lacking, or are disabled, but us adults that lack and are disabled in our thinking and becoming.

This implies seeing students with PMLD in a different light and accessing their voices differently. It is through the works of Derrida, Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari, and a particular reading that I have done of these philosophers, that I have become aware that there is more than our present discourses. They create spaces of intensities, and if we decide to engage with them then we have the possibility of *becoming*. This thesis therefore focuses on spaces that students with PMLD carve out for us, spaces of possibilities, not only to access the voices of students themselves, but for the becoming of us adults who work around these children. This is my understanding of students with PMLD as agents. This is also my understanding of inclusion, that we become included in the lives of these students. Inclusion is understood beyond the placement of students in mainstream schools, but a placement of adults within the spaces that are carved out by students with PMLD.

Derrida, Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari were essential, as will be shown later in Chapter 3, to view the five students in a particular light. This thesis may not be seen as offering a new programme which assists the practitioner working with students with PMLD. It does not offer pedagogical programmes or suggest sets of skills. It offers *another* particular kind of knowledge to the practitioners and educational staff. What I hope that it does is challenge the intellectual paralysis that often surrounds educational staff working with students with PMLD; it hopes to help us think *again* in a new way; and make the familiar look strange. It is also hoped that the students will be viewed as agents of change over those who have

been working around them for many years. The students will be viewed as able to carve out spaces which give us the possibility to *become* if we were to engage with them.

A word of caution

This is not a hip-hip hurray thing, a nice utopia (even if there were nothing questionable in presenting a utopia). I do not want to sound romantic, even if I think that this thesis falls within the romantic sphere. The intensities offered by the students with PMLD are contingent and often very short in duration. The students' agency is that they provide us with situations of deterritorialization – going beyond the territory that we are accustomed to, going beyond the vocabulary and grammar that we are familiar with as articulated in the MENCAP document. Buchanan (2005) explains that deterritorialization, is "the process whereby the very basis of one's *identity*, the proverbial ground beneath our feet, is eroded, washed away like the bank of a river swollen by floodwater – immersion" (my emphasis, p.23). Therefore the agency of students with PMLD is not neutral. It hits us practitioners and professionals at the heart of our identity. It is a violent experience. Those everyday small experiences that for the majority of us are insignificant and passing situations are *blown up* or *exaggerated* (to use a Deleuzian term) moments by students with PMLD. The agency that is being advocated in this thesis is an agency that lives history – lives those *blown up* or *exaggerated* moments. The students with PMLD live history while we tend to historicise history, historicize the students. Students with PMLD call us to live our history. It needs madness to engage with the intensities offered by the students with PMLD (this is a variation of the Kierkegaard phrase: a moment of decision is a moment of madness). This also calls us adults working around students with PMLD to a new kind of responsibility (a response is needed in order to do something), a new kind of justice as well as a new kind of identity for practitioners, as will be discussed in the concluding chapters of the thesis. Therefore the agency that students have is political and ethical.

What also needs to be spelt out is that here I am talking of children in relation to adults. While in educational contexts the situation seems to be one of adults (teachers and professionals) relating to inferior beings, and in this case very vulnerable students, here I am presenting students with PMLD as offering possibilities of *thinking again* and *becoming* to the teachers and other adults working around them. However I will conclude by saying that from a personal experience if one engages with the possibilities offered by the students with PMLD, their intensities become irresistible for us and we will *long* for

the student with PMLD. What you will be reading in this thesis is nothing more than my experience of thinking again and becoming, or rather a moment in time in my becoming. Becoming-teacher, becoming-PMLD.

Meeting the students

Ruth is an eight-year old girl who came to my class in the special school, following a failed attempt at inclusive education in a mainstream primary school. She is the only child of Sylvia and Bernard. Ruth is known throughout the school for the tantrums which she can produce quite frequently and also for her love of stories. What also sets her apart from the rest of the students in class is that she can sign a few words and thus she can communicate with others.

Charles is nine years old and has three sisters, one of whom is his twin. They pamper him, play with him and are constantly with him. Charles's eyes are communicative and expressive yet his body is completely stiff. He sometimes struggles to take deep breaths and his head is constantly rolling onto his chest with his saliva wetting his T-shirt. Charles passed away half-way through this study, just after I finished collecting my data in the special school.

Six-year old Nina sits on her chair which is fastened onto a platform so that it does not topple over with her weight. She is physically big for her age, with a large head and wispy hair. Nina is the child with whom the staff in the special school feel they have least communication. She seems to provide herself with her own entertainment and does not seem to require anything.

Luke is eight years old. He attends the mainstream primary school and is in Year 4. He is small for his age and is very stiff and constantly extends his body backwards. His classroom assistant often carries him around like a baby in her arms. He smiles when one tickles him and when one touches his face and sings to him. The students in his class know him well and do this often.

Matthew is also eight years old and attends the same mainstream school, although in a different Year 4 class. He is more mobile and this makes him different from the above four

students. He can imitate sounds very well but does not have any communicative speech. He loves to work on the computer.

Inclusive and Special Education in Malta

Malta is a small island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, or rather an archipelago made up of five small islands, two of which (Malta and Gozo) are inhabited. Malta covers an area of 316km^2 and Gozo 162km^2. In 1998, the total population was 404,039, (Central Office of Statistics 2005)**.** According to the National Disability Survey 2003 (Bezzina and Pace, 2003), 1.92 per cent of the population are registered as having a disability.

Camilleri and Callus (2001) speak of the increase in parental power in Malta between 1971 and 1987. It can be said that before this, the Catholic Church was the only institution which provided support for persons with disability and their families. The notion of parental empowerment was initially started by persons with visual impairment and their families and later this extended to different groups of persons with disability. For example, in 1976 a group of parents of children with various disabilities joined together to form the Parents' Society for Handicapped Children. As Camilleri and Callus (2001) maintain, "perhaps the most momentous outcome of parent power and the growing disillusionment with the medical model of disability was the establishment of the National Commission for the Handicapped in 1987" (p.88). The authors then highlight the achievements this Commission has had notwithstanding all the struggles and the future challenges. Today this Commission is headed by one of the authors himself, Joe Camilleri who recounts a short life history: "In 1973, one of the present authors has vivid memories of being the only disabled person out of a total student body of 1,500 at the University of Malta" (p.83). One of the big major achievements was the Equal Opportunity Act in the year 2000. This Act refer to the right of pupils with disability to be educated in any environment they or their guardians deem most appropriate for the pupil; and second, that in whatever educational environment pupils with disability are, they have to receive an adequate education.

Another significant step towards inclusion was the establishment of a particular non-governmental organisation called Eden Foundation. Together with the National Commission for Persons with Disability, Bartolo (2000) holds that

> the most important pressure has been that of the *action* of EDEN Foundation. EDEN is a non-profit organization for the education, assessment and rehabilitation of children with mental disabilities. … EDEN is now taking on the biggest challenge in the Maltese educational system: inclusive education. As from October 1994, at least six classes in three schools will have a child with special needs with a facilitator to help adapt the class and curriculum organization in such a way as to permit full participation by each student including the one with special needs (p.16).

In the space of twelve years Malta has seen a full change in the educational approach towards disabled pupils. Today more than 1,785 statemented disabled pupils attend mainstream schools from kindergarten level to post-secondary schools. Around 300 pupils are in the six special schools, and many of these are young adults. Usually the only young pupils to enter special schools are those pupils who find difficulty in the transition from primary to secondary schools. Infant pupils with very profound and multiple disabilities are the exception as their parents often still opt for specialised education. To support the number of pupils with disability in mainstream schools the Education Division employed an army of 800 facilitators, out of which around 350 are trained with a diploma in 'facilitating'. According to Bartolo (2000), the term 'facilitator' was imported from Canada "because there, more emphasis is put on teacher-facilitator collaboration" (p.81). However the term facilitator was changed to Learning Support Assistants in 2007. For the purpose of this thesis I will be using the term 'classroom assistants' as it is used internationally.

Within this context we had the formulation of our New National Minimum Curriculum (1999), which emphasises education for all pupils, and the increase of achievement. Throughout the controversy and discussion around the new national minimum curriculum, the topics of discussion were comprehensive schooling and the examination oriented education system, with teachers and parents categorically ruling out the idea of comprehensive schooling and favouring a highly exam oriented system, although it seems that a reform in the assessment system is being worked out. As part of the implementation of the NMC, sixteen focus groups were set up, one of which was on Inclusive Education. The focus group worked on translating the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth *et al.* 2000), which is now being implemented in Maltese schools. Also the Ministry of Education formulated the first Policy of the Education of Pupils with Disability (1995), where it restructured the

Statementing Panel, and talked about the right of every pupil with disability to have an Individual Educational Programme.

In the last two years, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment of the Maltese islands embarked on a comprehensive process of educational review. The aim was to provide improved quality education in Malta and resulted in the document *For All Children to Succeed* (2005). One of the ten areas targeted was "Inclusive education policies, structures and services" and the Minister of Education appointed a Working Group to review inclusive and special education. The suggestions of the Review group were incorporated into the amendment of the Education Act of the Maltese Islands (Chapter 327of the Maltese Laws) on August 2006. The Maltese education acts states:

> (1) The Minister shall ensure that the national policy on inclusive education is being applied in all schools and that there are available the resources, tools and facilities required so that this may be given as effectively as possible.
>
> (2) The Minister shall ensure the existence of specialised centres of resources which support schools and Colleges in the implementation of the policy of inclusive education, which give a service to students having specific learning difficulties, and others which provide education and training services to students with individual educational needs whose educational entitlement may be better achieved in such centres.

Outline of thesis

In Chapter Two I look at the main literature on inclusive and special education and on PMLD. The aim is to highlight how, because of the focus on performativity and skill-acquisition, some of this literature is linear and can be oppressive for people and children with special needs. In Chapter Three I present the theoretical framework of this thesis and demonstrate how Derrida, Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari's philosophy have worked within this thesis. Chapter Four discusses the methodology of the research process.

The following three chapters are the main focus of this thesis. These three chapters are organised around a school day. Chapter Five focus on the first part of a school day, arriving at school and settling in the school and classrooms. Chapter Six focuses on the lessons and mid-day break, while Chapter Seven focuses on preparing to go home and leaving school. The final chapter attempts to make sense of what happened in the school day and consider some of my becomings.

Chapter 2

Cartographies of PMLD

This Chapter maps out some of the discourses on defining PMLD, special and mainstream schools where students with PMLD attend, and also the pedagogies used. The aim of this Chapter is twofold: first, it is a continuation of the argument provided in the Introductory chapter, that discourses on students with PMLD are linear, systematic and therefore oppressive. I see some of the discourses as meta-narratives (meta-discourses). These discourses seem to have a comprehensive ordered explanation of knowledge about PMLD that are based on some goal and transcendental universal truth. Lyotard (1984) suggested that the postmodern condition produces increasing scepticism about the totalizing nature of meta-narratives, mostly due to the progress of science. However Braidotti (2006b) argues that meta-narratives are very much with us and have engulfed in them more current ideologies, in particular the ideas of technology.

The second aim of this chapter is to map a territory on which the ideas of Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari can work. As will be shown in the next chapter Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari need the linear, systematic, that which is closed and makes sense - the meta-narrative. In no way do they want to do away with meta-narratives. They need these meta-narratives to *play* with them. They are parasites on the linear, systematic and closed. Therefore this Chapter will provide a space, even if often I think it is a closed and oppressive space for the students with PMLD, on which the following chapters can move about.

Defining PMLD

The persons interviewed defined persons with PMLD as having the following characteristics: the deformed body and the limitations of movements it produces, the absence of speech and the diagnosis of brain damage.

The drive to label those who are deviant from the norm, and define such labels, very often to justify resources, support or discourse around social justice, seems to be central for children with PMLD. The World Heath Organisation relates profound mental retardation to an IQ range of below 20:

> Comprehension and use of language is limited to, at best, understanding basic commands and making simple requests. The most basic and simple visuo-spatial of sorting and matching may be acquired, and the affected person may be able with appropriate supervision and guidance to take a small part in domestic and practical tasks. An organic etiology can be identified in most cases. Severe neurological or other physical disabilities affecting mobility are common, as are epilepsy and visual and hearing impairment. Pervasive developmental disorders in their most severe form, especially atypical autism, are particular frequently, especially in those who are mobile (World Health Organisation, 1992, p.230).

Lacey (1998) asserts that people with profound and multiple learning disabilities face difficulties of two kinds: "they have more than one disability and… one of these is profound intellectual impairment" (p.ix). Imray (2005) feels that it is important that we produce a simple, understandable and working definition of PMLD. He gives us the example of a giraffe. We can define giraffe as a tall animal with a long neck and feet. This definition is good enough for a casual visitor but not a zoologist. If we do not come up with a good definition, or a subjective definition, "this will inevitably lead to differing interpretations and much confusion" (p.3). So he suggests the following definition:

> Any person whose intellectual development is equivalent to a typically development child aged 18 months or under (and usually considerably under 18 months), irrespective of chronological age. This definition needs to be supplemented by noting a number of specific characteristics. Namely, that this population will:
>
> - be pre-verbal in terms of intent;
> - have no formal means of communication;
> - be unable independently to imitate actions, sounds and movements;
> - be totally physically reliant on others for their basic care and safety;
> - be totally unable to conceptualise abstract concepts;
> - have limited contingency awareness and an unrefined sense of cause and effect (ibid., p.4).

Two things need to be considered from the above. First is the need for simplicity in the definition: I have my doubts as to whether the above can be considered simple. But one either falls within that definition or is out of it. The simple definition is always given in relation to terms and concepts that seem to make up a non-disabled child: intent, communication, etc. Secondly, what Imray seems to be emphasising is the importance of producing something that does not confuse people and that does not defer interpretation;

the want to produce a definition that labels a particular group of people in a particular way with *certainty*.

What fascinates me with these definitions is the search for the bottom line. Baker (2002) argues that we *need* to find the pathological in order for us to function. We seem to want to establish the line on which we can start building. However, I have the feeling that while profound disability implies *profoundness* there is always the want to search for something more profound. I was once writing a proposal to get funding for a particular resource for the special school where I worked. When I wrote the label PMLD, the school administration emphasised that I add the term complex with PMLD. Introducing such a term, for them implies that the impairment of these children are more than profound and multiple, so in turn we would get more funding. I do find myself in similar situations when I describe to people that I worked with students with profound disability. To emphasise how profound the impairments of the students are I say that sometimes the children that attend my school die. Am I thinking of death as a definition that goes beyond PMLD?

It is interesting to see how the term PMLD is perceived within the arena of disability. The White Paper – Valuing People (DoH, 2001) sets out the commitment of the British Government to improving the life chances of people with learning disabilities and reports how this commitment will be met by working closely with local councils, the health service, voluntary organisations and, most importantly, with people with learning disabilities and their families to provide new opportunities for those with learning disabilities to lead full and active lives. However, the extent to which the White Paper addressed the needs of people with PMLD was criticised by the PMLD Network (2001) who argued that Valuing People fails to:

- use consistent terminology;
- identify that children and adults with PMLD are amongst the most excluded people in our society;
- identify children and adults with PMLD as a priority group;
- make any specific objective or sub-objective for people with PMLD;
- identify family carers of children and adults with PMLD as a priority group (p.2).

For people with disabilities, the White Paper outlined the four key principles of ‘Rights’, ‘Independence’, ‘Choice’, and ‘Inclusion’ but, as the PMLD Network state:

> whilst the overall vision is the same as for their more able peer group, the detail for children and adults with PMLD is often different. Children and adults with PMLD have specific needs that call for specific initiatives. All too often, their needs are lost within the wider agenda (PMLD Network, 2001, p.3).

Closely linked to definition of PMLD is the assessment of these children and students. There has been considerable effort on the part of specialists to come up with systems and strategies of assessing children and people with PMLD. McNicholas (2000) found that schools in England did not clearly identify the needs of pupils with PMLD. The frequency and depth of assessment varied from school to school, and sometimes from teacher to teacher. Even though most schools claim that they have a system of formative and diagnostic assessment, most of the assessment conducted in schools was informal. Multi-professional assessments were usually done at the time of annual reviews and were often not sufficiently well co-ordinated.

Most of the assessment of children and people with PMLD is carried out by proxy – what parents, teachers and support people think and feel about a particular student (Lyons, 2005). This, as well as medical diagnosis, is considered insufficient by Tadema *et al*. (2005) who argue that it is important to describe the characteristics that a group of students with PMLD actually have. According to these researchers, the assessment must take into account both the heterogeneity and the limitations that characterize students with PMLD. They argue that many instruments are insufficiently specific for use with students with PMLD so they develop their own: a checklist for chartering determinant characteristics of students with a development perspective up to 24 months and with additional disabilities in the field of education and care. Their findings suggest that their instrument is reliable and its internal consistency is sufficiently high.

Similarly a lot of work has been done to try to establish modes of communication with children and people with PMLD. In the book edited in 1992 by Warren and Reichle, *Cause and Effects in Communication and Language Intervention,* Brickler and Tannock & Girolmetto were questioning the efficiency of communication intervention. They were asking how communication interventions through pre- and post-testing in controlled environments could guarantee that the communication intervention was being successful. Bricker (1992) stated that

> there is the need for measurement that reflect the functional repertoires used for communicative transactions, the need for collecting information in the social context in which it normally occurs, and the need for reliable measures that accurately reflect the language performance of the learner rather than the bias of the data collector (p.19).

The ideas of Brickler and Tannock & Girolmetto seem to contrast the ideas developed by Hewett and Nind (1994, 1998, 2001; Nind, 1996). These developed a specific way of working with children and adults with PMLD which they named Intensive Interaction. They make a strong case for subjective observations, recoding and analysis in which the perceptions and feelings of the staff plays a significant role in Intensive Interaction. The staff follows imitative techniques to engage the children in playful interaction. This gives control of the interaction to the participant who can begin to explore and develop interaction. There is no task or outcome focus – it is the quality of the interaction itself which is the most important aspect. For Hewett and Nind (1998) the underlying premise to Intensive Interaction is

> for individuals with severe and complex learning disabilities, developing the abilities to relate to others and to communicate are the primary learning needs and the priority for quality of life (p.1).

Kellett (2005) provides a case study of Catherine, an 11 year old girl using Intensive Interaction, and there are parallels between Catherine and the students researched in this study. The classroom teacher is copying the faint throat moans and the saliva dribbling by making small saliva bubbles. Kellett suggests that as the teacher talked to Catherine and blew saliva bubbles, Catherine began to make a tutting noise with her tongue. The teacher picked on this, and "this began to develop into a form of 'turn taking', a vital stage in communication development" (p.119).

I do not want to be overly-sceptical and cynical. The efforts of the teacher with each student are huge and aimed towards turn-taking and some form of communication. However, the Intensive Interaction process itself could be seen as a reality which propagates and confirms itself. The reality created between the teacher and student answers the questions brought about by the process itself.

The assumption seems to be that in spite of the complexities if we devise a good assessment instrument or a good communication technique we can penetrate the depths of

students with PMLD and reach them, we come to know them and capture on paper their true identity. I question if all this effort on our part is to show that we are in control of the students with PMLD. Maybe it is very difficult on my part to let go and say that I cannot get hold of the identity of Nina and her friends - that we are not in control.

Vorhaus (2007), following MacIntyre (1999), suggests that all human beings are dependent, largely because we are variously vulnerable and disabled at more than one stage in our lives. Dependency he argues is best conceived in relation to reciprocity and indebtedness. We depend upon and receive more from other people than is commonly acknowledged. Therefore there is much we can learn only by attending to children and adults with PMLD and other disabilities. Vorhaus shows us that independent and dependent states generally co-exist within persons and that acknowledgment of dependency is often necessary for the growth of independency. Dependency is nothing to be ashamed of and indeed is unavoidable. Children and persons with PMLD are dependent on others, but there are moments when they are independent. It is important that teachers and professionals working with students with PMLD have the awareness that they themselves are also dependent.

Mainstream or special schools

Nina, Charles and Ruth attend a special school, while Mathew and Luke attend a mainstream primary school. This thesis does not attempt to bring out any comparison between the two educational settings. I do not want to imply that Mathew and Luke carry the label of included students while Nina, Charles and Ruth are segregated. Enrolment to a mainstream school is not a measurement of inclusion. I do not want to settle for one arrangement as better then the other.

As Cook *et al.* (2001) argue, the debate of the pros and cons of special (segregated) schooling has been going for more then 40 years in the UK and has become sterile. This is the case in many other countries in the Western world including Malta. In spite of all the inclusion celebrations there has been no significant decrease in the number of disabled pupils placed in segregated settings. Cook *et al.* point out that both from literature and in their projects they found out that there are positive personal and social effects for disabled people of being with similar disabled people. While the experience of attending special schools for some students with disability has been abusive, traumatic and with very limited

educational achievement, for other students with disability it has been a place of enjoyment, success and liberating. What they emphasise is that we listen to insider voices both in segregated and inclusive settings, "if inclusion is not to perpetuate the subjugation of disabled people in other settings" (Cook *et al*., 2001, p.309).

As is reported in *Special Education across Europe in 2003* by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education the current trend in EU is to develop a policy towards the inclusion of pupils with disability into mainstream schools. However as can be seen below this does not always mean doing away with special (segregated) schooling. The philosophy of the inclusion of students with disability in mainstream schools and that of special (segregated) schooling are often made to live together in spite of their differences. European countries according to this report (2003, p.124) are grouped into three categories:

1. One-track category: those countries that develop a policy and practice geared towards the inclusion of almost all pupils within mainstream education. This is supported by a wide range of services focusing on mainstream schools.
2. Multi-track category: countries have a multiplicity of approaches to inclusion. They offer a variety of services between mainstream and special (segregated) schooling.
3. Two-track category: there are two distinct educational systems. Students with disability are placed in special (segregated) schooling, and do not follow the mainstream curriculum among their non-disabled peers.

Inclusion, Slee and Allan (2001) argue, "has passed spectrally into our language and process" (p.181) and inclusion is advocate for, promoted and lived. However the question that we need to ask is: can we appear *not* to be in favour of inclusion? Can we be perceived as not already inclusive? Admitting or acknowledging that one doubts or finds inclusion as a difficult process can get one into a particularly odd position with his colleagues. If a school advertises that it is still struggling to be inclusive then it will lose some credibility and even maybe funding. The moments of doubt and questions about the inclusive process are levelled out, made invisible and we forget them: "we are still citing inclusion as our goal; still waiting to include, yet speaking as if we are already inclusive" (ibid.).

We are urged by Allan (2003, 2005) to keep the processes of inclusion alive, playful and to see this process as full of aporetic moments. We are exhorted to be responsible by keeping inclusion as a double-edged question and this changes its focus.. Inclusion often 'implies a

bringing-in' (Graham, 2006, p.20), getting those outside (those who are different) into the same – into a core centre. The focus of inclusion is always about others. Slee (2001), however, reminds us that inclusion starts with ourselves. That is we need to consider how our actions create barriers to inclusion (Allan, 2003, p.177). If this does not take place**,** to use a metaphor from Slee (2003), we will be just renovating the store (p.113). The warning that inclusive settings can be perpetuating segregated practices has been echoed years ago by Roger Slee, who in the 1990s argued that discourse and procedures on people with disability and even sites where they live their lives may have changed, but "traditional ends are affected because of the resilience of ideologies of 'failure' and 'normality', and the established bureaucracies which sustain these understandings" (Slee, 1993, p.352). Slee (2006) refers to Said's description of how theories travel, losing what makes them radical and subversive and becoming 'domesticated' and 'tamed' in their destination. Slee and Graham argue that "originally, inclusive education was offered as a protest, a call for radical change to fabric of schooling. Increasingly it is being used as a means for explaining and protecting the status quo" (Graham and Slee, 2008, p.277). Therefore the discussion on inclusion is perceived as one that focuses exclusively over inventories of human and physical resources. Inclusion becomes a struggle "to open the public purse wider" (Slee, 1993, p 351).

These inclusive discourses which are a perpetuation of the 'status quo' (instead of being the radical call which originally characterised them) form the basis of statements that argue that inclusion can only go so far and that full-time placement for certain students are unrealistic. The House of Commons' Select Committee on Education and Skills report (2006) and the Baroness Warnock report (2005) are two examples. The latter document is interesting because the u-turn of the author. Mary Warnock, originally a pioneer in inclusive education, now argues that the move towards inclusive education was a big mistake and a large number of students with disability, especially those in secondary mainstream schools have a 'traumatic' experience. Croll and Moses (2000) have highlighted how the Green paper: Excellence For All Children - meeting special educational needs (DfEE, 1997) emphasises the need for inclusion for most students while reinforcing the segregation of a selected few by 'protecting and enhancing specialist provision for those who need it'.

For students with PMLD often inclusive special (segregated) schooling is opted for, that is mixed-ability groupings in existing special school provision with some opportunities for mainstreaming where this is thought appropriate (Bayliss and Pratchett, 2004; Simmons and Bayliss, 2005, 2007). Simmons and Bayliss (2007) highlight that the assumption that special schools are an alternative for some students and especially for students with PMLD is never challenged. They also argue that the quality of the special schools is never questioned. They observed the inclusion of a group of students with PMLD in a school for students with Severe Learning Difficulties and observed that despite the best intentions of the staff, the quality of education that students with PMLD received was poor. This they thought was the result of the staff's lack of understanding of PMLD stemming from lack of training opportunities and resources. So here we go back to the vicious circle of resources and training.

Teachers and classroom assistants are of crucial importance in the lives of students, especially those with PMLD, who are constantly dependant on others. Attitudes and beliefs held by teachers have been seen to be critical in determining the ultimate success or failure of a policy of inclusion (see Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996; Male 2000a, b; Leyser and Tappendorf, 2001; Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004). A major barrier to inclusion identified by teachers has been lack of knowledge and/or perceived skill-deficit (Male, 2001; Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004). However Ware *et al.* (2005) found out that the teacher's negative attitudes at the beginning of an innovation, such as having a student with PMLD, may change over time. Ware *et al.* (ibid.) reported that, over time, previously anxious and apprehensive teachers began to see students with severe and profound learning difficulties as unique individuals and "rose to the challenge" of meeting their needs. Male (2003, 2006) argues that a combination of experience and additional training is needed for teachers. Additional training alone does not help teachers to feel more effective or less stressed.

Teachers working with students with PMLD in special schools see themselves as different from mainstream teachers and belonging to a specialist profession within teaching. However, Jones (2004) writes that they may also believe that mainstream teachers perceive them as second class citizens and are not appreciative of the work they do. Haplin and Lewis (1996) argue that this separation and independence fosters among those that work in special schools a sense of being somehow set apart or marginalised (p.101). Lacey and

Ouvry (1998) illustrate how the social identity of teachers of students with PMLD creates a closed homogeneous group. This, according to Mittler (2000), serves to uphold segregated and separate services. Jones (2004) argues that this closed group identity serves to support each other against the difficulties they encounter in a culture that does not appear to value them or their pupils. In her study Jones (ibid) found that teachers of students with PMLD are very positive about their specialised teacher training and found that it acts as a catalyst to highlight the difference between mainstream teachers and teachers of students with PMLD. She reported that the latter argue that they have further specialised training and therefore are more professional.

One of the unusual aspects of teaching in special schools is the number of other professionals, mainly from Health departments, whom they have to relate to.. Teachers in special schools also work closely with classroom assistants. It is only fairly recently that classroom assistants are being offered training and salary and career progression, in spite of the fact that they often undertake a wide range of tasks that are complex and challenging. Ware *et al.* (2005) found that most teachers in special schools found that the allocation of classroom assistants in their classes as positive, even if cramped classroom space was problematic. Some teachers also found it problematic to organise the work of assistants, especially where roles where not clearly defined or where the classroom assistants were not empowered within their supporting roles (Aird, 2000).

Teachers of students with PMLD see themselves as making a difference in the lives of students with PMLD, without making themselves martyrs. Ware (1996), however, argues that:

> Research evidence backs the view that people with PMLDs do have some characteristics which make interacting with them more difficult and potentially less satisfying for the other persons (p.7).

These teachers often act as advocates for the rights of students with PMLD (Aird, 2001); they believe and argue that their students are learners, knowing the individual learning profile of each particular student (Jones 2005). However as Ware *et al.* (2005) found, the working conditions of teachers in special schools for students with severe and profound disabilities and the level of support are crucial factors for the survival of these teachers.

Planning for the education of students with PMLD

When planning for educational tasks for students with PMLD there are a number of approaches used. Historically behaviour approaches have been popular (see Farrell, 1997). Sensory approaches (Longhorn, 1993) and interactive approaches (Nina and Hewitt, 1994) are now more popular. A number of approaches that are curriculum based have been developed. Park (2004) and Ockelford *et al.* (2005) argue for an adaptation of the music and drama curriculum, while Moseley (2003) and Lewis and Norwich (2000) advocate similarity to the mainstream curriculum, the difference being "in degree but not in kind" (2000, p.50). There are two educational approaches used to meet the needs or students with PMLD, both of which are used with the children in this study. The first focuses on the needs of the individual student and on creating a programme around her educational needs – this is usually referred to as Individual Educational Programme (IEP). The other approach focuses on the curriculum, and adapts and differentiates it for students with a range of needs. Often these two ideas are made to work together or one is prioritised over the other. This is usually done through different activities spread out during the school day. However some educators have a preference for one of these approaches. In Malta, while there has been a long history of IEP development, while the formal curriculum differentiation and adaptations for students with PMLD was formulated officially in a number of syllabi supplements last year.

Smith (1990) has argued that the purpose of the IEP meeting is the production of the IEP document, a single document (Burns, 2001), and not a series of different plans or programmes. The Maltese Policy on Inclusive Education (2000) defines the IEP as a:

> concise and practical written plan, developed for a student with a disability, that describes the modifications and adaptations for a student's educational programme and the services necessary to ensure full access to educational entitlements according to the National Minimum Curriculum. The IEP is a primary tool for ensuring equal opportunities, as regards the National Minimum Curriculum, for students with special educational needs because of disability. Some students with a disability require small adaptations and minimum levels of support while other students with more complex needs may require detailed planning for educational modifications, adaptive technologies, or health care plans (p.2).

There seems to be the assumption here that if IEPs are implemented then inclusion takes place. A child who has an IEP is an included child. Inclusion is seen as taking place because of the educational programme that is developed and the collaborative process that is assumed in IEP. Therefore IEPs could be seen as realities in themselves, and not a medium for other ends. Throughout the reports on inclusive education in Malta, in the last

ten years there has been a constant stress on training people, mainly teachers, classroom assistants and the administration teams in developing IEPs (see Inclusive and Special Education Review, 2005). SENCOs were established in primary schools to develop and monitor IEPs. One of these SENCOs told me that she was referred to by the schools she was responsible for as "the IEP teacher". The role of these people mainly focused on developing IEPs. There is an assumption that the having of an IEP document makes inclusion a reality. Therefore, hundreds of IEP documents are made yearly in Malta and in many other countries, and if a child does not have a IEP then one has to be done as fast as possible, and this is celebrated.

What becomes important is not that IEPs are made, but are made as an efficient tool for inclusion. This therefore assumes collaboration between different people and this collaboration needs to be seen as part of the school's arrangement. "They (IEPs) are unlikely to be successful if they are not a part of the school's overall arrangements for assessment and recording keeping" (Ofsted, 1999, section 92, p.22). Everyone should know the part they play in designing IEPs and in implementing IEPs. Reviews and annual meetings are seen as important for monitoring how IEPs are carried out, and changed where something is not working. The IEPs are measured according to the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timescaled).

But while the IEP process assumes that the parental (family) participation in the whole process enables the special educational programme to be more appropriate for their child, Gallagher and Desimore (1995) found that parental participation is inconsistent and superficial. Others (Goldstein *et al.* 1980; Skinner, 1991; Rodgers, 1995) have found that parents are passive observers at IEP meetings, or that parents did not even know that their child had an IEP (Isaksson *et al.* 2007).

While IEPs assume collaboration, this issue is considered to be of a great point of stress for teachers and classroom assistants. Aird (2000) points out that a single child with PMLD could be seen in school by up to 25 different professionals. Aird (ibid) suggests, assertiveness, negation, consultation and reflection are some of the basic skills need by those involved in multi-agency collaboration. However all this collaboration needs to be translated into the direct work with the particular student on behalf of teachers and

classroom assistants. Ware *et al*. (2005) found out that one of the factors that affects teachers' morale to stay on teaching in special schools was the relationships with staff.

Also it is assumed that everyone attending the meeting would discuss and produce one set of plans, but Stroggilos and Xanthacou (2006, p.340) found that teachers physically write the IEP by drawing information from reports of the other professionals, usually prior to IEP meetings. Furthermore teachers rarely discuss the content of IEPs with other professionals.

The educational modifications and adaptations for a student's educational programme and the services necessary to ensure full access to educational entitlements that an IEP develops is often predominantly attributed to the pupil's shortcomings and individual characteristics. Also the recommended measures suggested in the IEPs focus mostly on special training skills to increase the student's performance (Isaksson *et al.* 2007). This suggests that an IEP is viewed as a means of how to fix a child, through its focus on the impairment.

The curriculum adaptations try to make the curriculum accessible to all students. They are founded on the assumption that equal opportunities for all are a fundamental human right therefore implying that:

> all students should have access to a common syllabus, that every student has the right to become an educated person, every student has a right to a higher standard of education; and teacher need to develop their understanding of how to deliver the syllabus to all students (Syllabus Supplement. General Guidelines. 2007, p.1).

The newly published Syllabus Supplement (2007) in Malta for students with profound disabilities follows the British EQUALS (see http://www.equals.co.uk/; Humphreys, 2001) and a number of consultants were brought from England to help Maltese educators in developing these syllabi supplements. The British EQUALS agency prides itself for having adapted the British supplements for many countries.

Almost contrary to the concepts of IEP ideology that gives great importance to the 'individual', syllabus adaptations such as the EQUALS and the Maltese syllabus supplements try to do away with the idea of an individual student and the focus is on

'students with abilities'. In order to do this, levels of attainments have been planned out for every subject known as P Scales. The following quotation summarises these ideas:

> We believe that there is only one category of students all of whom are on the inclusive learning continuums. We only use the term 'students with abilities' when we refer to students within the current special school population. We do not identify their psycho-medical classification such as autism but rather our prime frame of reference to differentiate the students is to identify their levels of attainment as they may differ from strand to strand and subject to subject. So for example a student who in the psych-medical mode might previously been categorized as a wheelchair-user with no speech, may now be defined within a subject context, as a student being at Attainment level 3 in PE and Attainment Level 5 in Mathematics and Attainment Level 7 in Maltese.
> We believe that such a shift in the way we talk about the students will significantly change the way we think about their educational potential. In doing so, we will be able to raise our expectations of the students' educational abilities. This will allow teachers to raise their levels of attainment and set standards of education that are more appropriate to the level of attainment of the students in our school (Syllabus Supplement. General Guidelines. 2007, p.5).

The environment in which Nina, Ruth, Charles, Matthew and Luke are educated draws upon both IEPs and curriculum differentiation. However both these approaches still use a multi-sensory approach to actualise the IEPs and curricular adaptations. The multi-sensory approach involves using the six major types of sensory inputs to the brain in order to access to texts and other curricular material. Therefore when planning and delivering a lesson, attention is given to visual, auditory, kinaesthetic (the body-image component), tactile, olfactory and gustatory is used. According to Davis (2001) the only way students with PMLD will be able to make sense of the world is through involving all the senses in the leaning process and he uses Piaget's theory of development to justify this claim. The impairment in students with PMLD affects them both in their 'primary circular motion' and 'secondary circular reactions'. The former is when the infant's movement are involuntary and do not have any link with the outside world. The latter is when the infants at the age of three months start to show an understanding and an anticipation of the results of their movements and this awareness of case and effect is considered to be the foundation on which all subsequent learning develops. Davis argues that infants with PMLD cannot make sense of their own body and the environment around them and thus "retreat into their own world and become powerless and vulnerable" (ibid., p.2). Therefore a sensory approach curriculum may help to compensate for this loss.

Conclusion

I want to read the ideas that I have just presented as meta-narratives that digest and swallow in them the children and people with PMLD and others around them by trying to make PMLD an object of sense. It is believed that through coming up with a definition, the ensuing implication for the education of such pupils can be tackled next. It is as though a building is being planned, with a sound definition as the foundation and several units built on top. These meta-narratives also simulate an idea of protection and dependency – of being part of a group, of something good and comforting.

Diversity and difference, the particular of every child and person with PMLD is put in linear order by these general discourses and moves the particular child from herself into this collective discourse. The child is lost into a big universal discourse, often formulated by experts and professionals, backed by particular research that generates sameness. The making sense of PMLD silences or ghosts that which does not fit and that which is awkward.

In the following chapters, using Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari's philosophy I try to look at five students and educators around them, who are performing in discourses highlighted in this chapter, but however moving within the closed spaces and therefore opening the meta-narratives.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I give an overview of how the philosophers Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari have worked for me in this thesis. As pointed out in the introduction, the ideas of these philosophers help me situate this thesis in a particular framework. The idea of agency of students with PMLD and who can make us think again and provide spaces of becoming draws from the work of these philosophers. It was through the readings of these philosophers that I see the students with PMLD in a particular perspective, as having agency. In the following chapter I will discuss how these philosophers have affected me in the research process itself.

It is important to point out that while these philosophers are being placed comfortably next to each other yet I must acknowledge the complexity and denseness of each philosopher and the challenge is not to have a reductive stance in this thesis.

There are moments when Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari seem close to each other in their philosophies and others when they are not. The label 'post-structuralist' links these philosophers to each other. They both belonged to the post-structuralism movement that emerged in France after the 1960s: Derrida, with his essay 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' (Derrida, 1978b), and Deleuze, in 'How Do We Recognize Structuralism?' (Deleuze, 2004), react to structuralism. However both have their particular way of working out their ideas around structuralism. In the previous chapter I gave an overview of some discourses mapped out around students with PMLD. I read most of the literature presented within a framework of structuralism, which tends to produce discourses of closure, ableism and oppression for students with PMLD. In this Chapter I will discuss how Derrida's and Deleuze-Guattari's ideas have helped me see the five students within discourses of PMLD. Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari allow the five students to open up and move beyond such discourses. The first section of this Chapter concerns how Derrida and Deleuze write about and within these structures.

In their respective ways, I read Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari as philosophers of life. They celebrate life by trying to go beyond what is human, or what we have made being human to mean. While acknowledging our humanness, they try to stretch us to go beyond it. For Derrida life is never present to itself, and could never be located within consciousness or subject, while Deleuze-Guattari saw life as a plane that was effected through relations but never as some ultimate body productive of relations (Colebrook, 2007, p.28).

This is what is often implied when it is said that Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari are 'philosophers of difference'. It is not that they wanted to be different, but that they see difference as a possibility of life – that generates life. These are philosophers that 'play' with humanness to give it life:

> In their [Derrida and Deleuze] subsequent work, concepts of differential repetition, iteration and continuous variation serve to counteract philosophical prejudice in favour of unity, closure and homogeneity over diversity, openness and heterogeneity (Patton and Protevi, 2003, p.4).

I think this is why Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari had no problem working around Charles, Nina, Luke, Matthew and Ruth and myself. The nine of us celebrate life in particular ways and desired more life through the engagement with others. I do not know who came first: the students with PMLD or the philosophers. I like to see the nine of us a multitude. I am often asked why I chose these philosophers. I came across these philosophers coincidentally as I came across the five students with PMLD. However, these philosophers did not only give me a language through which to read the lives of the five students in a 'different' way, but showed me how to live my life 'differently'. And now I choose them constantly and say 'yes… yes' (Derrida, 1997b)**.**

The second part of this Chapter focuses on how their project of difference is worth considering for Charles, Ruth, Nina, Mathew and Luke. Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari do not suggest that we are to throw anything away from our discourses, but to open up, go beyond the discourses that are around us, and look out for discourses that are present that have been made silent, closed down, and hidden away. Opening, or cracking our discourses, to use a phrase suggested by Ansell Pearson (1999)**.** But opening up, cracking, to what? Deleuze says to *nonsense*, Derrida to *astonishment* and *perhaps.* For us who work in educational contexts, these are words that we can resonate with, but instead we disregard

and forget. We hide and keep these ideas closed in our cupboards. They are words that show that we are not certain, threaten our security, and put us in a bad light in front of colleagues and administrations. They will not help us in our Performance Management Programmes, in the school's performance assessments, in our discussions with parents and in our planning. Words like *nonsense* and *astonishment* are quickly abolished and removed. It is bad and impractical to think along those lines. Here Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari come in to play with us. They are not only suggesting that we start acknowledging again such ideas within the ideas that we already hold, but that we might take them up seriously and make them ours. These could help us *become*. They are suggesting the contrary of what we do. We eliminate words of *nonsense* and *astonishment* from our discourses, but they suggest that in order to produce sense in our lives we have to resort to forces of *nonsense* and *astonishment,* as the full and unrestricted dimension of meaning (Bogue, 1989).

John Protevi (2001) argues that the work of Derrida can be seen as preparing the work for Deleuze's radicality. I agree with this position and have experienced it myself in thinking through and writing this thesis. Derrida's work is seen as destroying the self-evidence of various identification machines at work. He labours to shake the pretensions of metaphysics or phenomenology as the self-grounding of a rational and meaningful sign system (signifier-signified). Derrida sees in these pretensions 'aporia': puzzles, contradictions, and as Derrida would argue, undecidability and a logic of thought of impossible possibility (a path without a path) in experience **(**Derrida, 1993**).** I see Deleuze as taking over from Derrida at this point: the working with the experience of aporia as a possible virtual realm from which bodies can start emerging. A body for Deleuze is a "relation of forces – whether it is chemical, biological, social or political" (Deleuze, 1983, p.40). Derrida and Deleuze are at times supplementing and complementing each other in this thesis, yet there are those moments when Deleuze takes me a step further.

The experience of aporia which is the beginning of the experience of becoming-body is seen as possible for those working in educational contexts through the encounter with students with PMLD. These philosophers both emphasise the point of encounter with the *other* as fundamental. This is not a comfortable encounter, but as they both argue, it is a violent encounter that brings about destruction. This is a destruction that does not mean to bring the place down, but to open up spaces in closed dense space, to find space in non-

space. The five students that are the focus of the thesis are constantly carving out these spaces, providing us with these spaces for us to engage in and these are productive spaces as will be discussed in the coming Chapters.

This chapter may be considered as theoretical in nature, but in an interview between Foucault and Deleuze (Deleuze, 2004), Deleuze argues that theory "is exactly like a tool box. It has nothing to do with the signifier… A theory has to be used, it has to work. And not just for itself" (p.208). *Praxis,* on the other hand, "is a network of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory relays one praxis to another" (ibid., p.206). But, Deleuze adds, a "theory cannot be developed without encountering a wall, and praxis is needed to break through" (ibid.). The works of Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari need the five students with PMLD and myself, while the five students with PMLD and myself need Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari.

Linear thinking – structured thinking

This section looks into how Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari argue about the various ways metaphysics and phenomenology have self-grounded reason and signs. Some pinned-down thoughts on closed discourses are laid out, so as later to make it possible to play with these closed spaces. It is important to try and read these closed spaces for we are *engrained* in them. Secondly both philosophers argue that closed spaces are needed for our survival, and thirdly, the play that these philosophers engage in is parasitic on these discourses.

Pinning down, or better still, finding words and metaphors to write about and represent linear and closed spaces in the education of students with PMLD is crucial. The ideas of these philosophers provided me with a vocabulary through which I could read the contexts of my research. These, as I have already pointed out, are closed, stifling and oppressive for students with PMLD. In this section I explain a number of terms used by these philosophers that were useful in helping me describe the context of my research.

In this section I bring these two philosophers close to each other and move from an idea of one philosopher to an idea of another. What joins these ideas is the effort on their part to represent and explore closed and linear spaces. It is important for me to see Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari work together for me and not to see them as separate.

The left term

Derrida argues that there is a 'metaphysics of presence' which gives a text its unity, where presence is granted the privilege of truth.

> The reassuring evidence within which Western tradition had to organize itself and must continue to live would therefore be as follows: the order of the signified is never contemporary, is at best the subtly discrepant inverse or parallel - discrepant by the time of a breath – from the order of the signifier. And the sign must be the unity of a heterogeneity, since the signified (sense or thing, noeme or reality) is not in itself a signifier, a *trace*: in any case is not constituted in its sense by its relationship with a possible trace. The formal essence of the signified is *presence*, and the privilege of its proximity to the logos as *phonè* is the privilege of presence (Derrida, 1976, p.34).

Derrida is constantly trying to negotiate the relation between signified and signifier, and one of his main concerns as seen in the above quotation is the relationship between the spoken word and the written word. In the Western tradition the written word has always been thought of as a sign of the spoken word. It is assumed that the spoken word is free of the paradoxes and possibilities of multiple meanings characteristic of written texts. Derrida called this assumed primacy of the spoken word over text *logocentrism*, seeing it closely linked to the desire for certainty. In *Of Grammatology* (1976), Derrida substitutes *logocentrism* with *metaphysics* due to his emphasis on the dependence of metaphysics on speech . Derrida coined the term *logocentrism* to bring about two ideas: logos – the Greek term for The Word or Truth (for Derrida the distinction between signified / signifier is tied to the face of God - it is always theological); and centre – the origin, the moment of beginning, from which ideas circulate and refer to. So for Derrida logocentrism is

> the conceptual movement in Western metaphysics where a philosophical system of thought orients itself around a key-concept term as the starting point or originating point or centre as the truth or value of a particular system in question. In such a system the centre values something (??) outside the area of inquiry or field of investigation as an apparently stable identity or quality (Wolfreys, 1998, p.198).

The history of Western philosophy has always been a series of privileged terms. So speech has been privileged over writing in such a way that conveys that the existence of writing depends on speech: speech as embodying an immediate presence of meaning, and writing as a mere substitution or secondary representation of the spoken word. But there are more binary opposing terms that Western philosophy has developed: Good/Bad, Presence/Absence, Same/Difference, Man/Woman, Reason/Madness, Truth/Falsehood,

Normal/Abnormal, Able/Disabled. The left term, which has always been thought of in terms of presence, is an attempt to locate a fundamental ground, an absolute beginning and centre from which everything originated and can be mastered. The left term is always given priority over the second term and is conceived as original, authentic and superior while the second term is considered as inferior to the first and is thought of as secondary, derivative, or even "parasitic". This is the 'hierarchical axiology' of metaphysics, here the left term is designated as "pure, simple, normal, standard, self-sufficient, and self-identical, in order *then* to think in terms of derivation, complication, deterrioration, accident, and so on" (Biesta, 2001, p.38, author's emphasis).

Discourses on persons with disability as evidenced in the MENCAP document in the Introductory Chapter are written through normal, standard and ableist discourse. However, the term *disability* itself may sometimes take the place of the privileged left term and becomes a logocentrist term in itself. The right term becomes profound disability: disability/profound disability. I also argue that at times the right term for the privileged left term disabled, is non-disabled. Being disabled is seen as privileged and becomes the measurement for the non-disabled (see Oliver and Barnes, 2008). This will be tackled in the next Chapter where I will question my position as a non-disabled researcher.

If Derrida questioned the privilege of speech over writing, he argues in *Of Grammatology* (1976) that "there is nothing outside the text" (p. 46). What texts refer to, what is "outside" them, is nothing but another text. Textuality means that reference is not to external reality, the assumption of much Western thought, but to other texts, to intertextuality. Thus Derrida's criticism of logocentrism also entails an attack on the assumption that words refer to or represent the world. If texts do not refer to the world then it is impossible to secure through language a foundation for meaning and truth. This requires a revision of what we mean by several concepts that we have developed over time. It can no longer be seen as the search for foundations, but as the critical play with texts to resist any metaphysical drive of thought.

Arborescent structures

René Descartes, in the preface to the French edition of the *Principles* (1647), explains the foundational role of metaphysics and how the various sciences depend on each other in the metaphor of a tree. The roots of the tree of knowledge is metaphysics, the trunk is physics,

and the branches are all the applied sciences. Whether the roots are metaphysical or otherwise, it does not follow that one should continually replant the tree, or once planted, that one should obsessively dig up the roots to check that all is in order. An experienced gardener plants a tree carefully in well prepared soil and any subsequent interference with the roots is likely to damage the tree rather than strengthen or secure its growth.

This metaphor of knowledge is taken up by Deleuze-Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). Without naming Descartes, they effectively summarise his ideas when they explain that trees and roots are arborescent structures. Trees grow in the vertical, "which plots a point, fixes an order" (ibid., p.7). Arborescent multiples are "extensive, divisible, and molar; unifiable, totalizable, organizable; conscious or preconscious"; (ibid., p.33). What defines a tree or root is that these structures are "above all infinitely reproducible principles of *tracing"* (ibid., p.12), which is when we continue to reproduce coded structures. Deleuze and Guattari tell us that such multiples reproduce something "that comes already-made" (ibid., p.12) and the tracing results in simple reproductions. A number of discourses on students with PMLD can be read as resembling tree structures. In Chapter One, I made reference to the book co-edited by Penny Lacey and Carol Ouvry (1998). The table of contents shows that the book is made up of four sections "beginning with things personal and concluding with aspects of the wider world" (ibid., p.xvii). The first section contains chapters on health, physical, sensory and personal needs of people with PMLD – these are the roots of the tree. The second section is entitled 'Social' and relates to making relationships and developing communication – these make up the tree trunk. Section Three focuses on the learning and 'life-long learning' – these are the branches. Section Four focuses on the community with reference to people with PMLD in the developing countries – these are the leaves of the tree. The roots are the health, physical, sensory and personal needs of people with PMLD. This tree structure builds on the fact that these children are impaired – that their minds are impaired and have an*other* or more bodily impairments.

Striated spaces

Imagine a space: a big empty piece of land or a group of children. Now imagine that a grid was placed on this space. The space is now delineated. Gradually this space becomes compartmentalized and segmented. Often this compartmentalised space is controlled to a greater or lesser extent through a nested hierarchy of centres. Using the example of the

empty piece of land, the grid placed over it is a school plan, with classes, very often same sized and in a squarish shape and with the administration offices being at the centre of the school. Similarly the group of children are delineated by placing girls on one side, boys on the other. Forming two straight lines, boys behind boys, and girls behind girls, with the teacher at the front of the two rows. Space for Deleuze-Guattari is marked by striations, that is, metric or measured space. According to Deleuze-Guattari not only humans striate, but any organism striates spaces to achieve territorial organisation. Humans, however, attempt to achieve a particular striate that covers the whole earth. Striation results from stratification, the overcoding, centralisation, hierarchization, binarization, and segmentation of the free movements of signs, particles, bodies, territories, spaces (Bonta and Protevi, 2004). Striation imparts the truth that place is an immobile point and that immobility (the idea of dwelling and house as sedentary space needs to be kept in mind) is always better than aimless voyaging, wandering, itinerancy, and nomadisation. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) give us the metaphor of the chess game to explain territorial organisation. The chess board *cuts us spaces* and determines the relations of these spaces in relation to the chess piece that is occupying that space. This idea had been put forward by Immanuel Kant in the preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) where he lamented that whereas dogmatists had maintained a certain despotism of reason – giving reason fixed but unjustifiable rules – a certain barbarism had allowed for "a kind of nomads who abhor all permanent cultivation of the soil" (Kant, 1998, p.99). The loss of dogmatic law (a law that is fixed and determines space in advance) can give way to nomadism, but Kant dismisses this by appealing to the proper domain of any principle, what is good and common sense in a particular principle. Reason has a proper domain, and should be kept there, even if it has the tendency to go beyond its own domain, to think beyond its own domain, to think the unthinkable (Parr, 2005). A labelled grid has been placed on children and people with impairments. Labels and classifications are constantly stratifying people into coded pigeon holes. Tests are developed and armies of experts are trained to cater for these classifications.

Borders of closures

Derrida worked extensively on the ideas of borders and on how borders of spaces imply a closure – a limit, a moment in time or point in space which delimits a given area and seeks to circumscribe it. But if there is a limit, one has to think of or see the outside of the closure. So borders are caught between this inside/outside. It is not the territory outside that

keeps the inside, but the other way round. Derrida does not want to understand closure as that territory that encloses a constituent part, but a closure that is a more twisted structure, a devious limit that is 'invaginated' – that is, to say ensheathed within itself, or folded back upon itself (Critchley, 1992, p.73). Closures are circular in that they auto-represent or auto-intentionate themselves. Closures justify themselves, master their own limits, assume self-knowledge; and regulate the traffic that moves in and out of their territory. These closures reinforce and emphasise what is outside of them. Thus the outside is established as non-closure.

Common and good sense assumptions

The gridding of space that helps us establishing striated and sedentary spaces very often through the establishment of borders (in-out) seems to be based on a natural and pre-philosophical 'image of thought' borrowed from the pure element of common sense. According to Deleuze (1994) we build an image of thought that has an affinity with the true based on what we think is common sense. We think that this common sense assumption possesses the true and wants the true, thus making it good sense. What makes it a common and good sense is that it seems that everybody knows and is presumed to know what it means and what its implications are. We always suppose that sense is understood and that it is there. It is because we assume that sense is established that we can enact possible denotations, and even to think their conditions. Sense is always there as soon as we begin to speak and do anything. We would not be able to begin without this presupposition, which is seen and thought of as universal.

Living *other*wise: Derrida

There would be two hypotheses.

Derrida made us aware of binary terms where the left term is given priority for it is assumed to be "pure, simple, normal, standard, self-sufficient, and self-identical" (Biesta, 2001, p.38). It seems that we cannot escape from the left term. We have, as Critchley (1992) argues, a problem of closure. It is important to note that "every concept… belongs to a systematic chain and constitutes itself a system of predicates" (Derrida 1977, p.21). A concept cannot be if it is not in a context. But while the majority of us think that this context provides us with an ontological certainty, Derrida wants to read that idea in a different way. He sees that the left term is fraught with paradoxes, contradictions, and

other disjointing movements which make unity within that term impossible. For Derrida, closure is "the problem of the relation between belonging and the breakthrough" (Derrida, 1978a p.163). Critchley's (1992) comment on the above quotation is that the problem of closure is a problem of *now*:

> When 'our' language, concepts, institutions, and philosophy itself show themselves both to belong to a metaphysical or logocentric tradition which is theoretically exhausted, while at the same time searching for the breakthrough from the traditions… Closure is the double refusal both of remaining within the limits of the tradition and of possibility of transgressing the limit (p.20).

So we are presented with this double-reading, taking place simultaneously: on the one hand a first reading that is faithful to the traditions, context etc.; on the other hand, another reading that *Others* the first reading. This reading makes strange the first reading.

One of the best examples of how the right term others the left term is given in Derrida's reading of Plato and Platonism. From Plato's text the Western tradition gave birth to Platonism, "Platonism is thus certainly one of the effects of the text signed by Plato" (Derrida, 1995, p.82). But when Derrida reads Plato's texts he finds more than what Platonism established as logocentrism. Platonism rests on the distinction between the world of Forms/Knowledge, which is not based on assumptions, therefore unchangeable, eternal and non-material; and the world of objects, which is based on assumptions (in Plato's Divided Line these would be the world of Thinking, Belief and Imagination), therefore changeable, in time and material. But Derrida

> will look around – in the text itself – for some third thing which the distinction omits, some untruth, or barely true remnant, which falls outside the famous distinction, which the truth of either separately or both together fails to capture, which is neither and both of the two (Caputo, 1997, p.84).

Plato in *Timaeus* says that there is a third term, *khôra*, which has never entered Platonism. Plato says that the *khôra* is "hardly real", it is neither intelligible being nor sensible being, but a little of both, the subject matter of neither a true logos nor a good mythos. The *khôra* can be understood as a great abyss or void which is "filled" by sensible things (see ibid, p.85). Derrida first points out in his text *Khôra* that Socrates is the khôral figure, for Socrates does not belong to a particular class of people: not a philosopher, not a sophist, not a politician, but a stranger. Socrates in fact told the people of Athens to consider him as such in his trial (Plato, 1997, p.91). Moreover, in *Khôra*, where Derrida is reading *Timaeus*, he says that the structure of the *Timaeus* is a *khôral* structure. The *Timaeus* is

made up of layers of stories built on each other (see ibid, p.90 for a detailed summary). Derrida questions the action of leveling the different layers out thus coming up with Platonism, when the author, presumably Plato, is "from one telling to the next [that is the different layers of stories], …get[ting] further and further away" (Derrida, 1995, p.90). So *khôra* is left out of Platonism; it is there, but has no property of its own, unlike the Forms and Objects. It is out of mind, out of memory (see Derrida, 1995, p.96), so it is impossible to say something about it. Derrida thus defines *khôra* by what it is not; *khôra* is that which defies the logic of noncontradiction, the logic of either/or. "So to be true to Plato, and this is a sign of love and respect for Plato, I [Derrida] have to analyse the functioning and disfunctioning of his work" (Derrida, 1997b, p.9). This is the problem of closure, the double reading that Derrida presents.

What are the *khôras* that are left out, put aside, made invisible, spectered in the discourses on students with PMLD? Derrida's powerful reflections made me aware that I need to start listening to the silences, to see the invisible, to look out for what is too ordered and clean in the classroom and school texts I was observing and working in. This is important for what seems self-sufficent, certain and non-contingent is so, because *khôra* is made absent. However Derrida made me aware of the *khôra* that is present. What is not present is important in the articulation of what is present, even if it is totally different from what is present.

Similarly, when Derrida argues about closure as the activity or process of bringing something to its conclusion, completion, or end, he draws our attention to the distinction between the end and the process that can bring about this end. Derrida emphasises that "it is still necessary to distinguish between closure and end" (Derrida, 1984, p.21). This is important because we assume that the end arrives where it has to arrive, thus there is an eschatological understanding of the end. Derrida however thinks that in arriving towards this end, this end is threatened by a 'dissension' or 'dissemination' (Derrida 1987, 2004) which would divert the destining of the end. What is being sent "would have the form neither of presence nor of representation" (Critchley, 1992, p.86). Sending which is always related to a historical and specific moment would have to be thought of as '*tout autrement*', in a manner that cannot be presented or represented in terms of a closure of presence or representation.

These two closures work closely together. They are continually suspending and seek to constantly repeat and reinterpret. This tires us out. We have exhausted all possibilities. This idea of being tired, being more than tired – at times exhausted – is also discussed by Deleuze (Deleuze, 1995) and these ideas of tiredness become very significant in Ruth's story as seen in Chapter Five. Everyone plans for Ruth, but Ruth is that '*tout autrement*' that shows us that our closure is not really working, even if it is the result of our best intentions as educators. So we need something else.

But we must remind ourselves that closure for Derrida is "the problem of the relation between belonging and the breakthrough" (Derrida, 1967, p.110). We cannot think of closure as this tension. Closure is this double refusal: refusal of remaining within the limit of tradition, and refusal of transgressing the limit. There is this double movement.

We are always caught between two hypotheses – doubleness. This state creates in us undecidability and this is the experience of aporia. The experience of aporia for Derrida gives us the possibility to "analyze all the hidden assumptions which are implied in the philosophical, or the ethical, or the juridical, or the political" (Derrida, 2001, p.178). But our history is one where we have tried to do away with aporias and tried to assume that they were not there. What Derrida wants to point out and play with is that in the left dominant term, in the *I*, in the established borders, there is an *undecidability*. This opposes the term that assumes that it is the origin, the moment of beginning, from which ideas originate and refer to. This undecidability cannot be traced back to some original and pure unity but is already at *work* (Biesta, 2001).

Différance

Derrida, in his usual manner of playing with words, plays with the word 'difference', and introduces the letter *a* in writing of the word to form the word: *différance. Différance*, when marked by a silent *a*, in effect plays neither the role of a 'concept', nor simply of a 'word'. However Derrida argues that it does not prevent it from producing conceptual effects and verbal or nominal concreations. Derrida invents this new writing of *différance* for he wants to bring together two notions together: differing and deferring (Derrida, 1982a). *Différance* "is the play which makes possible nominal effects" (ibid. p.26).

Différance is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each so-called 'present' element is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of a past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element. This trace is related to the future as well as to the past, and constitutes the present by means of this very relation to what it absolutely is not: that is, not even to a past or a future as a modified present. An interval must separate the present from what it is not, in order for the present to be itself. This interval that constitutes it as present must therefore divide the present in and of itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that is thought on the basis of the present. This refers to our metaphysical language, every being, and in particular the substance or subject (Derrida, 1982).

Différance marks the infinite redoubling and repetition of differences. *Différance* "carries with it an unlimited power of perversion and subversion" (Derrida, 1967, p.296) and is an economy of duplicity (Ormiston, 1988)). The mark of *différance* becomes effacement. *Différance* rends *itself,* as well as the metaphysical text, readable/legible as a *scribble*. In this respect, *scribbling* translates the "assemblage" of "difference". "The word 'assemblage' seems more apt for suggesting that the kind of bringing-together proposed here has the structure of an interlacing, a weaving, or a web, which would allow the different threads and different lines of sense or force to separate again, as well as being ready to bind others together" (Derrida, 1973, p.132). This double movement frames representation, but also overexposes it. Overexposes it to what? To the "bottomlessness of infinite redoubling" (Derrida, 1969, p.296) and the "bottomless chessboard" (Derrida, 1973, p.154), that is the return of the same to the same itself. This is an infinite redoubling that:

> keeps this reflecting representation from folding back upon itself or reproducing itself within itself in perfect self-correspondence, from dominating or including itself, tautologically, from translating itself into its own totality (Derrida, 1986b, p. 92).

Alterity

For Levinas, ethics is the experience of putting into question the *Same*. Derrida takes this concept from Levinas and argues that there is no significant difference in his philosophy from that of Levinas. The Same (the ego, the knowing subject, self-consciousness) is put into question by the *Other – Alterity*, that which cannot be reduced to the Same and

escapes the Same. The Same however has always tried to transform, or to swallow the Other into itself, into the Same. The Other is swallowed in the process of thinking about the Other. We constantly try to reduce and appropriate the Other into our understanding. The Other if it has to remain Other has to remain incalculable, that which cannot-be-thought. It would be better to use the vocabulary of *astonishment*, *wonder, perhaps*, *maybe*, but not assimilation in front of the Other.

Derrida is constantly trying to locate a point of Otherness within a particular context or situation and it is this Otherness that destabilises the stability of the dominant interpretation. Derrida is concerned for the Other – the Other that is to come and wants to open himself to the Other. "For the waiting for someone to come: that is the opening of experience" (Derrida, 1997b, p.23). This experience is the experience of the impossible. The impossible makes the experience possible, for the Other that is to come is an event that "exceeds calculations, rules, programs, anticipations and so forth" (Derrida, 1992b, p.27).

But Derrida constantly reminds us that the Other and the Same are in constant relation. It seems that one cannot do without the other. "I follow the path of a repetition which crosses the path of the entirely other. The entirely other announces itself in the most rigorous repetition" (Derrida, 1989, p.113). Therefore we need to listen to the Other and respond to the call of the Other. We need to listen to the *sayings* of the Other not the *said*. The 'saying' is the limits of what is strived for in what is universally, solidly and closurely *said.* The relation to the other is always a relationship to a singular other to whom I am bound to answer. We have here a relation of distance, or better, proximity: when I see the face of the Other. It is a focus on the *I*, I that cannot thematize the infinity of the other, I that remains hostage of the other (Derrida, 1992b, p.22). *I* is the "experience of one's absolute singularity… It is from the site of my singularity that I feel called to responsibility" (Derrida, 1995, p.41), a responsibility which implies a response to the uncertain of the particular Other. However as I have already pointed out, this call is not an easy experience. It is violent because "it *presents* the non-representable (the other as other)" (Biesta, 2001, p.46, author's emphasis) and because the language we use always betrays the many particular Others (Edgoose, 2001, p.127). This is justice. Justice is the relation to the many particular Others. "Justice, if it has to do with the other… is always incalculable" (Derrida, 1997b, p.17). This is different from Law that focuses on universal, is written, is constantly used for future reference.

Derrida (1994) argues that Justice and Law are caught in tensions, in aporias, and he gives us three examples of these aporias: 1. Each particular circumstance, each particular case in front of the law "is different and requires an absolute unique interpretation, which no existing, coded rule can or ought to guarantee absolutely" (ibid., p.23); 2. The "undecided remains caught, lodged, at least as a ghost – but an essential ghost – in every decision, in every event of decision" (ibid., p.24); 3. We cannot have "infinite information and unlimited knowledge… the moment of *decision, as such,* always remains a finite moment of urgency and precipitation" (Derrida, 1994, p.26, author's emphasis).

Every decision that is taken for Derrida is a moment of madness. Every decision has a supplement, the decision can be delayed and it can also be different. So deciding about something is deciding to stop the play of *différance*. When we decide for something we establish a border around a particular thing. So when we decide about something - establish a border - we have to see if we are just following a law, a rule or if we have gone to the trouble of deciding about something ourselves. If we follow a rule or a law, there is no responsibility and we are just following something that someone else has decided. The responsibility has been taken by someone else. If we go through the trouble of deciding about something ourselves, we are caught up between different tensions – we are caught up in aporia. Very often we are caught up in the experience of the impossibility of deciding on some issue, yet we are called to decide.

Yes, yes

> We have the universality of law, which is its ideal concept, and we have the singularity of the other…In that case we have to define a policy of absolutely unconditional openness to whoever is coming *and*, because that is absolutely impossible, we have to produce laws and rules in order to select, in the best possible way, the ones we host, we welcome. This is an example of a situation where we must remain absolutely open to who is coming, but nevertheless try to adjust our policy as far as possible, and the conditions as far as possible, to this unconditionality (Derrida, 1997a, p.8).

So on the one hand we have the universal law and on the other each particular individual. Derrida is however suggesting that we read our laws and practices in the light of the unconditional laws.

There is the need of this commitment to take up the Laws and open them again and again in the face of the particular Other. Derrida often talks of this process as the *Yes, yes*. For Derrida, "there is no 'Yes' without 'Yes, yes'. Because an affirmation as such commits itself to an immediate repetition, when I say 'Yes', I say 'I commit myself to confirm the 'Yes' by a second 'Yes' immediately after and indefinitely'. This intrinsic repetition of the 'Yes' divides I; there is an immanent difference with the 'Yes', otherwise it could not be a 'Yes'. It could not be an affirmation" (Derrida, 1997b, p.28). The fact that we have taken up certain decisions and established certain laws of hospitality implies for Derrida that these decisions and laws are automatically open up to a reaffirmation of such laws. But this reaffirmation does not imply that the laws will remain the same. They need to be changed or adjusted accordingly in order to reconfirm the second yes or the many successes of *yeses*. These *yeses* make the unconditional impossibility somehow possible, for the many *yeses* hopefully are overcoming their own borders and moving towards the unconditional law of hospitality.

This is responsibility. It is taking a decision, even if a decision is a moment of madness, for it is independent on knowledge, norms and rules (Derrida, 1997b, p.20). We never meet a decision taken and Derrida insists that we do not even experience a decision "because a decision is something that interrupts or tears the fabric of time or experience; it introduces discontinuity in the experience so that one never faces a decision as an object, or as something which could be demonstrated or shown or taught" (ibid.). A decision has to be taken. However we have to keep that decision open to many other decisions that we have to take in order to overcome our own decision.

> A decision is a bet: you don't know in advance from where it comes, and where it goes to, it's an interruption. Finally, if we want to summarise, a decision is the other's. Responsibility is for the other, with the other. I am, as Levinas say, the hostage of the other. Responsibility is not my property, I cannot reappropriate it, and *that* is the place of justice: the relation to the other (Derrida, 1997a, p.27, author's emphasis).

Derrida develops a number of what he calls quasi-concepts in order to try work with the ideas developed above. In the coming sections I will look at three of these quasi-concepts.

Supplement

In Chapter Five I use the concept of supplement (see Derrida 1976, p.141-64). What is a supplement? A supplement "it is not preceded by anything but itself… [and if] one wishes

to go back *from the supplement to source*: One must recognize that there is a supplement at the *source*" (Derrida, 1976, pp.303-4). A supplement is on the one hand something that "adds itself, it is a surplus, a plentitude enriching another plentitude" (Derrida, 1976, p.144). On the other hand a supplement "fills, it is as if one fills a void" (ibid., p.145). The supplement is nothing more than this double-bind, double closure. "The supplement is maddening, because it is neither present nor absent" (Derrida, 1976, p.154).

The logic of supplement shakes the the very foundations of the ontology of the text and makes up the web or tissues a text (Ormiston, 1988, p.44). It is there already: being-there-already and not there. What Derrida points out is that while we think that something is complete, at the origin it is already supplemented, making presence not complete. With this idea of supplement we need to think that the origin "fissures and retards presence, submitting it… to primordial division and delay" (Derrida, 1973, p.88). Derrida's supplement gives a new reading of Rousseau's *Emile*. Rousseau argues that nature is the origin of education. Nature is a self-sufficient and self-present origin, to which nothing can be added or subtracted, "it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence… its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness" (Derrida, 1976, p.145). Education helps to make this origin become as fully as possible and to show the discordance between nature and the social. However it seems that Rousseau sees nature as both full and lacking. Nature sometimes lacks, like when a mother cannot produce enough milk to breastfeed her baby. Lack is something common in nature, thus nature is self-sufficient but also lacking. The fact that nature lacks puts the "self-presence" of nature into question. Nature's self-sufficiency can only be maintained if the lack is supplemented, what Rousseau calls "the dangerous supplement". Derrida plays on this idea of danger. The supplement is like a virus, in that is impossible "to arrest it, domesticate it, tame it" (Derrida, 1976, p.157), or "the concept of supplement is a sort of blind spot" (Derrida, 1976, p.163).

The supplement is creativity, imagination, creation, invention, other. It gives us that space of more - the impossible. This is future-oriented, responsibilities are at play. I am carried away by this idea which haunts this dissertation. This work focuses on students with profound disabilities, whom we view as limited because of their profound and multiple impairments. With our theories, approaches, curricula, psychology, discourse on rights and equality, we think we provide for these children, we think we know who these children are and are giving them what they should be given. But if we think of the identity of these

children as both complete and lacking, then we can be surprised by these children. The supplement is what surprises us, what goes beyond our expectations of these children, what goes beyond our written observations, what goes beyond our planning. Ruth, whom we will meet in Chapter Five, is a girl that receives a lot of attention. From the interviews and from my own experience a lot of time is given in planning for Ruth: conferences are held, IEPs are done, reviews are carried out regularly, her parents are present regularly at school, so there is constant discussion on what should be done. There is a general feeling by all those involved in working with Ruth, that whatever amount of planning is involved, there is always something lacking – something more needs to come across. Often this lack is impossible to point out, but the *lack* is evident from all the interviews and comes across clearly from the observations.

Gift

I give you something – a gift. This automatically entails an economy of exchange. You are grateful for my gift and want to repay me, you are in debt towards me. I am aware that I gave you a gift and am pleased with the generosity that I am able to share with you. Even if you cannot repay me, I am happy with my own action.

Most disability discourses, as mapped out in Chapter Two, are set within economies of exchange. Charity models are still dominant in spite of the awareness and huge criticisms that have taken place in the last years especially with the advent of Oliver's (1990) writing about medical and charity models. However, this attitude of exchange, generosity and giving comes across in the classes where the five students with PMLD are being educated. Parents are grateful that their children are in schools and assistants are grateful that resources are acquired. I show this economy of exchange with the classroom assistants working with particular students.

Derrida sees how this idea of gift that involves an economy is broken within itself. Derrida points out that a gift is an affirmative gift if it is a "gift without exchange, without circulation, without recognition of gratitude, without economic circulation, without calculation and without rules, without reason and without rationality" (Derrida, 1992b, pp.55-56). The gift if it is to be a gift must not appear, be perceived or received as a gift (Derrida, 1992c, p.16), so both the giver and the receiver do not know that what is being received and given is a gift – this is an impossible possibility, the irresolvable

contradiction, the aporia of gift. To give a gift requires that one forgets and asks the other to forget that a gift has been given, so that the gift would vanish without a trace. The intention of giving a gift is the negation of the gift. The gift cannot be linked to thought without "becoming alienated" (Champetier, 2001, p.16). If it is to be a gift the gift needs to escape the economy of exchange for it is not neutral (ibid., p.17). Derrida reminds us that the gift is like poison. The gap between the gift and economy of exchange is what Derrida calls "empty words or a transcendental illusion" (Derrida, 1992c, p.29).

In Chapter Seven we meet Charles where I read his dancing as an impossible gift and the educators around him who are closed in the economy of gift-giving. Charles' dancing is seen as a gift that interrupts the economy of exchange that we educators are accustomed to. With his dancing Charles is able to suspend the calculations and break the cycle of giving and giving back. But it is not an either/or position, rather of being in-between, being in a suspension of choice or decision between two alternatives. In this in-between, teachers and classroom assistants could "give economy its chance" (Derrida, 1992c, p.30). For it is "this gap between the impossible and the thinkable [that] a dimension opens up where *there is* gift" (author's emphasis, Derrida, 1992c, p.10). Derrida does not want us to do away with the idea of gift, but to think of the impossibility of gift. Charles is able to help in this thinking.

Hospitality

Derrida compares the established borders to a habitable house and home (Derrida, 2000, p.61). These things need to be protected. However a house has windows and doors. The owner, even if he owns the house, needs to "give up a passage to the outside world. There is no house or interior without a door or window" (ibid.). It is because there is a house, an established border, that we can talk of hospitality. The owner of the house, the host, is someone who on the one hand takes on, receives and gives to strangers, but on the other hand is one who is still in control of his place. The host is the person with power over his own property. Caputo (1997) explains this:

> A host is a host only if he owns the place, and only if he holds on to his ownership, if one *limits* the gift. When the host says to the guest, "Make yourself at home," this is a self-limiting invitation. "Making yourself at home" means: please feel at home, act as if you were at home, but, remember, that is not true, this is not your home but mine, and you are expected to respect my property. When I say "Welcome" to the Other, "come cross my threshold," I am not surrendering my property or my identity (p.111, author's emphasis).

When we welcome others we engage in the laws (plural) of hospitality. There are "limits, powers, rights and duties" (Derrida, 2000, p.77) involved. Derrida, in *Of Hospitality* (2000), writes about the significance of the host asking for the name of the foreigner. "What is your name?" What shall I call you?" (Derrida, 2000, p.27). Asking someone's name is a sign of respect, and maybe even love, also by asking your name I can protect you and also guard your identity. The proper name given by the stranger/the child with disability. According to Derrida, it is never purely individual (Derrida, 2000, p.23). We develop a culture of hospitality. For Derrida hospitality is culture and no culture exists if it is not a culture of hospitality.

However these laws of hospitality are not enough. Derrida suggests that we need to be aware of the Law of unlimited hospitality. Although we may not be conscious of this Law, it is there if there are laws of hospitality. Laws of hospitality moreover need the Law of unlimited hospitality, just as the Law of unlimited hospitality needs the laws of hospitality. The Law of unlimited hospitality is the absolute Law of hospitality where the stranger becomes the host of the host, where the child with disability (the stranger) is not asked his name, or where he comes from. Even if asking his name or origin (kind of impairment) is a sign of love and care, that is enough to construct that stranger as the stranger in our eyes. So the laws (plural) of hospitality are caught in this double bind: they are needed in order to react to the Other, and yet they need to be opened before the Law of hospitality.

The limit of my hospitality keeps open the present hospitality making it almost non-existent, while future-oriented; a hospitality that is *to come*. Caputo summarises the idea of Derrida's hospitality as follows:

> Derrida likes to say that we do not know what hospitality is, not because the idea is built around a different conceptual riddle, but because, in the end, hospitality is not a matter of objective knowledge, but belongs to another order altogether, beyond knowledge, an enigmatic "experience" in which I set out for the stranger, for the other, for the unknown, where I cannot go. I do not know what is coming, what is to come, what calls for hospitality or what hospitality is called (Caputo, 1997, p.112).

Derrida argues that absolute hospitality requires that I open my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (the other) but to the absolute stranger (the Other), unknown, anonymous, and that I let the Other come, arrive and take place in my home without even

asking their name or asking them for reciprocity (Derrida, 2000). The difference between the foreigner and the absolute Other follows similarly the distinction between hospitality and absolute hospitality. The absolute Other does not have a name or family name. The absolute Other breaks with hospitality in the ordinary sense – it breaks our culture of hospitality and our rights of hospitality, and opens our hospitality to absolute hospitality.

On the one hand there are laws of hospitality as established by the house (border); such laws are very often based on charity models and human rights models. In Malta we have a procedure for how to include children in schools, and several agencies support and see that children are given their fullest human rights. On the other hand the child with disability who has a proper name, when they are included are subject to the laws of the inclusion process that we have designed.

Concluding Derrida – Deconstruction

Although I have resisted the use of the word *deconstruction* due to its often mistaken association with a method that destructs or demolishes, that ends up in nihilist relativism (Caputo 1997), with no relevance to politics and ethics, what I have been talking about in the above section is deconstruction. Derrida reminds us that deconstruction is not separable from politico-institutional problems and it "has to require a new questioning about responsibility, an inquiry that should no longer necessarily rely on codes inherited from politics and ethics" (Derrida, 1992a, p.23).

Deconstruction is a scar (Derrida, 1981, p.57) of exteriority or alterity. Critchley (1992) also points to the "flawed body which is unable to demarcate its inside from its outside and which is divided within itself between belonging and not belonging to the logocentric tradition" (p.74). In the light of the vocabulary of this thesis, it may be called 'impairment'. An impairment constitutes the possibility of an exit beyond the closure of metaphysics and this is what Derrida calls 'trace'. The scars, the flawed body, the impaired body, traces of an irreducible Other disturb the unity of the concepts and do not see concepts as a unitary closure or totality. We have two readings taking place simultaneously within a text. One of the readings is the dominant and often historic reading of a text, the other a transgression of this reading. This is sometimes called *play* by Derrida, a matter of opening the two texts to each other. Deconstruction is always there, is already there, is already working in closed spaces or spaces that are end-oriented. We have to acknowledge it. We have to understand

closure as an openness – as a space of tension, as an assemblage of forces, often contradictory forces, a space of *two* – "two texts, two hands, two visions, two ways to listening. Together at once and separate" (Derrida, 1982a, p.65). It is not an option of choosing one from the other (Derrida, 1978a, p**.** 84). The students with PMLD are seen as 'one text, one hand, one vision, one way of listening', while the other hand, which is usually the traditional view, is the educational contexts made up of policies, professional, educational settings and spaces that are often drowned in discourses of performance, efficiency and skills. The students with PMLD are these scars, alterity, flawed and impaired bodies. This is how I am reading agency in students with PMLD. Their agency is a violent agency. While we try to masticate and swallow the students into the Same, their very presence manages to help other us from this Same. I have found in Derrida a way to read many situations within the classrooms and schools where students with PMLD are educated in the Maltese context. Derrida's ideas and philosophy helps the young people to be seen in a different light.

Living *other*wise: Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari

In the previous section when I was elucidating Derrida's idea of *différance* he explains it with the words which I have already quoted above:

> The word 'assemblage' seems more apt for suggesting that the kind of bringing-together proposed here has the structure of an interlacing, a weaving, or a web, which would allow the different threads and different lines of sense or force to separate again, as well as being ready to bind others together (Derrida, 1973, p.132).

Through this quotation I see Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari as very close to each other. It would be very interesting to see how much of Deleuze-Guattari is in this quotation, because the vocabulary and the general idea that form Deleuze-Guattari's philosophy are found in it. Deleuze-Guattari's philosophy builds on the idea of assemblages. Assemblages are basically territories, made of decoded fragments of all kinds which are borrowed from different milieus.

The complexity of Deleuze-Guattari is that their philosophy focuses on becoming; they focus on the creation of concepts, as opposed to established ideas. The concept of becoming that they worked and re-worked in a variety of texts through the influence of particular philosophers, literature texts and psychoanalysis positions them as

'philosophers' in the middle of things. They are caught in between the creation of concepts and the already available concepts - this is what they refer to as being the purpose of schizoanalysis: a life in between. This life in between calls for connections and the reduction of conjugations, although the two live together. The more connections we engage in, the more life of difference we live. Difference is not a lack, but is what is produced through the act of living itself (Buchanan, 2004).

Deleuze-Guattari assume a certain build-up in their ideas which I think are more complex to express in writing than those offered by Derrida. Deleuze-Guattari use a number of concepts that are very often repeated, explained and developed in a variety of texts. They blur the line between philosophy and other disciplines, such as literature, art, , maths, and science. Although the reader of this chapter will notice that the following section on Deleuze-Guattari is shorter in comparison to that of Derrida given above, yet the influence on this thesis is still significant.

I will use Massumi's (1998) words to express the writing process I went through in writing the following ideas:

> My stomach anticipated this failure with a wrenching I felt for weeks before sitting down to write. An excruciating ache in my jaws bears witness to the grinding tension that wracks my body when I try to write as a 'Deleuzian' 'about' Deleuze… I enjoy this, intensely. I enjoy this, to exhaustion. I would leave my home and my job and move to the other end of the earth to have time to luxuriate in this feeling (p.568).

Where to start with Deleuze-Guattari? They always encourage us to start in the 'middle' of things. Imagine a sandy beach and think of a lobster's pincers (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p39). The lobster with the pincers captures, gets hold of things, animals and other stuff that are passing on the beach. The lobster pincers for Deleuze-Guattari act as stratification of what is passing on the beach. The lobster pincers get hold of a crab, which happens to be passing by, but for the lobster it is food. The beach (or Earth, a term used by Deleuze-Guattari) is unformed, unstable matter and full of flows. The pincers capture some of these flows, like black holes, and they code and territorialize what flows on the beach (the Earth). Stratifications for Deleuze-Guattari are judgements from God, or little death sentences. However they argue that outside strata there is only chaos, and life is unsustainable. This metaphor of lobsters' pincers to explain stratification may be strange for our usually metaphors of stratification recall geographical layers of rocks. So why

lobster pincers? For both pincers capture, one captures content the other expression. Stratification of the Earth, the beach, occurs in pairs. One does not come before the other, both happen simultaneously. That is why Deleuze-Guattari suggest the position of the middle: to be in between the pincers of the lobster, to be between content and expression.

Deleuze-Guattari remind us of the pre-socratic philosophers' discussions of the relations between form and matter. Form organises matter, that is, it gives content. However as Buchanan (2004) reminds us, the idea of content needs to be viewed from the double perspective of selection and succession. Content is:

> not a given, content is chosen, and always in a specific order - man before woman, white before black, self before or other, and so forth. The order itself has no intrinsic meaning, but once in place it acquires a meaning (p.7).

Strata are for Deleuze-Guattari the bedrock of existence. So it is important and also very interesting to see how the different strata relate to each other. Strata influence each other because they have different levels (blocks) of organisations between them. Because there is a different level of organisations there could be a switch from one organisation to another. This often implies moving from the general to the specific, from students with PMLD in general to Ruth. In the coming chapters a lot of emphasis will be put on the different levels of organisations that exist between the five students and the educational staff. What is pointed out is that the different levels of organisations that students with PMLD have and are involved in are often not accounted for by the educational staff. This however is of great significance for Deleuze-Guattari. We will meet in the coming chapters Ruth with her stories, that are organised in a particular way. Luke at the back of the classroom has a different organisation of space and time, while Nina has a particular organisation of the school hall. The fact that these students have different levels of organisations from the teaching staff makes it possible to move from one level of organisation to another.

So let us imagine two blocks of different levels of organisation coming near each other, there is a difference or gradient in their degree of intensity (see DeLanda, 2005):

> Everything which happens and everything which appears is correlated with orders of differences: difference of level, temperature, pressure, tension, potential, difference of intensity (Deleuze, 1994, p.222).

It is because there is this difference in intensity between the two blocks that they attract each other. The difference between the two blocks "acts as *the structure of a space of*

possibilities" (DeLanda, 2005, p.83, author's emphasis). This reminds me of my Biology O-Level where we used to study osmosis and how water passes from a region of high water concentration through a semi-permeable membrane to a region of low water concentration.

But how to engage with blocks of different levels of organisation?

> It is always to seize that person in a mass, extract him or her from a group, however small, in which he or she participates, and find that person's own pack, the multiplicities he or she encloses within himself or herself which may be entirely different nature. To join them to mine, to make them penetrate mine, and for me to penetrate the other person's (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.35).

But how is this done? There is movement of the educational staff into the organisation of the students, and there is also movement of the students into the educational staff. Both these movements form assemblages. However the formation of an assemblage would not simply involve taking something from Ruth or copying it; it is to decode. That is, not deciphering the code but remove the code from that milieu so that it can be used in different milieus. Ian Buchanan (2004) gives the best example of how this works:

> Think of costume design. If you want to dress like a bee, you can create a costume that is facsimile of a bee, or you can attach a couple of yellow and black ribbons to your skirt and perhaps put some antenna-like things in your hair and thereby call to mind a certain beeishness. The first strategy is mimetic and the result is usually laughable because it calls to mind nothing much as a someone in a costume; the second strategy, by contrast, is expressive, and usually more successful because it calls to mind not someone in a costume, but what *Deleuze and Guattari would call a 'becoming-bee' the strategy works by showing that the bee's essential characteristics are not intrinsic as such, but extrinsic and detachable, and that man's fixed exterior is permeable* (p.11-12, my emphasis).

Deleuze-Guattari's thinking becomes more complex when we have to multiply the becoming bee by 100, or even 1000. It is not just the experience of becoming-bee that we focus on, but of becoming-bee with a multiple other becomings at the same time. This complicates things, while also giving us further possibilities and pushing further in between the pincers. One has to note that for Deleuze-Guattari that becoming is not only human, but also animal, and even beyond. Becoming is possible to what is possibly experienced with the senses. In the coming sections I will be talking of becoming-stories, party invitation, dance, sounds, movements among others. In the previous section of linear thinking – structured thinking - I wrote about arborescent structures. In these structures, and not opposite to them, there are what Deleuze-Guattari call rhizomatic structures.

Rhizomes are like ginger-roots, rats, tubers, and potatoes. Their point of origin is death and their point of arrival is not known. These move in a horizontal way and not in the vertical. Some of the strata are not codified, or as Deleuze-Guattari point out, a rhizome can become a tree or a tree can become a rhizome. Because it is not as codified it can move between codified spaces. While arborescent structures start from the roots and move up, until one arrives at the leaves, the metaphor of the rhizome describes the connections that occur between the similar and most different objects, places and people. Trees stay in the same place where they are planted – they do not move about, but ginger roots do. Trees can only move vertically, ginger roots move horizontally. What is important is that the rhizome is an "*intermezzo,* it is always in the middle, between things" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.25).

For Deleuze-Guattari the rhizome is a concept that maps a process, a network, relational and transversal thoughts, and a way of being without tracing the construction of the map as a fixed entity (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.12). Thinking in terms of rhizomes changes ideas about hierarchy, history and activity that are so important in the striated spaces and arborescent structures. Thinking and more importantly living and acting in a rhizomatic way challenges 'genealogy', in fact Deleuze-Guattari call the rhizome an 'anti-genealogy' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.11). The tune of the rhizome is "and… and… and" or "stammering" without beginning or end – always in the middle of the pincers.

This is similar to the *nomad* that can move around coded spaces or *smooth spaces* in striated spaces. In order to understand the nomad, the game Go as opposed to chess game can be of great help. The pieces of the Go have no value in themselves as the chess pieces have. The Go pieces receive values as the game develops. The nomadic space, unlike the striated and sedimentary space, has no value in itself but gathers values through its movements. As Deleuze-Guattari argue the nomadic tribes dream about, cross and dance upon a space and in so doing they fill that space. It is in the using of space that laws are produced. Movements become important, and through the movements that we produce understand. This is the main idea of Chapter Five where Luke and Nina are encountered through their movements.

Stratification can be either arborescent or rhizomic, sedentary or nomadic, striated or smooth. All these lead to a becoming, either a becoming that reinforces coding – a

becoming that is made up of one pincer or a becoming that allows for a newness, a becoming in the middle of the pincers (with the possibility to move slightly towards chaos – what is not coded). The latter type of becoming, that rejects a unifying subjectivity, is linked to rhizomatic structures. Rhizomes are there but it does not imply that they will be there in a while. So rhizomes present us with different levels of organisations or intensities as Deleuze-Guattari argue. Also what one must keep in mind is the shift that can occur: a rhizome can become a tree, and the tree can become a rhizome, similarly the smooth can become striated and the sedentary nomadic. So how is it that some strata are arborescent and others rhizomatic? And how is it that they can be inverted?

We need to establish a plane of consistency, a degree of density, firmness, or viscosity. The idea of degree is very important for Deleuze-Guattari. The degree can go down or up. This will affect the density, firmness or viscosity of the object. Stratification is when the degree is so low that matter thickens, so it cannot move. However, if the codes are gradually removed the degree will go up and we will have more movement. This is often referred to as body without organs (BwO). BwO is not opposed to stratification, but the BwO is the degree which is forever-forming. The BwO can have a low or high degree which allows for movement or no movement to pass from it. Deleuze-Guattari make it clear that it is not cutting parts of our bodies in order to be able to become, but a degree of variation. However consistency also means: correspondence among related aspects. The degree variation effects particular relations and the changes that are needed to enter such relations. This is the experience of "coming undone" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.322), what Deleuze-Guattari call deterritorialization and is movement producing change. It frees up fixed relations that contain a body while also exposing it to new organisations. A body is a composition of parts that have some sort of relation to each other that has a force. Bodies are changing, and colliding and coming into contact with other bodies. This is affect – the knowable product of an encounter. The knowable product of my encounter with the five students, which is not just an experience, can become a material thing, and can also compel systems of knowledge, history, memory and circuits of power. This would be the abstract machine, a machine that is able to define the patterns and thresholds, therefore create concepts, of a complex system of becoming. A machine is nothing more than the connections and productions it makes: it is not made by anything, is not used for anything and has no closed identity. Colebrook (2002) gives an interesting example to explain the machine. "Think of a bicycle, which obviously has no 'end' or intention. It

only works when it is connected with another 'machine' such as the human body; and the production of these two machines can only be achieved through connections. The human body becomes a cyclist in connecting with the machine; the cycle becomes a vehicle" (p.56).

Becoming is a key word in this thesis. Becoming needs to be seen in the light of another important concept for Deleuze-Guattari, that of difference. We measure difference as difference-from-the-same. Deleuze (1994) suggests a difference that is internal to things or events, therefore a specific and unique understanding of difference. He calls this difference-in-itself. Brusseau's (1998) example of the distinction between difference-in-itself and difference-from-the-same is a finger turning in light circles across your toes and the pads of your feet. According to Brusseau difference-in-itself is to "let the physical action define the borders and meaning" (p.10), while difference-from-the-same would be to interpret the movement of fingers to a masseur, a doctor or wife. The masseur's fingers mean relaxing, the doctor's fingers examination, while the wife's fingers could mean sex (see p.10). Difference should focus on how each body interacts with the forces around. Becoming is moving between different particular events and spaces, intensities. Becoming is changing – subtracting of rigid, striated, gridded, sedentary forces and adding intensities to a particular body, moving towards no particular goal or end-state.

Concluding Deleuze-Guattari: desire

Stratification which is the result of the lobster's pincers can be symbolised by Robinson Crusoe, the Earth, and the chaos between Ahab and Moby Dick. These two literary texts used by Deleuze-Guattari are examples of the very important question: what makes one engage in intensities? Robinson Crusoe did not engage with the intensities offered by the island. He remained a foreigner to the island. He got what he needed from the shipwreck. He lost his "degree of diversity, differentiation and mobility" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.503). On the other hand Ahab is constantly looking to engage in new intensities offered by the white whale Moby Dick that drove him to the point of killing himself and his whole crew with the exception of one, the author of the book.

The question of what makes us engage or not engage with intensities is of great importance for this thesis, for if the students with PMLD offer intensities to the people working around them, why would they want to engage or not engage with these

intensities? Why would some people decide not to engage with these intensities offered by the students with PMLD? The answer seems to be found in the concept *desire*. This term is central to Deleuze-Guattari's work, particularly in *Anti-Oedipus* (1984). Desire is not just a focus on the lack - what I do not have - but is also the material process of connection and enjoying the flows of matter and energy through bodies in network. Like most other concepts there is a double reading of the concept of desire. We can have paranoid-fascist desire. This is desire that wants to grip to identities of social production, coded productions. As already mentioned paranoid-fascist desire is seen as a lack, but also pleasure (you have it then you do not desire it any more) and *jouissance* (you can never have it but that is the only thing you want) (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.154-155) produce this. For Deleuze-Guattari desire should be productive. This happens within schizoanalysis: moving away from the Oedipus complex (lack, pleasure or *jouissance*) to a conception of desire of living life as flows, as connections and an enhancement of the power of bodies to connect – to form machines, to be *in* relation. Robinson Crusoe had no desire to form machines, while Ahab had too much. In forming machines we are called to caution. We can either spend our time pathologising students with PMLD and thinking we can find an answer or solution, or else be with them, engage with the spaces they provide for us, be creative and experimental, and make some of their characteristics ours. That is engaging in our becoming, through being with students with PMLD.

Chapter 4

The Research Process

Time is always a factor in conducting research and writing a thesis. This thesis is a process of five part-time years. What one reads in this thesis seems to be "out of joint" (Derrida, 1994a, p.18). It seems untimely. Yet it is situated in time, context and conducted by a particular person with his baggage with a particular group of students and a set of philosophers. The process of thought develops and is modified by the many influences which are encountered and engaged with along the way. One of the determining factors in conducting and writing a thesis is the method that one uses. Usually this has to be determined at the early stages of the research process and the way data is collected and analysed determines the outcome. Therefore this chapter is a retrospective account of something that was decided upon before the research started and which influenced the whole research, as already mentioned in the introductory chapter. This chapter will map some of the ontological and normative dimensions - it tries to present a world of interconnected machine assemblages, the innermost tendency of which is towards the 'deterritorialization' of existing assemblages and the deterritorialization in new forms (Patton, 2007, p.42). This chapter maps out some moments of my becoming-researcher, on the timing involved in this thesis.

(re) formulating the research

The data for this research was collected through interviews and observations. The interviews were conducted either: 1. In small groups according to different professionals and educators and 2. With individual professionals and educators. The interviews with a particular group or individual professionals and educators were split up into a number of sessions. More than forty interviews were conducted and observations fed into the interviews. In the special school I observed sessions of various professionals and in my own class. More will be found on the implications of observing practice within my own classroom later in this chapter. In the mainstream school I spent three weeks in every class.

The interviews helped me to make more sense of the questions, queries, and assumptions formed during my observations.

The research was conducted in two educational settings: a special school for children with PMLD and a primary mainstream school. Both the special school and the primary school are in the same village, and both are within walking distance from each other. The special school was chosen on the criteria that I worked there and somehow I owed it to my students, especially to the students in my class for whom I felt a lot of affection. Also this special school caters for students with PMLD and I wanted my study to focus on students with PMLD. The special school is located in a police compound that is responsible for damaged vehicles that were involved in an accident or some sort of crime. Often there are lots of cars and junk – seeming like a scrap yard. The school has been functioning for the last fifteen years. The founder of the school, who was also the first head of school, stills attend every Christmas concert at the school. The head of school at the time of the data collection was the only second head. The school is dedicated to a Christian saint who had had walking difficulties.

The three children attending the special school were selected after a few factors were taken in consideration. Primarily, school attendance was an issue to be considered. I looked at the regularity of the attendance of particular children. Some students are absent from school on a regular basis due to being very sick or often hospitalised. The second criterion was parental consent. I knew that certain parents were unlikely to consent participating and decided not to ask them. With these two criteria out of a class of nine students, three students stood out and are the three children described in the Chapter One.

I selected this particular mainstream primary school for two reasons: primarily it is very close to the special school involved in the research. The Maltese Education Division gave me permission both to be away from my class and to conduct research in the primary school, but they preferred that I would be close to the special school just in case something out of the ordinary happened in my class (no system in which teachers replace others exists in Malta). Secondly, there was some communication between the special school and the primary school. A joint project was taking place, where students from the special school attended the mainstream school twice a week, while the students with disability in the primary school attended twice a week to use the resources of the school, such as the multi-

sensory room, hydrotherapy pool, and ICT. The fact that I also knew the head of the primary school and some of the teachers was helpful in getting permission to enter the school. The two students in the primary school were selected by the head of school who was aware that my focus of research was on children with PMLD; she consulted with the parents and obtained consent from them. Here I also conducted interviews and observed the two children in their respective classrooms and school environment.

This study is qualitative in nature, in that it is an "interpretative study of a specific issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made" (Banister *et al*., 1994, p.2). The emphasis that I am making for the time being is to contrast this with Banister *et al*.'s definition of quantitative research, where they comment that "one of the features of measurement in quantitative methodologies is that it attempts to screen out interpretations, and to imagine that it is possible to produce a clear and unmediated representation of the object of study" (ibid). This seems to be the basis of the argument that Richard Smith (2006) develops when he quotes Francis Bacon:

> Namely, that the entire work of the understanding be commenced afresh, and the mind itself be from the very outset not left to take its own course, but guided at every step, and the business be done as is by machinery (p.167).

My argument is that, even if in qualitative research the sense of the researcher is what is central, here too one needs to be aware that it is possible that the researcher may have a mechanical sense which she applies to her research. Smith takes up the idea of machinery that for Bacon the researcher does not need any great intellectual qualities of research and if she has them they must be restrained (ibid, 158). The most important thing is to possess a method (ibid.). I think this idea becomes significant when we think that we can somehow access the reality of the object of study. The assumption of this positivistic approach to research is that there is an independent reality which can be discovered if the right methods and techniques are used. John Law (2004) gives us five dimensions of this reality:

1. it appears that our experience is widely if not universally built around the sense that there is, indeed, a *reality that is out there;*
2. reality out-there is usually understood *independent of our actions and especially of our perceptions;*
3. this external reality comes before us, that it *precedes us;*
4. this external reality is composed of a set of *definite forms or relations;*
5. The world out-there is the same *everywhere.* While acknowledging different people and groups and cultures, but there are similar singular ideas pertaining to the many.

My idea of doing research, and researching students with PMLD matured during the process. The idea that there was a *reality out-there* that I could investigate to "dispel illusions and illuminate the dark places of ignorance with the light of reason" (MacLure, 2006, p.225) in the area of education of students with PMLD was initially attractive.

Through the reading of the social model of disability, that acknowledges that disabled people and children are marginalised and excluded from 'mainstream' society, I was made aware that the process of exclusion is grounded in *time* and *history* (Oliver, 1996a). Adopting a Marxist approach Mike Oliver demonstrates that disabled people are socially excluded because they are deemed unproductive and so hinder the progress of capital accumulation. The shift from land to factory due to the industrial revolution has caused disabled people not to be as productive as their able-bodied counterparts, resulting in excluding these people from production. Oliver further argues that the ideologies of individualism, mostly due to the concepts of liberal democracy and medicalisation, marginalised even further people with disability. In the words of Tregaskis (2002)

> an analysis of oppression within capitalist societies, it has shown how the previous taken-for-granted naturalistic category 'disability' is in reality an artificial and exclusionary social construction that penalises those people with impairments who do not conform to mainstream expectations of appearance, behaviour and/or economical performance (p.457).

Kitchin (1998) recognises the two factors of *time* and *history* that marginalise different groups of people, suggesting that acknowledging a better understanding of *space* will add further insights to history and time, and a better understanding of how disabled people are marginalised and excluded. He suggests that it would be better to merge aspects of political economy and social constructions than to see each one on its own.

However my reading of the works of Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari challenged even further the idea that I was in no way able to research a *reality out-there* or that my research was in some way objective, sterile, clean and going to give a clear picture of the situation of students with PMLD. Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari took me further than the social model of disability and emancipatory disability research in the process of producing a knowledge which is of beneficial to oppressed people.

In the words of Barnes (2003):

> the emancipatory disability research agenda warrants the generation and production of meaningful and accessible knowledge about the various structures economic, political, cultural and environmental - that created and sustain the multiple deprivations encountered by the overwhelming majority of disabled people and their families (p.6) … Those who adhere to a social model of disability whether traditionalists or rectifiers and regardless of their theoretical leanings - materialist, feminist, or postmodernist - all assert that there is a 'reality' out there, namely, the social oppression of disabled people that is historically, environmentally, culturally and contextually variable, that research is influenced by subjective values and interests, and is politically and socially influential (p11).

Barnes is arguing that the *reality out-there* is a reality that sustains and creates disability through its various structures. This is his assumption, which is difficult to argue against, even if Oliver himself "came to question the way the social model was becoming a straight jacket for our experience" (1996b, p.31). What I find problematic is that the positivistic approach that claimed that disability is caused by impairment located in the body (medical model), which the social model tried to overcome, is replaced with the social model itself. I follow Danieli and Woodhams (2005) who argue that emancipatory disability research "reverse[s] the process by which such reality is to be discovered" (p.286). The *real* nature of disability is not medical but social. The starting point of disability research now focuses on the views of disabled people. "The urgent task for research, and indeed researchers, is to create an epistemology and methodology which takes as its starting-point the central idea that disability is socially created" (Oliver, 1993, p.65). Therefore, there is substitution: the social model that becomes a positivistic approach. As Danieli and Woodhams (2005) argue, it is not a question of not accepting that disability is socially created, but that this assumption is *a priori*, and "any subsequent 'data' generated will always be interpreted through the lens of this theory" (p.286). Therefore, this would be research that is fuelled by the social model and in return fuels the social model.

The role of the researcher is nothing else but to "facilitate" the goals of the social model (see Barnes, 2003, p.6):

> researchers must make their standpoint clear at the outset. This means stating clearly their ontological and epistemological positions and ensuring that the choice of research methodology and data collection strategies are logical, rigorous and open to scrutiny and commensurate with the goals of the sponsoring organisation and research participants (ibid. p.11).

In the previous Chapter, I showed how Deleuze-Guattari brought forth the metaphors of trees and rhizomes. The former reproduces/traces and the latter experiments/maps. I think

that a similar situation could be happening within emancipatory disability research. It seems to me that tracing is taking place, implying interpretations of situations according to fixed premises. With tracing, disabling situations are researched in the light of the social model of disability, emphasising logic, rigour and an openness to scrutiny. These are terms that echo Francis Bacon's idea of machinery.

Then how would a research that maps or is experimental look like? Or, in Derrida's terminology, how would a research look like that acknowledges the *ghost* and that acknowledges terms such as: enigmatic experience, astonishment or perhaps, in the research?

Danieli and Woodhams (2005) think that "replacing one theory with another does not reveal the 'reality' of phenomena" (p.286). They think that there could be *other* models, experiences of disability that are being missed out. But is Deleuze-Guattari idea of mapping or experimentation aimed at finding alternative methods? While for Deleuze-Guattari experimentation involves improvising, creating, trying new things, and also observing how these new things work, experimentation is not the discovery that the same work means different things to different people or that it has a meaning that is ambiguous or undecided (see Baugh, 2000, p.35). What Deleuze-Guattari are suggesting is experimentation that does not aim at pre-determined results, but experiments in order to discover what *effects* can be produced. So this is the shift: not to reveal a different reality but to see what effects are produced (the idea of difference in itself. See Chapter 3). This is the challenge they offered me: to move from interpretations to effects. They are not suggesting that we remove any positivistic approach. As shown in Chapter 3, the rhizome and tree live together, the rhizome is parasitic on the tree, and the tree and rhizome, like the wasp and orchard, try to stratify each other. At times the tree becomes rhizome and other times the rhizome becomes tree. In the positivistic approach of the social model one *needs* to see the effects that are produced *in-between spaces* and go along with them (see idea of Robinson Crusoe in Chapter 3).

What Deleuze-Guattari ask is: "given a certain effect, what machine is capable of producing it? And given a certain machine, what can it be used for?" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.3). I see research as a *machine*, not in the Francis Bacon way, but as developed in Chapter 3. The coming together of different bodies will produce *affects* (the

additive process, forces, powers and expressions of change). Therefore, the role of the researcher is important. The researcher does not bring to light hidden structures, or is just megaphoning the voices of persons with disability, nor including information about disabled people's experiences (see Barnes, 2003, p.10), but is the one that is creating of a *foreign language* (outside of language) within language. The "outside of language" which is sensorial, is made possible into language.

My role as a non-disabled researcher, researching vulnerable children with PMLD whose voice is very difficult to access, was challenged through the constant warnings of disabled researchers highlighting that:

1. disability research had been conducted by non-disabled people and the dominant understanding of disability was "personal tragedy" for the individuals;
2. this idea of personal tragedy was generated by non-disabled experts;
3. the hierarchical power relationship between researcher and respondents served to reproduce wider social inequalities between disabled and non-disabled people (Danieli and Woodhams, 2005, p.284).

Aware of these warnings, however, thinking, or better still experiencing research as affects, shifts the emphasis from me to the students. The research that I am suggesting is a research that focuses on how the researcher has been affected in this process and how the researcher affects others. These others are the students, the educational staff and the space that I encountered in the process. What echoes in my mind as I write this is a comment that one of the classroom assistants used to say when interviewing her: I need to think about this point, can we take it up again tomorrow?

There is still an element of desire that starts from me – within my power. This however has to be seen in relation to my teacher identity. My teacher's identity, to imitate Derrida, if such a thing as teacher exists, was being challenged. As I will argue in the concluding chapter of this thesis, a lot of un-learning and re-learning was going through me, especially that part which is defined by my work as a teacher. Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari have been important to challenge the idea that a teacher's identity is something fixed, that one achieves through a teacher training course and through engaging in teaching. It is an identity that one somehow achieves and is able to practise, an identity that is set out in policy that is gradually updated and developed. It is an identity that is bettered through the constant learning of skills and techniques. I had a common sense assumption of myself as a teacher working with students with disability. A shift from a desire as a lack - perfecting

my teacher identity; to a desire of the other, a positive and productive desire that supports the conception of life as material flow.

So I see this thesis as a moment in the constitution of myself as a teacher and person. It is not a throwing away of what I learnt in my teacher training course, or stopping engaging in teachers' development programmes. It is more a taking up of the suggestion of Derrida and Deleuze to open up myself to the other and living in-between. Therefore this thesis has been important as I sort of constituted myself through the writing of it. This thesis is my reterritorialization of my deterritorilization, my patch in land, my ritornello.

Deleuze-Guattari urge me not to try and calculate the difference in terms of how I was before I started this thesis and now as I write this a few days before submitting this thesis, but to see difference as a focus on the singular and unique circumstances of its production. The writing of this thesis is made up of those moments of my becoming. There were many other intensities that I did not engage with for they were singular, particular, contingent, and lost opportunities in the production of my becoming. Intensities came from the students, teachers and other educators, Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari. These are intensities that while belonging to them are also extrinsic to them and I was able to detach from them, and let them permeate me, constituting me as I am. They are intensities that I was able to exaggerate and blow out of proportion. I desired these intensities. These intensities are the main core of the following three chapters through nine stories that can be considered as moments in my becoming.

Another element that comes across in this thesis is the fact that I was researching three students within my own class. The complexity of this came across in the writing of the thesis. While sometimes the personal pronoun *I* is used, at other times, there is a certain detachment in the following three chapters. I see the role of the researcher in disability arena as that who "suspend[s] judgment and think[s] in terms of packets of sensations rather than 'characters'" (Buchanan and Marks, 2000, p.3). Buchanan and Marks (2000) explain this suspending judgement and packets of sensations in a simple but extraordinary way. It has helped me to envisage my particular position in the research:

> Sometimes it is necessary to restore the lost parts, to rediscover everything that cannot be seen in the image, everything that has been removed to make it 'interesting'. But sometimes, on the contrary, it is necessary to make holes, to introduce voids and white space, to rarify the image, by suppressing many things

> that have been added to make us believe that we were seeing everything. It is necessary to make a division or make emptiness in order to find the whole again (p.4).

It is in these moments that Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari come so closely at hand in this thesis. Derrida's quasi-concept of différance is very close to Buchanan and Marks' explanation as shown in the above quote. This research focuses on children with PMLD, but it focuses more on the effects that these children brought into my life through the observations and interviews I conducted. This research is about *my* pockets of sensations. But this does not mean that it is not transformative for disabled people through the material produced. Deleuze-Guattari in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1986) call the foreign language mentioned above as *minor language*. Minor language is not a language that is produced by minorities (persons with disability), but a deterritorialization of the major language, which for Deleuze is private but becomes public (see Deleuze, 1997b, p.57). The minor language therefore is a political task of writing, which for Deleuze-Guattari consists in the Event - inventing a people who do not yet exist. I try and do this with limitations, in the following three chapters by using stories. This is the discussion of the following section.

Stories

The stories are not narratives of lives of students with disabilities in classrooms and schools. They are not an interpretation of situations involving interviews and observations conducted by me. They are my sense of nonsense of the data collected. They seem to separate life from the contexts that are imbued in them, to create an image of life that neither serves nor remains identical to itself (Colebrook, 2007). These stories can stand on their own. Deleuze argues that "one can institute a zone of proximity with anything, on the condition that one creates the literary means for doing so" (Deleuze, 1997a, p.2). The stories and comments that follow in the next three chapters are my literary means. The stories are "a third person" (ibid., p.3), not I, the students with PMLD, educators or educational spaces, but "states into which we fall when the process is interrupted, blocked, or plugged up" (ibid.). The stories are made up of individuals that lack nothing; they consist "entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 261).

The stories do not represent a search for explanatory understanding. It is not a case of me trying to understand the meaning of an act or situation in terms of the motives which give rise to it. They are my sense of the data collected because of the links which are formed, through writing and re-writing. The writing has been a process of ongoing and multiple displacements. This implies a writing and re-writing, what Derrida would call writing under erasure: writing, cancelling that writing and writing again while keeping the previous writing. It is as though the eraser which is being used is not fully effective. I become a nomad in my writing: what is important is writing which maximises the connections between me, the students and the staff.

This writing seen as a process of making sense of nonsense is understood as drawing up the variations in the intensities of relationships, more than a description of the state of being. It is to be worthy of what happens to me (Deleuze, 1990, p.149). Deleuze-Guattari and Derrida themselves struggled with this idea and writing, for them, was not only an expression of the content but it was what formulated the content in the first place. Content and expression for these authors was of paramount importance. Particular examples were Deleuze's discussion of Samuel Beckett and of the French novelist Joë Bousquet (see Deleuze, 1990). The latter became a novelist and poet following a devastating injury incurred in the First World War. Bousquet's work transforms his wound (he was left paralysed with a severed spinal cord)

> into an artistic theme where it becomes a shadow of pain and suffering alleviated by morphine, but also a destiny to be affirmed and redoubled in his art. … The wound thereby becomes an artistic event as well as a physical one and the life as an artist of acute sensibility and great passion rises out of, or hovers with, the curtailed life spent bedridden in deep pain (Williams, 2008, p.155).

In the stories, my involvement with children and my engagement with the possibilities and intensities they offered with their lives is redoubled and affirmed. It is this affirmation of connecting with these intensities that produced in me a deterritorialisation of myself. There is a recognition of the flows, a mapping out of particular moments of my connections. The process of writing and re-writing helped me make sense of such connections. The reader of this thesis does not encounter the multiple structures of the writing of the stories. However, the comments following the stories open them up further.

The following three chapters have a similar pattern. They all start with what I describe as a story. The story introduces a particular episode in the life of a student with PMLD in the school day. What follow the stories are reflections on the stories, an opening up of these stories using ideas from Derrida and/or Deleuze-Guattari.

The stories are assemblages; each assemblage is made of different strata which is "always the substratum of another stratum, which in turn is the substratum of still another stratum" (Buchanan, 2004, p.8). I see the stories as an assemblage when the different natures of the different strata (thoughts) *penetrate* (Deleuze 1986, p.35) each other. Therefore a territory is produced through this penetration, that is, when a code starts forming between different strata. The different strata come from different sources: the observations, interviews, my own experience, almost autobiographical notes in the case of the special school, literature, and so on.

In *What is Philosophy?* (1994) Deleuze and Guattari present us with the idea of: *sensations*. In creative work, the sensations embodied in content, form, material and composition become indiscernible. Holland (2004) gives an example of a piece of wood. The structure of the wood: the knots, grain, strength, surface appearance etc, and how that piece of wood becomes important and has singular features for the artist or sculpture. Each singularity can become a substance of expression. But it is impossible to discern "whether the wood grain itself suggests ocean waves, or whether ocean waves make us see the wood grain in this way" (p.23). It is similar with the stories. These *sensations* could have been unacknowledged and a very clinical approach could have been extracted from the data to establish specifications based on particular constants. However this approach does not reflect a Deleuzian-Guattarian, or even Derridian approach. Above all, it does not reflect me and certainly limits the students. I want to think of the stories as *blocks of sensations, a compound of percepts and affects* (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.164) that can stand on their own without me, the author of these stories. These stories, affected the students and me, but also will affect those who read the stories. There was a moment during the research process, when I reasoned that the whole dissertation could be presented simply through the nine stories. That is not possible for a doctorate thesis. This does not imply that I believed that the stories are perfect - far from it. They have "great geometrical improbabilities, physical imperfection, and organic abnormalities" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.164), but they stand on their own and the important issue is that the stories created

perverse sensations in them (ibid.). The stories are not monuments, in the sense that they are blocks of memory – they are not just notes taken down and then reproduced faithfully. Rather than focusing on the origin of these stories, I urge the reader to focus if these stories work out for him or herself:

> you see the book as a little non-signifying machine, and the only question is "Does it work, and how does it work?" How does it work for you? If it doesn't work, if nothing comes through, you try another book. This second way or reading's intensities; something comes through or it doesn't. There's nothing to explain, nothing to understand, nothing to interpret. It's like plugging in to an electric circuit (Deleuze, 1995a, p.7-8).

I consider this plugging, "turn away from signification and representation towards the expression of intensities" (Buchanan and Marks, 2000, p.2) as political / ethical and agentising the students with PMLD. Hoping to create an "and…and…and - a stammering" in the readers.

When each story was written, I shared them with some teachers, professionals and parents in order to get some feedback and comments. What was noted is that the people who read the stories could identify them in their work with children with PMLD even if it was noted that at times the stories brought forth points that may be considered as *absurd* or unimportant. I see stories as having this double-bind: stories are a type of organisation that provide a border, but they tend to attract people not repel them, and they have the power of *affect*. These stories provide us with a language which we can engage with and also transgress. I am seeing stories as the Deleuzian-Guattarian *refrains*. The refrain gives us security in troubled situations, but on the other hand the refrain can be taken out of the song and made to wander. The example of the young girl who hums to herself, when she is in the dark to comfort herself – comfort but taking music elsewhere. I hold that this is similar to the stories I have written. They are comfortable for us – we see ourselves in them, but the stories can take us elsewhere. The fact that stories take the reader elsewhere implies that my writing of these stories are written under erasure. What I wrote down and formulated as stories need to be crossed out, but both the word and deletion may be allowed to stand.

The nine stories that follow form a semblance of day in the life of a child with PMLD. They were arranged in this way after they were written, and they were thus placed to bring some structure in the presentation of the chapters. What follows after each story is how

certain *affects* are produced in particular assemblages. Classroom assemblages, school assemblages, assemblages made of teachers, professionals, classroom assistants and other children. I emphasise that I do not want to eliminate the discourses presented in Chapter Two but aim to note how certain flows in these discourses can help us produce particular assemblages. In this way I argue for the agency of students with PMLD.

I want to end this section reproducing a quote from Law (2006) that summarises my sense of the research process, of reading Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari, being with the students and their teachers, interviewing, thinking - reflecting and writing and re-writing this dissertation:

> Slow method, or vulnerable method, or quite method. Multiple method. Modest method. Uncertain method. Diverse method (p.11).

Chapter 5

Today, an *other* school day. Settling in.

"What are we going to do TODAY?" (Derrida, 1992d, p.3). This sounds familiar to teachers as it is a question asked on daily basis by students and classroom assistants even before they settle down in class. Settling in the class is an essential part of the day. Usually the school day starts off with a school assembly, and then students and their teaching staff settle in their classrooms. This is the focus of this chapter: the settling of an *other* school day. Four stories are presented: arriving at school, attending assembly, settling down in the classroom and the hello song.

Story One: Finding a Place

Luke's mother arrives at school with Luke and his sister Chloe in a red minibus. It is one of those minivans that take children to school. She comes out of the minibus carrying Luke in one arm while holding Chloe's hand with the other. Luke's buggy is taken out by the bus driver from behind the last seat. He opens Luke's buggy and his mother places Luke inside it. She then goes with Luke near his class and stands outside the classroom, until the classroom assistant comes. All other parents escorting their children wait outside the gate until someone from the school administration opens the gate for the children to come in and tend to the requirements of the parents.

When the children arrive at school, they gather in the hall. Five steps lead to the entrance of the hall. Teachers' cars are parked in front of the hall making it difficult for children to go in the hall in straight lines. Luke uses a side entrance, which is at the same level as the hall. When the classroom assistant comes into the hall some of the children welcome Luke and go over to him. Inside the hall the children gather according to their classrooms. The younger children gather in front with the older children at the back. The children in Luke's class line up in the hall to the right at the back. The children stand in straight lines. Luke and his classroom assistant stay at the back of the lines. The classroom teacher walks along the straight line monitoring the children. At times she stays near the classroom assistant.

When the assembly is over, usually Luke's class uses the side entrance to reach their class. The walk to the class becomes more of a crowd than straight lines, but these are formed again upon arriving to the class. The teacher or the classroom assistant often raises her voice so that the children go back in their straight line formation. The classroom is elevated a few feet, so at the entrance there is a wooden ramp. During break-time this ramp serves kindergarten children to race their toy cars. The children go in. One row first, then the other and at last Luke with the classroom assistant who has to give a push to go up the ramp.

Luke and his classroom assistant sit at the back of the classroom**.** The desks of the children are in the form of a U-shape, with desks within this big U. The classroom is rather big, very shabby and run down. At the back of the classroom there is a small cupboard that is used by Luke's classroom assistant to store her teaching resources, and also a small table that is used to change Luke's diaper during break-time. There is Luke's specialised chair, a round table, a place where cushions are kept, and a small library. Another classroom assistant who works with two children sits at the right side of the U- shape, with a child on either side.

The children are working with their teacher. She has set some work. When some children are ready they ask their teacher if they can go over to Luke. They leave their place and walk to where Luke and his classroom assistant are. There they sing to Luke, or take a book and read to him. Someone takes a Winnie-the-Pooh soft-toy and caresses his face. Some play with some of the toys that are used for Luke. Some talk to the classroom assistant and ask her questions or tell her what they have been doing at home or during the class work. Some show her the family album that they got with them from home. The children are allowed to get some toys or pets from home and talk about them in class in English lessons. They take what they have brought to school to Luke's place, show it to Luke and the classroom assistant, they talk to her about it.

Today the teacher decides to do some role play. She wants to cover the religion lesson that talks about The Good Samaritan. The teacher called out groups of pupils to the front of the class and they role-play the story. All the children have a turn. Every time a new group was chosen, children raise their hands so that they can be assigned particular characters. Some of the boisterous boys want to be the robber, while others identify themselves with the

Good Samaritan. After each group finishes the short act, there is clapping, and the children go to their place. Luke is not involved in this session. His classroom assistant and I are watching the children doing the act and enjoying the show.

During the first part of the break the children sit in their places, take out a napkin and eat their food. During the second part of the break they go out in the yard to run around and play. When they have finished eating while still in class, some children ask the teacher if they can go near Luke. Usually she asks if they have finished their lunch. If they have, then they are allowed to go. During the time that the children go in the yard, most of them play football: all the members of one class against another class, some others play catch. However a small group of girls take Luke on his buggy around the yard. It is always the same group of people. They take him around the yard and grounds. They all hold the buggy's handle and then from time to time stop and talk a little to Luke, and then continue their walk. The classroom assistant stays on the classroom doorstep which is a few feet higher than the yard, drinking coffee and monitoring the girls who are wheeling Luke. When break-time is over, the children gather in the yard for a very short assembly. A thanks-giving prayer is said. All the children are in rows. Luke is at the back of the class. The teacher is in front. Then they walk to class. Luke is last to go in.

In class Luke stays in his buggy, or else in his specialised chair. Often the classroom assistant holds him in her arms. This happens every time that he is fed, but also when she thinks that he is tired or needs to change position. At school they have a small gym, which was undergoing refurbishment in the last scholastic year. The classroom assistant occasionally takes Luke there and places him on a mat. Once every fortnight, Luke and his classroom assistant attend a fun park for children with disability. A van collects all the children with disability and their classroom assistants and attends this park for the day. There they do some pottery, go on the go-cars, and play with the animals. Occasionally Luke attends the nearby special school where he uses the pool and the multi-sensory room. However, in the mainstream school, the classroom assistant sometimes also goes to the kindergarten classes, where Luke is laid on a mat and the other children sit down next to him. It seems that when one of the kindergarten teachers is sick or is momentarily away the head of school asks Luke's classroom assistant to help with the kindergarten classes. She is a kindergarten teacher, but currently without a class and therefore assigned to work with Luke. When she is asked to help out, Luke goes with her. There is also a very small and

run-down room reserved for the use of children with disability. Sometimes the classroom assistant goes there with Luke to listen to some music. For the Personal and Social Development lessons, children are taken by two peripatetic teachers. The classroom teachers and classroom assistants do not attend so they give the children the freedom to express themselves without their presence. Therefore Luke does not attend. He stays in class with the classroom assistants and classroom teachers. When the classroom teacher does a Physical Education lesson, Luke goes with the children in the playground, and stays in his buggy in a shaded area, usually, with one or two girls around him.

Square syndrome

From the above sketch, Luke's place in the class is not part of the main setting of the desks used by the other children. He is not part of the square formation that the desks make. His place is at the back of the class. The classroom assistant and Luke sit near one edge of the square, close enough to the children, but yet not part of the children. It is the teacher that changes places for the children. They do not have a say where they sit. What usually happens is that on some particular mornings, when the children are lined up in front of the class, she calls them one by one and gives them new places. This new setting will last as long as the given places are suitable for the running of the class, so that a balance is maintained in the class among the various behaviours, interactions, and familiar attitudes. The classroom assistant told me that usually the decision of which child should be seated next to Luke is not based on who is a close friend to Luke, but on those children who need some support. So when Luke is asleep or absent from class, the classroom assistant can help out with the two children sitting beside Luke. This may be read in the light of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987, p.26) idea of the *pack*. There is always someone in the pack that links with the world outside. It is through this link that there is interaction, as these authors describe in the case of the wolfman or Moby Dick. Whether Luke and the classroom assistant or the class are seen as the original pack, the link between the two entities is the need for additional help which two chosen children have. A similar situation seems to be happening with the other classroom assistant. She is assigned two children, so she holds one child on either side. Yet around her are more children who need more support. Are such children the link because they have characteristics of both entities, in that they are children like the rest of the class, but are also like Luke in that they need 'additional help'?

In this first story I would like to focus on what I will be calling the *square syndrome* (see Davis and Sumara, 2000). One of the primary characteristics in most classes is that almost everything resembles a square or is based on a square principle. A square classroom, with square desks, spaced in a square shape, with square copybooks, with square white boards, with square computer monitors. When Luke and his classroom assistant are not in class, the only person that is out of the square is the class teacher. Most of the time she walks around the space in front of the class, but does at times go around the class to see how children are getting on in their work. Yet during my observation she never came up to Luke. The other classroom assistant is part of the square.

While all the children have a desk, Luke does not. He has a specialised chair and a buggy. When one enters the class in the morning before the children are in the classroom, Luke's place in the classroom is quickly identifiable. The classroom assistant sits on a chair next to Luke. Luke is either in his buggy or specialised chair, or for long moments during the day the classroom assistant holds him in her arms as though she is holding a baby. She does this because she thinks that it is a way how to make Luke comfortable especially as he has spasms frequently during the day and cries when the spasms come if he is either in his buggy or chair. Although Luke is eight he still is a very small child.

However at the back of the class, where Luke stays, there is also a round table, a small L-shaped library, and a cushion corner. Every now and then a child would ask the teacher whether s/he can change a library book. From my observations there is no one directly responsible for this small class library – books are not classified and not ordered. It seems to be rather an abandoned place, very disorganised but used very regularly by different children. Children are not guided in choosing their books. They usually pick up a book and flip through the pages deciding whether to take it or not. The round table has multiple purposes: children who have not done their homework are sent there to do it, yet the teacher does not monitor them. She would tell the child not to return to his/her place until s/he has done all the homework. This at times takes a few minutes, but I saw children sitting there for a whole morning, usually playing with their pencils or just staring. Luke's classroom assistant may draw the child's attention back to the work, or tell him/her to go near her so that she can see what s/he is working on and maybe give some clues, but the child is otherwise left alone. The round table is used by those children who get toys from their home, leave them on this table and then go and play with them in specified times. I

have never seen the classroom teacher using the cushion corner. I used it once with the children, when I was telling them a story, and the cushions are placed all jumbled up, resembling almost a patched up soft play area.

The reason why I am highlighting the above points is that I think that the above can be read in the light of smooth spaces and striated spaces that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) distinguish. The central part of the class, which I have called *squared* is ordered: square desks, one next to the other, every child knowing the relation to every other child. This could be seen when the children were making chocolate balls. There were bowls and crushed biscuits and chocolate chips all over the place. The teacher and the two classroom assistants were running around, from one child to another. I had to give a helping hand with the chocolate balls. Yet what I found amusing is that despite the fact that things were messy, children not only knew their things but tried to protect them, as though they were precious possessions. If it happened that one child lacked some nuts, it was not an easy task to convince other children to share with others. Some children would let others take some of their nuts because they were almost bribed with the possibility of being allowed to play with the toy that the borrowing child had brought from home.

There are codes that regulate the whole classroom setting. The teacher controls the children from the front of the class. She raises her voice a lot, a point that was brought up by the classroom assistants working in this classroom. The teacher has hearing difficulties, and has two hearing aids. Yet I was told by the classroom assistants that they had never spoken about this issue with the teacher herself. If the teacher fails to control the class, then the other classroom assistant forms part of the square and she calls for attention on specific points. At the outer extreme spaces of the classroom, in this case at the back of the room, there are different things happening. It seems more fluid, more *nomadic*. It does not mean that there are no rules, but the rules are more flexible, as from my observation these rules are not established by the teacher, but by children themselves or by the classroom assistant outside the square. While the teacher has rules on how, when or why children move from their places, and rules on what children can do at given times, these are rules that need to be observed by children. At the back of the classroom, the rules are more flexible. I am certain that there are rules that govern the library use established by the teacher, or how to choose a book, yet the pattern of behaviour that I saw during my observation was:

1. the child decides to change the book;

2. maybe ask the teacher to change book;
3. goes in the library section and places his book where ever s/he wants;
4. chooses a book, and flicks through the pages;
5. goes to his/her place with a new book.

What this story tries to do is to elicit the balance, or relationship, between the smooth space of the class and the striated space within the same classroom. I argue that Luke's space in the classroom gives the other children a possibility of de- and re-territorialization. Before however engaging with this idea, I would like to explore Luke's movement within the school. This will help me reinforce my argument.

Bordered in non-space

If we had to plot Luke's movement and see this in relation to the other children in classroom, we can see that during the day Luke spends 1. a lot of time changing position when he is in the classroom – from the specialised chair, to his buggy or in the classroom assistant's arms; 2. a lot of his time going around the school for different reasons. As stated in the above story, he goes to the gym, the run-down resource room for children with special needs, in the kindergarten classes, once a fortnight to the Park of Friendship and also attends a nearby special school on some particular days. It seems that Luke is able to move around different boundaries, yet at the same time not appertaining to any one. He fits in with the kindergarten classes, given that he is small for his age. During an English lesson the word 'dwarf' came up, the teacher asked the children what it means, and one of the children just said "like Luke – being small". In the kindergarten classes he is laid on the mat and some children gather around him and sing to him, while others do not take any notice of him. At the special school, he attends the class where I am a teacher. He participates in the sessions, usually literacy where a multi-sensorial approach is used. He also uses the pool, attends sessions in the multi-sensory room with a specialised teacher and the Opti-Music room where he attends story-telling sessions.

At the mainstream school he sometimes goes to the resource room for children with special needs. This room is not really accessible to children who are wheel-chair users – yet the classroom assistant takes him there to listen to some music. She has to lift Luke with his buggy. On her way to the resource room the classroom assistant tries to get someone to help lift him. He is also sometimes taken around the school according to the needs of the

classroom assistant. If the classroom assistant needs to go to speak to the assistant head he goes with her. There are times when the head of school or someone from the administration team asks the classroom assistant to run some errands for them, to give out circulars, or to give important messages to some teachers. Luke often goes with the classroom assistant on this errand. Luke is able to go in places where it is very difficult for children to go in, such as the staff room, and to move around the school at different times of the day. This movement can be read in relation to Derrida's (1983) three types of borders. A child in a Year 4 class has closed borders in that s/he cannot spend an hour or so, on a regular basis, in a kindergarten classroom, or attend the nearby special school to use the pool. Everyone can go through the open borders, such as the playground and the hall for the morning assembly. The third type of border is where there are no borders, not because the border is too open, but because there is no border whatsoever. Luke appears to engage with the third type of border. Could it be that the fact that he is disabled, and with his particular kind of disability (very quiet, can allow other people to talk without interrupting, with only the occasional crying) he and his classroom assistant are able to go wherever they want?

While all the children attending the primary school belong to a class, including Luke, yet he has the ability to form parts of other classes and spaces without being directly part of them. Luke is on the class 4.1 register. His teacher is Ms…. and his friends are… yet he is also on the register of the special school where he attends. He is written in my classroom register for he attends for some sessions at the special school, so he has to be on it. His name is placed on the special needs room time-table, so that he has slots when he can use the room, even if in practice it does not work like that. His classroom assistant simply goes to see if the room is empty and if it is, they use it. He is also on the register of a non-governmental organisation which provides leisure activities during school hours; they know about him too. Borrowing a term from Buchanan (2005, p.27), Luke at school can be in a non-place. Buchanan gives an example taken from Marc Auge where he tells us that he is a Parisian, on his way to Sicily to give a talk, but to return back home that evening, hearing the news and being updated on what is happening not only in Paris but in the rest of the world, drinking Brazilian coffee. I was told that Luke last year had changed class. I wondered why this had happened, and the story was that since the classroom assistant's son was Luke's age, he could not be in the same classroom as his mother. Luke and Matthew were swapped (another child with disability in the other year four; see Chapter 6

for story on Matthew). I know that the classroom assistant pressed for her son to be with his present teacher as she has a reputation of being a good teacher. Luke does not belong; he can be moved whenever and wherever!

In the light of this, I think that Luke's ability to belong while at the same time to flow from one place to another, makes him welcomed by many and people give him their attention. I have been with Luke in the kindergarten class for a few times. Children gather around him the moment he comes in. There is the odd child that does not acknowledge Luke, but most of the children welcome him. The moment he is placed on the mat the children gather around him. They take their toys, or colouring and do it next to Luke. Many would speak to him, or sing to him. Even the kindergarten assistants make a fuss over him. Although Luke's particular class were not organising the Christmas concert he was nonetheless chosen to be baby Jesus. So he was chosen by another class and given this main role. He was then taken there often by his teacher to participate in the dress rehearsal.

Singing and playing around

Luke seems to have the ability to belong and not belong at the same time to a number of places. But Luke and the classroom assistant pass a considerable amount of time in the classroom and this is the focus of this story. I focus on how persons encountering Luke are influenced by him. In this story I focus mostly on the interaction between Luke's peers and the adults involved in his classroom.

In the story at the beginning of this chapter I referred to what Luke is involved in doing when the rest of the class are following their teacher in lessons. The class teacher does not present her schemes of work to Luke's classroom assistant, so that the latter can adapt sessions for Luke. From my talking to different key players in Luke's class, there seems to be a mutual understanding that Luke does not participate in class in the formal curriculum content. I do not know whether the other classroom assistant is given the schemes of work in advance, but the children she works with do follow the teacher to a certain extent. So what does Luke and his classroom assistant do when the other children and teaching staff are engaged in literacy, numeracy and other subjects? Luke's classroom assistant can be heard singing constantly in a very low voice to Luke (this theme will be taken up in another chapter). When she is not singing to Luke, she reads to him from a book of nursery rhymes over and over again. She sometimes talks to him about the pictures and invents her

own story. She also has two home-made sensory books that Luke's previous classroom assistant had made. One is about colours and the other about basic things, such as: a boat, a star, etc… There are a few toys that she uses with Luke. The administration allocated some money for the purchase of two toys that have some special effects. Even if they have a sound function, they are kept switched off so that the other children are not distracted by the sounds.

Luke has some other toys, but Winnie-the-Pooh, a McDonalds soft toy, seems to be a favourite toy for Luke and is used by the classroom assistant often. She starts by placing it in front of Luke's face, and then pretends that Winnie goes on Luke's arms and belly. The soft toy jumps from one place to another. Each activity takes around ten minutes. This depends on Luke's position that is changed constantly. He moves from his buggy to the specialised chair that the classroom assistant does not know how to use properly, and then she hold him in her arms. There are moments in the day that Luke doses off and sleeps for some time.

The children work with the teacher and some are helped by the other classroom assistant. When a child finishes his work they often go over to the teacher and ask her if they can go near Luke. This happens often. The moment some children are free they go next to Luke. Usually it is the same two pupils who finish their work quickly and well enough, but soon the other children come up too. Some children never opt to come near Luke. They take out their reading book and read silently. Some others are constant in their coming while with some others it varies. The children either lift their hands to ask the teacher, or leave their places go over to the teacher and then go near Luke, and some would just go near Luke without asking the teacher. For some the teacher just nods, and that sign is taken to mean yes. For others she asks to see their work before going near Luke. There would always be those four to six children around Luke and the classroom assistant.

When the children are near Luke, some stand, some bend over him and some kneel beside him, some walk around Luke and the classroom assistant, and also around the circular table. They are involved in a number of things. As recounted in the opening story some speak to the classroom assistant about their family; at times pictures from home are brought to be shared with the classroom assistant. One or two children talk to each other, some sing to Luke, or playing with Winnie the Pooh, stroking Luke's face and knee gently.

Some take Luke's nursery rhyme book and read the words to Luke while trying to show him the book. Others get the toy or object they had brought from home on that day and show it to Luke or the classroom assistant. Other times some of the children sing a song together.

Luke's space may be offering the children a different environment, even if for a few minutes, to what I have called the *square syndrome*. The walk from their desk and the moving towards Luke appears very significant. It is an activity, a movement that I think helps the children to experience a different environment – the movement that may create in the children a difference in intensity. Luke's environment seems to be one which is more similar to the children's homes than to the class, perhaps also including the mother figure of the classroom assistant and the baby figure, Luke. It is different from the space which the classroom teacher and the other classroom assistant inhabit. One attends there for a reason, to learn, while Luke's space resembles home, with toys, singing, talking with the classroom assistant about very private home/family things at home, photo albums.

Luke also appears to provide the children with other experiences that usually are not part of a mainstream class, perhaps giving them the possibility of actualising some of the virtual intensities in children. Mark is one of the children that the other classroom assistant takes care of. He has a label of hyperactivity that he lives up to very well. I know who the child is, but in the weeks of observation he was hospitalised for he had hurt himself. The first time I had met with the head of school to ask permission to attend her school to carry out my research he was in the head's office. She was having a row with him together with the classroom assistant. Mark was refusing to take his Ritalin tablet. A big row was taking place in the office. I was involved in the scene. The head of school turned towards me and, winking her eye, told me: here you are at last. Pointing to Mark, I was introduced as an educational inspector coming to see how Mark was doing. I must not have acted the part well, for Mark still refused to take his medication and so his mother had to be contacted. In class Mark seems all over the place. The teacher and the classroom assistants thank God when Mark is not at school. He jumps on desks and hits children, and yet he is a bright child. In all the interviews, when mentioning Luke's friends the name Mark always cropped up, and all expressed the fact that when he goes near Luke he seems to be a different person. He changes completely. He is delicate with Luke and loving.

During assembly the children follow their head of school in singing a Maltese religious song. Children seem to like it, maybe because of the actions this song has: clapping and moving hands. When the children are near Luke in class they use the tune of this song and invent words to the melody of this song and sing it to Luke. Very often they would also put the name Luke in the song. This does not happen once but quite frequently during the day. I saw children hopping and enjoying themselves when the words they choose actually rhyme. After the observation period I went back other times to the class either to visit or ask the teachers and classroom assistants a few more questions. I noticed that it was the time of the Eurovision Song contest, and in Malta this is a big issue for it is the highlight of Maltese musical achievement. The children were taking tunes of the Maltese winning song and changing the words of the song and singing it to Luke.

In the opening story of this Chapter I said that Luke during break is wheeled around the yard most often by the girls. I spent a lot of time talking with these girls. They talk about Luke as though he were their baby or son. The girls around him have roles: one is the mother; another would be the father, another Luke's sister and other an aunty. They take turns. They talk amongst themselves and with Luke and pretend that they are going shopping or organising a party. I think that Luke is giving the possibility to the girls to engage in a discourse that very often only takes place at home in play.

Luke and the space that is formed around him give the children the possibility to experience the classroom differently from the U-shape part of the classroom. I think that children are coded when they are sitting at their desks. They have to be silent, whereas near Luke they can sing or talk; they have to sit whereas near Luke they can move; they have to hold pencils, pens and books, whereas near Luke they can hold soft toys. When the children are carrying out the Good Samaritan role play they barely move. The role play is repeated over and over again until all the children present take part with the exception of Luke. But when they are near Luke they are animated, they move and invent songs. I am tempted to use Deleuze and Guattari's term 'becoming-imperceptible' (1987): becoming different through not being different. It seems that Luke likes songs and they also like songs; they also like toys as much as Luke likes toys. The children can be children near Luke.

Going back

A small crowd is gathered around Luke. The teacher calls the class to take their places. Luke is left all alone, with the classroom assistant who takes up once again the tasks she usually does with Luke or goes around the school. The children go back to their square desks, holding square books, in front of a square whiteboard. The children are squared – they are learners. The teacher starts a new square lesson...

Story Two: Morning assembly

Every morning when the children arrive from home they are wheeled into the school hall. It is rather a small hall when compared to other school halls. The hall is rectangular and leads onto another small hall on the right hand side. On one side is the head's office next to the school entrance, next to it is another entrance where the children from the vans pass through, on the other side a small courtyard where we have a big budgie aviary. When it is sunny, the budgies make their presence felt. Few things characterise the hall: two very large mirrors with four large mats in front of them; three trees made out of wood all in different shades of green: the middle one with the children's names, the one on the right contains the names of sponsors or friends of the school and the one on the left has the names of the staff listed on it. The hall is also the place where religious events take place. A big statue of the Madonna occupies one of the corners of this hall and is the focal point particularly in May when the statue is crowned by one of our students. There is also a big picture of the patron saint of our school, a LaSalle religious brother who had a physical impairment – he could not walk properly. He was ordained saint a year before the school opened. Next to this picture is another religious picture that of De La Salle, the founder of the religious order and patron saint of teachers, which Order also runs numerous religious schools in Malta.

Every morning, the children start arriving with their escorts a quarter of an hour before school officially starts at nine. The transport escort role is carried out by the teaching staff. Before the children come to school the hall seems dead, but the arrival of the teachers and children generates a lot of activity. The children are placed in a semicircle facing the area where the yard is. Teachers sign attendance papers and transport supervision papers. They talk with each other, recount the latest recipes they managed to get hold of, of the latest fashion that is going on. Some of the teachers go around the children and talk to them,

welcoming them to school. Some children need to be adjusted in their buggies. This activity goes on until the head of school comes in the hall from his office. Everyone looks at him. His physical appearance gives an instant indication of his mood. This year he has been involved in some very important national projects and by this time of the day, he would often already be charged with activity and energy, while for many of the teaching staff the morning assembly is the first activity of the day, for him this activity seems to be the latest of the many things he has already dealt with. All the staff members stop their talking and stand up straight. They stand behind the children, but gather in the middle of the hall. That makes it easier for the head of school to address them than if they were standing scattered around the hall. The teachers and facilitators barely move during the assembly and certainly do not talk, or answer the head of school back, unless he asks for something himself. He is known to shout and snap at people during the assembly. He starts off by asking us how many children are present in each class. Next, how many children will be having the blended or solid food which is funded by the school. Then he makes the sign of the cross, says the prayer and leads the singing of the national anthem. During the prayer he will go near the children in front of the semicircle and will pat them on the shoulder or their lap. Janice (one of the teaching assistants) will say in a very low whispering voice: “those children are the blessed ones today”, but nobody dares laugh. Following the prayer, the head of school gives out the relevant news to the staff. The amount of time dedicated to this depends on his perceived level of seriousness and on his mood. He does not allow anyone to say a word or move, expect for an emergency with the children. When he is ready, the assembly always ends with “Good day”, and he quickly goes back to his office while we go to our classes, chatting away to each other.

Cherry in Ms. Sue’s class starts shouting the moment the assembly starts. Sometimes Ruth joins in. They are placed at the far ends of the semi-circle. If they start shouting they are to be taken out of assembly and are thus strategically placed to ensure this can be done with the least inconvenience to anyone.

Nina is wheeled into the hall. Her van is one of the last to arrive at school, as the driver’s route is quite lengthy. While the national anthem is sung and we are all standing straight, Nina sits with her feet up, sounding strange noises with her hands and mouth. When our head of school says his news to the staff she is there in front of him with her hands up. She then puts her feet up and then makes one of her loud noises, then laughs and puts the

fingers of her right hand on her face, making her look very pensive. Nina then makes a grumbling sound, followed by the funniest noises one could imagine. Joanne looks at me, and then tries to catch Jasmine's or Ritienne's eye and looks back at Nina as though to tell us to see what Nina is up to. We cannot show that we are amused. The head of school is still telling us about the new school audit process that is going to start, and that we do not need to worry as we are fully prepared for it as it has been his vision for the last six years.

Nina has no language, and very limited communication skills. During the interview, Ritienne who is also Nina's transport escort besides classroom assistant, mentioned the *tok tok* sound that Nina does. In her reflections, she concluded that it could be that Nina was imitating the sound a horse makes. 'Could it be that Nina is starting to identify the sound to an object,' Ritienne asks? She happens to be Nina's transport escort and told me that she was certain that where Nina lives she sees a horse every morning. Ritienne tried to argue that it could be that Nina is learning the sound and it could be that she is making a reference of the sound to the object: the horse. So that very same day, when taking Nina home, Ritienne talks to her mother about the *tok tok* sound. Her mother tells her that that sound is a nuisance. Nina had done that sound for a time and had stopped, and her mother is annoyed that Nina was starting it again. Ritienne tells her that it could be that she is referring to a horse. 'Which horse?' the mother asks. 'The horse that we see every morning,' answers Ritienne. The mother insists that there are no horses where she and Nina wait for the school transport every morning. Ritienne does not push the point, but the following morning looks attentively to see whether she can see the horse. There are no horses!! She comes to class and tells us all this, while promising that she will look out to see if the horse will re-appear on the next day.

Playing chess in the school hall

In Chapter 3 I wrote about the Deleuze-Guattari (1987) metaphors of the rhizome and trees. They also use metaphors of games to explain these metaphors. I will be referring to the games to help me unpack some of the ideas presented in the above story. Deleuze-Guattari (ibid.) use the ideas of the games *chess* and *go*. The pieces in chess are well ordered, have particular rules and strategies. The pieces are divided into two matching sets, conventionally called White and Black. Each piece has a relationship with the other pieces – an established relationship. The object of the chess game is to checkmate the opponent's king, whereby the king is under immediate attack. Therefore one needs to attack and

defend. Any move is structured, is part of a strategy and is well planned. Each movement will continue to reinforce the structures of the chess game itself. Even the space where chess is played is an arranged space made up of a squared board of eight rows and eight columns of squares. The colours of the sixty-four squares alternate and are referred to as "light squares" and "dark squares". The chess game conserves all the different relations in itself, whether these are relations to space, or moves, different players or different pieces to each other. There are no relations outside the game.

The metaphor of chess can be used to explain the school hall as described in the above story. In one snap shot of the activities taking place in the school hall during an assembly one can identify the relations, spaces, circumstances and movements done by different people in diverse spaces. The school hall with its activities is like a small state. For Deleuze-Guattari (1987) the State apparatus resembles a chess game. What Deleuze and Guattari emphasise is that what makes a state is not so much the rules or the people governing the State, but it "is defined by the perpetuation or conservation of organs of power. The concern of the State is to conserve" (ibid., p.357).

The assembly that takes place in the hall first thing every morning is seen as a situation where conservatism is created and reinforced daily. From the observations and my own experience, the assembly is an event of crucial importance in the life of the school, and given great emphasis by the head of school and consequently by the teaching staff. While in the primary school as mentioned in Luke's story, the assembly addresses the students, in the special school the focus is on the teachers and classroom assistants. The assembly is addressed to the teaching staff with little and very often with no reference to the children. Every school day starts off with assembly; every assembly is much the same. The assembly is only missed on rare occasions when the school is having a school activity later on in the day, for example, the Christmas concert.

The teaching staff and head of school have definite roles and position to each other and the children. The school hall is the place that gives a particular pre-arranged space for certain interactions to take place.

Ms. Jane is one of the teachers that customarily arrive rather early at school. After she organises her class she is one of the first persons to be in the hall. She welcomes children

as they come in and speaks to them in her whispering voice. As she has been teaching the reception class for the past seven years, she knows the majority of the students quite well. She tickles, or jokes and smiles to the children. Gradually two of Ms Jane's classroom assistants gather around her. These two classroom assistants are still very young. After following a course which qualified them to become kindergarten assistants, they were asked to work in the special school for there were no posts available in kindergarten classes. They tease Ms. Jane playfully and interact with the students.

Ms. Katya also tends to be early at school, running around getting things ready in the multi-sensory room, or for some vestibular activity that she will be doing later on in the hall. Ms. Katya is a resource teacher who is responsible for supporting teachers in sensory teaching. She runs the sensory room and keeps an eye on other resources. In her hand she constantly holds her thermos and a list of errands that need to be done before assembly starts, either checking on particular computer devices, or phoning a particular supplier or another school.

Most of the other teachers and classroom assistants arrive with the children. From half past seven in the morning, until they arrive at school at around 8.45, they would have been doing transport duties. They are collected by a driver from their homes, and they go round in the minibus, picking up children, making sure that their wheelchairs are safely fastened in the vans and escorting the children to school. When the children are removed one by one from the minibus, the individual child is brought into the hall, and they quickly rush out to get another child and so on. There are the occasional accidents: a broken part of a wheelchair or a child who is almost slipping out of the wheelchair. Handymen or care workers (people that help in lifting the children) are called to their aid.

When the children from a particular van are in the hall, the accompanying teachers and classroom assistants go to Laura, the secretary, whose office also opens into the hall. There they sign the attendance sheet and also the transport supervision papers in order to get extra remuneration for their transport duties. They have to ask Laura to give them each their individual papers to sign. There they also have to fill in any infringement reports that occurred during the transport. The teaching staff also fills requirements forms at the school reception. These are forms asking for resources and other materials, such as diapers, that are needed by the class during that week. There are also the photocopies requirements

forms. These processes are complex and tend to take a long time. I have observed lengthy discussions by the teachers and their particular classroom assistants on the amount of diapers needed, or discussions as regards resources. Lots of counting takes place. Often discussions have to stop because a particular classroom member has not yet arrived, and then the discussion has to be taken up again. But the final decision seems to be taken by the teacher. This is expected by the classroom assistants and often reinforced by the secretary. Phone calls are made to parents who would sent an oral message with one of the escorts.

After going next to the secretary, the teaching staff go to their respective classrooms to have a quick cup of coffee and a chat, and to share the latest news with each other. When the bell goes, everyone gathers in the hall. Someone always lingers about and is called by the others. The teaching staff very often gather either by class or friendship groups, but from the observations it is always the same groups of people together. Chatting goes on until the head of school comes into the hall.

Thomas and Jason are also around in the hall. They are the school handymen. They are on loan to the school from the Malta Shipbuilding Yard, that due to its being downsized, relocated its workers in various government establishments. These two workmen are extremely efficient, hardworking and reliable. Usually Jason would be carrying the small apparatus that measures the chlorine and acidity of the pool. He would look out for me and show me the colouring, which we would compare to a chart that he has. It seems to me that he does not want me to say whether it is fine or not, but to confirm that it is fine. In fact I always think that it is fine, with rare exceptions. But I do not understand anything about pools, chlorine or pHs! It is the pool coordinator who is difficult to convince. She is a classroom assistant that coordinates the activities in the pool. She had extensive training in a specialised method of teaching swimming. She comes in with a pale face from escorting the students to school. She says that travelling makes her sick. Jason and Thomas show her the pool readings. I step back and go and do other errands. She goes to the pool which opens onto the hall. She comes back to me with Thomas and Jason showing me the readings of the pool which she had done. Her pool readings are different from the previous. Again I have to match the colour to the chart. She grumbles that Jason and Thomas have done something to the pool, either extra chlorine, or have forgotten to back-wash it, or

something. I am caught up in the middle between the two. This happens almost every day. I try to be nice to all three of them.

When physiotherapists are at school they also come to the hall to check which students did turn up on that day. As each student is time-tabled for a particular session once a week or according to the needs of that student, they check if that child attended on the day. What distinguishes them are their uniforms and the fact that they are English-speaking. They wear white hospital garments even at school. Their head of section told me that when the physiotherapists are at school, the school becomes part of the hospital where they are based. Some of the physiotherapists are of British origin so between themselves they tend to speak in English, but they do switch to Maltese when they are talking to particular members of the school staff. John, the speech and language pathologist, always arrives at school half way through the morning assembly. Norma always comments in a loud whisper that he is late again, while Anne, another speech and language pathologist, is at school early and attends the assembly. Anne does not speak to anyone but floats around. She will not even answer a good morning. She says she is not a morning person. Although, besides being a speech therapist, she is also an actress, staff say that rarely they hear her talking. Everyone comments on her clothing. In spite of the fact that the school temperature is kept constant she feels cold easily and will wear heavy jumpers covering all her body and hiding her hands in these thick woollen jumpers (the average winter temperature in Malta is 15 degrees Celsius). School staff passing near Anne do not tell her anything, but as they pass her they start fanning their face with their hands as one does when it is hot.

Grace and Aaron are two seventeen year old students attending San Mark Special School. They have been there since the school opened. The school initially was intended to support students with physical impairments, but did not get any more students when inclusion started. Gradually it started giving a service to students with PMLD, however those few students who had stayed on at the school were gathered in one class, who are now on a transition programme. Both Grace and Aaron are able to manoeuvre a motorised wheelchair. Grace has a shrill voice. She knows everything about everyone. She moves around and says hello to the students that are wheeled into the hall. She goes to the teaching staff and asks them things. Her speech is difficult to understand, but Grace repeats and repeats and uses examples until her wants are met. Members of the teaching staff remind each other that they are not to talk about their personal things in front of Grace for

she is able to repeat to her mother whatever she hears. When the prayer is said she always shrills out that she wants to dedicate the prayer to some member of her family who is sick. She is quickly told not to shout. Grace pulls a long face and sulks. If she is scolded too much she may even cry. Soon she pulls herself together and is again curious in whatever is going around her and talks in a shrill voice again. Aaron manoeuvres his wheelchair with more caution and will start crying if he is caught in a mass of wheelchairs. He usually laughs at Grace. It is very difficult to hear him talk. He will only call selected people, one of whom is Marianne, a classroom assistant. He is teased by the classroom assistants that he fancies her.

Twice a week a class is assigned to organise a religious activity in the hall at the beginning of the assembly, therefore every class would have on average to organise two sessions every six weeks. This activity substitutes the time allotted in the curriculum to religion. A particular theme is taken and an activity is organised around this theme. During one morning a theme around Noah's ark was done. Lots of animals were distributed to the students and the teaching staff was asked to make the students feel the different textures of the animals. Then a religious song was played on the CD, while the animals were placed in a big plastic tube symbolising the ark. What very often happens is that the head of school comments on the activity. Some activities are praised; others are reproved, and compared to other classrooms. What was observed is that when a class was reproved for one of these religious sessions, in the next time it held a session, some of the teaching staff would clap a lot as though to make up for the reproof.

Most of the teaching staff lean against the wall during assembly; some straighten up for the national anthem. The prayer and national anthem are recited. After, the head of school goes through a number of points that he would have written on yellow sticky bits of paper. From the observations I noted that people react in very different ways to his points. There is Norma that always comments, whether agreeing or not with what the head of school says. Norma seems to be the spokesperson of the classroom assistants, but Vivienne is the real fighter. The teaching staff have commented that she may not always know what the issue being discussed is, yet she always raises her voice and supports Norma. Sometimes when an issue is mentioned, this is carried on for days. The classroom assistants and the head of school will carry the argument over the following days. The discussion, which starts during the assembly, also continues during the day. Norma goes around all the classrooms and

talks with the classroom assistants, who at times discuss endlessly the issues amongst themselves at classroom level or from one class to another.

The classroom assistants are divided into groups. The dominant group of classroom assistants are those who have been in the school since it was founded. Norma and Jemma are the leaders of this group. Vivienne is the fighter of the group, another few follow. These are involved in trade unions, and know their whereabouts in terms of working conditions and terms. Norma and Vivienne have been on the school council, representing the classroom assistants for their third time. With union support they have organised strikes for various reasons in the last years, for example, they did not change the students' diapers until care workers were provided in school. The classroom assistants argued that lifting students, even with hoists, does not fall under their job description. The head of school tried to dilute their effect by introducing more classroom assistants in the school. The new assistants were all young. He argued that the effect of the old group will diminish. But these young classroom assistants were either indifferent about the old group, or were sympathetic to them. Certainly no one goes against them.

Occasionally when the head of school meets teachers in teachers' meeting he repeats all over again to them the points that he had mentioned in the assembly that week, and argues his points further. He warns the teachers that they should be in control of their class. The teachers are very quiet, and no one either answers back or argues a different position to the head of school. They are often accused by the classroom assistants of accepting everything that the head of school says.

These relations are constantly going on in school and the dynamics of the assembly projects a lot of what takes place elsewhere. The assembly is just one moment in the life of the school, but in this moment there is a repetition that 'conserves' the power of different players in relation to each other. In the next story I focus on Nina, who is able to relate power relations not to others, but to herself. This however gives small possibilities to some of the teaching staff to go beyond their relations.

Singing the National Anthem

I also read the hall snapshot in the light of what Deleuze and Guattari (1986) call content and expression in their reflections on Kafka even if they are influenced by Spinoza in the

latter term. In the hall the majority of the teaching staff stand behind the children during assembly. The head of school faces the students. The students are caught in-between the teaching staff and the head of school. One of the everyday activities is the signing of the National Anthem. The classroom assistants and teachers, and all those present in the hall stand up straight even if they have been resting against the wall. The adults in the hall are not scattered, they are grouped all together as the head of school wants this so that he can address them better. They are a group of people, standing straight, at the side of the hall, singing. For Deleuze the content is people standing straight, while the expression is always gathered in the same place, a particular side of the hall singing the national anthem. But this is also similar to the students who are in between the staff and the head of school. Scattered around the hall, crouched in their buggies, most children are still asleep and covered all up, just arrived from their home after approximately an hour's trip. Most do not sing, with the exception of Grace and Junior that are helped to stand when singing the national anthem.

The staff straightening up could be read as them moving, but they are moving into a closed position. An ordered position that is almost a must, while singing the national anthem. It could be a colonial influence. Whatever the cause, the staff members are standing with their arms by their sides. The singing is not very enthusiastic, and if Tina, the person who usually intonates the singing of the national anthem happens not to be there, the singing leaves much to be desired. This for Deleuze could be seen as a blocked experience, neutralization of experimental desire. Oppressed and oppressing, minimal connections, childhood memory and territory (see Deleuze, 1986, p.4-5). Music here is reinforcing the content and expression.

Unlike the teaching staff, Nina, as recounted in the introductory story, is able to engage in activities, such as lifting her hands and feet, making lots of strange noises that the teaching staff can in no way do during the assembly. While the teaching staff is caught in an apparatus of relationships that are reproduced constantly, Nina does not seem to be so. Not that she can do whatever she wants, but she has built an assemblage that does not seem too dependent on others, an assemblage with minimal relations with others. She does not need to interpret power relations, or her position and place in relation to others as the teaching staff do. What she does is also situational and not based on some sort of power that is concerned with conserving.

In Deleuze and Guattarian terms, Nina is “outside its sovereignty [state] and prior to its law: it comes from elsewhere” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.352). If the teachers and classroom assistants and the head of school can be read through Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of chess, Nina can be read as the Go game (ibid). The Go game is “another justice, another movement, another space-time” (ibid., p.353) to the state apparatus. Deleuze and Guattari talk of this as the war-machine. Like the Go game, Nina organises herself to a particular space, but this organisation seems aimless and without any departure and arrival.

What Nina does with her body position is consistent with this. While the staff is gathered straight singing, she is all over the place. She turns on her back, slides down in her buggy. She risks sliding down. But there she is feet in air, almost doing summersaults. Her hands in the air. This contrasts greatly the straight teaching staff packed at one side of the hall. There is movement in Nina, allowing for new connections, memory blocks, and deterritorialization.

Another focus which I think is important to note in the opening story is that singing that is taking place during assembly time. Apart from the occasional religious hymn, or CD played by a class during the religious activity, it is the singing of the national anthem that takes place every day. This is the focus of my next reflection. Music and songs on the one hand are a form of art that are considered to be most capable of affect, but also on the other hand are fixed to a music composition that needs reinterpretation. The national anthem originally was written as a school hymn. Gradually it become used and adopted on a national level. The national anthem could be seen as a composed and semiotically shaped piece of music. The national anthem reproduces (like the tree, logos, royal science). What does it reproduce? The teaching staff members who are leaning against the wall, or talking amongst themselves stop to sign. They straighten up, with their hands down by their sides. They sing. Apart from this reproduction which is evident through the movements and actions, it also reproduces sets of memories, for example: that one is working in a state school, that the assembly is coming to an end. The national anthem is reproducible because in its structure it is composed music that in theory needs a small band to be played with a conductor.

This contrasts Nina. She invents her sounds at different times during the assembly. She occasionally invents new sounds: *tok tok* seems to be the latest sound that she was doing when I was collecting the data. She plays with her hands in her mouth producing funny noises. They are at times, even when the national anthem is sung, she burst into laughter. Loud sharp laughs.

The plane of immanence of the national anthem and Nina's *tok tok* sound seem to be of very different nature. The plane of immanence of the national anthem infers, concludes, induces from them to which it gives rise to people getting straight with their arms by their side singing. The plane of immanence of *tok tok* is only movements and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements. It is Nina almost cart-wheeling in her buggy, with her hands in the air or in her mouth producing strange sounds.

This is not only to contrast the national anthem with Nina's sounds per se, although this is also significant, but to see both the singing of the national anthem and Nina's *tok tok* sounds as a stable moment in the flow of becoming-life (Colebrook, 2002). The national anthem could be also a plane of immanence of only movements and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements. Ruth is at the side of the hall. She may be asleep or giving a big tantrum. The moment we start signing the national anthem she starts moving her feet in the air with a particular rhythm. Her hands are in front of her chest and she laughs. One of the classroom assistants comments that Ruth may be the only one in the hall who really enjoys the national anthem. The composers of the national anthem would be really proud of their work if they had seen Ruth's actions. Maybe Ruth is affected by the national anthem as it was intended by the composers – a song for children!

Smiles

While the teaching staff organise themselves in relation to the power difference to each other, Nina organises her power relations to herself, and in relation to no one. Nina is viewed differently, but there are moments when the teaching staff links to the Nina's *another space-time*, and are carried away in that time. Joanne takes up Nina's sounds, movements, legs up in air. She is carried into Nina's *another space-time*, where the relations between her and Nina are different from hers and the rest of the staff. Not only does she enter Nina's *another space-time*, but tries to call me and the other assistants into this *another space-time*, while we tried not to smile, in spite of the school audit that is

coming up soon. As Deleuze–Guattari point out, the *another space-time* of Nina becomes our space, implying that our space has been territorialized and deterritorialized (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1997, p.353).

For short moments I feel called into her space. I am straight with my hands at the side singing. While through Joanne's eye contact I look at Nina and smile and laugh, the head of school is talking about school auditing, and I try to cover the smile that I get from seeing Nina at her acts. I try to cover my smile. School audits are not something one smiles at. For short, very brief moments I wander with Nina even if I am there straight with my hand at the side signing or trying to look attentive to what the head of school is saying about school audits. This feeling is somewhat similar to the feeling of Deleuze who said that he wandered; that he was a nomad from the comfort of his chair in his study.

Story Three: Tantrums

Ruth is in her buggy. She is wearing a plastic blue helmet and her head is lowered to one side. Her left foot is extended and raised, constantly swaying up and down in the air. With the movement of her feet she makes her buggy squeak rhythmically. She has a headphone on her left ear. Sometimes she laughs alone and puts her hands together over her chest. During the assembly when the National Anthem is sung, she puts out her two legs and swings them violently in the air. The buggy squeaks even more urgently.

Ruth is wheeled to class.

On arrival at the classroom, Ruth joins the other children who are in the process of being transferred to their specialised chair before the hello song starts. A care worker, whose role is to help out in handling children, is called, and he comes along with a hoist. Ruth and all the other children will have come to school already with their hammock underneath them. This is part of the school policy so that handling is less of a strain for the children and staff. Ruth's hammock is fastened onto the handles of the hoist and she is suddenly suspended in the air and raised. Knowing that Ruth enjoys this feeling, she is not immediately placed in her chair but is left suspended for a few minutes. In the meantime other children are being transferred by other staff, as, having a less significant impairment than Ruth, these children are less demanding. She is left suspended in air for a few minutes, with constant

supervision, and the handler swings her from side to side. Her enjoyment of this is shown by her little laughs and her hands in front of her mouth and chest. She shivers with the intensity of her enjoyment.

Ruth is eventually lowered down to her chair. The handler, two of the classroom assistants and me are working around Ruth. The moment she is lowered to her chair she starts kicking and banging her head. She cries and shouts. She stiffens and extends her back, resisting the seating position, and therefore she needs to be held so as not to slip from the chair. Someone tries to grab one of her legs and position and tie it as this will force Ruth in a sitting position. She is tied from her chest and waist and legs. She is still head-banging. She starts to sweat. Water drips from her head under the helmet. The voices of people around her start to escalate. Tamsin starts crying. Ruth does not stop.

What can one do when Ruth is giving a tantrum? What can one do when Ruth gives five or more big tantrums in one day?

Select one, two or more of the following options:

- Get the torch out of her bag. Switch it on and start moving it in front of her eyes. Talk to her about the light. The torch has colour filters, so you can change colour. Ruth seems to prefer yellow light.
- On a sunny day take Ruth in the veranda and play peek-a-boo with the curtain hiding the sun from Ruth. When doing this be dramatic and use voice so as to make a big fuss when the sun appears.
- Take out the Walkman and one of her cassettes. Stories told by her father are recorded on these cassettes. They are not exactly stories but her father talking on endlessly for hours usually using a number of characters where Ruth is always the major character.
- Play a particular song from the CD player. Make certain that the CD player is programmed well so that the song can be endlessly repeated. The volume should not be too low.
- Talk Ruth for a walk around the school and out in the sun.
- Get a candle and loads of matches. Light the candle and pass it just a few centimetres away from Ruth's eyes. Ask Ruth to blow it out. Sing happy birthday. Ruth will try to blow but you have to blow it out. Clap when the candle is out. Relight the candle. Be careful of wax – had a few accidents where Ruth and the teaching staff ended up slightly burnt, for Ruth may reach out for the candle sometimes.
- Tell Ruth a story. Tell her the names of the fairy tales and she will show you the one she wants. Usually she tends to prefer one particular story over a period of time, for example Little Red Riding Hood for a week or so. Ruth should be in the part of the main character, as well as her mother and father. So the story is called Ruth Red Riding Hood.

If Ruth does not stop head banging, shouting and kicking, then there are two extreme measures:

- Grab her and throw her in the ball pool. Do not worry – she will not get hurt as there are plenty of balls to soften her fall.
- Take her to the pool and give her a swim, even if it is not in her time-table. Her mother always puts Ruth's swimming costume in her bag, for days like this. Tell her the story of the spider while in the pool.

When are you going to put Ruth on some medication, Sylvia and Bernard?

Sometimes Ruth is brought to school by her mother or father. That means that she did not sleep at night. That means that she will sleep for the first two hours or so at school. We will leave her in her buggy and make certain that no one disturbs her – it will be calmer for the first few hours.

Other times Sylvia or Bernard phone to say that Ruth will miss school. The class is much more relaxed.

Planning and preparation

In the literature review, Derrida's idea of différance (1982a) is touched upon with reference to the notion of supplementarity. This seems to be apt for Ruth whose demands upon us always exceed what is expected, prepared and planned for her. Our *telos* is questioned and broken. The supplement is something which is not considered as core but Ruth makes it essential from us. The supplement takes place at the moment when the text is established. When the centre is decided upon, that which is external to the centre takes its own life. Ruth's agency seems to call us to regard that which is not decided and exceeds our expectations. The nondecided, the ghost, becomes decided and vivid through Ruth. Ruth is "at once a chance and a danger, exert[ing] pressure on us" (Derrida, 1992d, p.5).

This story outlines how the school and class all consider Ruth's abilities and needs in their planning and preparation. In her Individual Educational Plan (IEP) there is also great detail about how best to cater for her needs and each day my classroom programme is chiefly influenced by Ruth's state of being. The intricacies which are dwelt upon will be explained

here. Ruth's supplement of our planning and implementation of programmes is the focus of the Chapter Six, as is also the notion of tiredness is explained.

When an activity is carried out with Ruth, it is of the utmost importance that the person with her is fully prepared and that nothing is left out. The plan needs to be fool-proof and the resources at hand, with contingency plans ready just in case something does not work. She is the yardstick against which I measure and gauge my lessons, and in my daily preparation I always know which of my assistants are to be with her and exactly what they are to do. Particular assistants are chosen for particular activities with Ruth - there are assistants who in the two years of data collection have never worked with her. One particular classroom assistant asks me not to assign her to Ruth, saying that she will do triple the work with the other students rather than one activity with Ruth. Some of the other assistants have found their own ways of working with her, but they all emphasised the need of being as prepared as possible.

Sylvia, Ruth's mother, is another force to contend with. When Ruth first started attending the special school she was placed in my class. Ruth's mother told me that whatever happened I was to take care that Ruth did not hit her shunt, as this was her basic physical need, to remove excess water from the brain. Damage to the shunt meant that Ruth would have to undergo major surgery. However, it is interesting that Ruth's head-banging seems to frequently take place on that side of the head where the shunt is. It is sometimes thought that Ruth receives stimulation from banging her head on that side. On occasion it has also occurred to me that Ruth understands that we are worried about this and therefore uses it to manipulate us into giving what she wants.

The planning and preparation for Ruth's IEP seems an anxious time for all involved. The interviews carried out with the staff corroborated this, adding that they feel tense throughout the meeting. Ruth's mother wants to know every detail about her daughter and also about the activities done with her. No one knows better than Sylvia how difficult her daughter can be, yet this does not deter her from going down every path which might be helpful in further reaching Ruth's potential. It must be noted that Ruth has a multisensory room at home, which her parents have set up for her. This room is equipped similarly to the one at Ruth's school. Sylvia and Bernard have taken Ruth to see several doctors, local and foreign, so that no stone is left unturned and every possible care is attempted. She has

also been attending a nongovernmental organisation for specialised support since she was only a few months old. Ruth's mother writes on the communication book every day, giving details about what happened at home the day before and about how Ruth's night was, so as to prepare us for the day. She also asks and challenges us through the communication book, as the following excerpts show.

In class, the moment I start working on a book or a resource, Ruth's parents are the first to get the book at home and to carry on activities which are started in school. If Little Red Riding Hood is being done in class, at home Ruth would have not only the book, but also the CD and resources. This in turn encourages the parents of other children in class to be more participative. I once conducted six sessions on literacy with children with profound and multiple learning disabilities and Ruth's mother attended each one, each time giving reports on how the application of what she learnt the previous session had worked out with Ruth.

Ruth's mother also visits the school frequently. San Mark has an open school policy and parents are welcomed anytime in the school day. Ruth's mother can turn up unexpectedly to attend a speech therapy session with Ruth, or can come and spend half a day with us in class. She can also come and stay for a few minutes outside the classroom door looking in through the window. This she does to prevent Ruth from playing up in class as she would take advantage of the situation if she knew her mother, and more so if her father, was there. It is as though she senses that when both the staff and parents are present in school there is ambivalence about who is in charge of her. Ruth's mother would like to comply with my wishes and programme, whereas I may feel uncomfortable demanding from Ruth as I would without her mother's presence. If Ruth needs to be scolded, who is to do it, myself or her mother? Although the roughness and aggressiveness of the actions when Ruth's legs are tied to her pushchair are the same as that done at home, nevertheless there is discomfort when the actions are carried out in school in front of the parents. It somehow feels as though the parents are being blamed for their daughter's wilful behaviour. Although Ruth's mother will uphold any decision I take, it is still not an easy situation. Ruth senses this uncertainty and may try to turn the situation to her advantage.

Ruth's mother is also very much involved as a parent on a whole school level. She has joined the school council and is now president of the education branch of the National

Parents' Society for Persons with Disability. Each time I am asked to give a talk or a lecture, I ask her to accompany me and she never fails to do so. The story of her pregnancy with Ruth, the birth and the gruelling months following this are told by her mother in an attempt to sensitise persons whose line of work involves day to day contact with disabled children and their parents.

One of the harrowing experiences which Ruth's mother describes involves the various doctors who were involved with Ruth when she was born. True to the medical model of disability, they focussed on her impairments and predicted that Ruth would not live beyond the first few days. When she survived, they spoke about how her life would be limited. According to the eye specialist, Ruth would never be able to see. There would be no communication or relationship with her parents. It was very difficult to find some form of encouragement from anywhere. And yet today, not only can Ruth see for light, but light is one of the stimulations which she prefers and which can be used as a reward. Moreover, as already mentioned in the introductory chapters, Ruth has actually discovered a method of signing which is unique to her. It is not developed even more because Ruth's physical condition does not allow it and an alternative substitute for manual dexterity is still being explored with her. At the moment, computer aided communication is being attempted, with the hope that Ruth's behaviour will improve when she is less frustrated because she cannot communicate so much. However, she can sign in favour of and against something, so she has the ability to choose her preference from the options laid out in front of her. Ruth signs for other important things and can also point out the body parts when these are asked for.

Ruth puts signs together so that the people around her can understand what she wants. Her wants rotate around story-telling and singing songs, and around which kind of light she wants one to put on. She can understand that when we talk about the pool this means that she will be swimming. Ruth can also show how she feels – she smiles, laughs and puts her hands in front of her chest and mouth in pleasure when we talk about particular subjects, such as her parents and cousins. We get the impression that she knows what we are talking about, as evidenced in the interviews with the staff. As an example when we talk to her about physiotherapy, she starts to misbehave and may start having a tantrum as she does not enjoy the therapy sessions.

Having said all this, it can be understood that the IEP session is a tense time for everybody involved. In the interviews, the classroom assistants were asked about the targets of the children they were interviewed about. It is interesting that whereas they were somewhat vague about the rest of the children, all the assistants had Ruth's targets clearly in mind. Prior to the IEP meeting itself, numerous mini-meetings take place among the various staff members and professionals involved with Ruth. It is as though all are eager to have a common idea, to iron out inconsistencies, to be prepared. We want to be judged favourably by Ruth's mother, and also by the non-government organisation which Ruth attends. It is also a question of wanting to present as continuous a programme for Ruth as possible, by cooperating with her parents and with the tutors in the nongovernmental organisation. As an example it was agreed that new signs will be introduced by the tutor outside school, as he was the person who had always done this even before Ruth ever started attending San Mark. It was further agreed that the school needed to be informed immediately so that the new signs could be consolidated there.

Very detailed planning takes place in the meeting and set out so that clear roles are designated regarding Ruth's development of communication. The words which we judge are important for Ruth are chosen and the kinds of signs which might best describe those words are suggested, with Ruth's physical difficulties in mind. This process is lengthy and requires commitment and effort. With regards to behaviour management, several routes are also tackled. Primarily, the aim is to reduce situations which are pinpointed as ones in which Ruth generally misbehaves. However, strategies to divert Ruth's attention when she cannot have what she wants are agreed upon, as are also the consequences of her misbehaviour. There are behaviours which everyone agrees need to be eliminated. An example is to reduce Ruth's incessant demand for stories except in designated times of the day. We all know what we have to do, we all have our roles.

Giving a lesson

So what are the fruits of all our plans and preparation? How does Ruth benefit from them? A few points are focused on in this chapter to give an idea of this.

In absence of a provision of a syllabus in our national minimum curriculum for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties, San Mark School subscribed to a curriculum which gave some ideas for the teachers to follow in class. In the area of

literacy, teachers were encouraged to follow a multi-sensory approach and to give children an experience of a story, without expecting the children to gain a cognitive understanding of that story. The curriculum provides examples of a variety of stories, ranging from fairy stories to Dickens, with ideas of how these stories can be accessed by children with various needs and abilities.

The lessons were carried out in class. Objects and props were used so that children could experience them through sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, movement and pressure. This was done while the story was read aloud to the children. Classroom activities were created to go along with the particular story chosen so that the displays outside the classrooms were filled with crafts created by the children supported by the assistants. This method of teaching is similar to the thematic approach, with the story being the theme of the classroom.

Ruth started out being rather passive in response to these stories. Our aims for Ruth in these stories were to enhance communication, interaction and giving her different experiences. Our aim did not go beyond eliciting from her a response which signified awareness and acknowledgement. However, when we started using stories with Ruth, these started becoming ends in themselves. She revelled in the stories and they seemed to become her life. Through Ruth we could no longer use them for the prescribed aims, as Ruth had her own aims which she communicated very vociferously. I would like to emphasise that this is not because we did not know Ruth well. Ruth took up the stories and made them her own. She would become one of the characters in the story and involve also us in the stories.

Similarly, when I plan out my lessons, I generally assign specific assistants with particular children. It is generally held to be good practice to have some sort of rotation so that the children do not depend only on one person but have experience of different assistants. Moreover, it ensures that my four assistants keep tabs on all the children in the class. No child belongs to one assistant more than another. They are all our children and our responsibility. In Ruth's case, however, I already mentioned above that one particular assistant asks me not to allocate Ruth to her care. This seems accepted by everybody and the concession is made. Sometimes personalities do not work well together and a situation

in which an assistant is afraid of a child does not augur well for that relationship, particularly when that child gives reason for such fear.

Thus this assistant is never assigned to Ruth for activities. However, this is carried even further. Ruth can suddenly decide, out of the blue, that on that day she does not want to be assigned to the assistant which I had chosen. Keeping in mind that I generally choose assistants whom the children show enjoyment with, this can come as a shock. Ruth is given the attention which she may be seeking because her behaviour will eventually reach my attention and I have to ask the assistant if anything is wrong. We realise that Ruth does not want to work with her and thus have to assign someone else. Sometimes the matter ends here – but sometimes all the assistants take their turn and finally they call me and I end up staying with her. All things being equal, Ruth's wilfulness may subside with me, as she generally enjoys working with males. I believe that her strong bond with her father, who admits to doing whatever Ruth wants whenever she wants, is extended to other males.

But whoever is working with Ruth needs to be focused on her and her alone. As the classroom assistants make explicitly clear Ruth does not like to share her attention with anyone. This could be another student or an adult. Other professionals and teaching staff know this, so they try to keep all interventions short, or they would just comment that they would come over later. Working with Ruth is not a matter of giving, but a matter of negotiating. She will want stories, or music or light. The classroom assistants and I would want the session to happen. There is a fine line in the negotiation process that if broken then Ruth would start a tantrum. This careful vigilance is very tiring. Commenting on how to work with Ruth, the classroom assistants commented that "one has to be well and emotionally ready to work" with Ruth. From my experience working with Ruth, I feel that it is a powerful experience of being on your toes. It is a question of endurance, of stretching yourself, but as Irene commented "you will break" and a tantrum will start – it is a matter of time.

There's always something else!

In spite of the lessons plans and resources accompanying, Ruth always seems to want more and more from the person working around her. It is her continuity, her constant movement in wanting more and different things, often the least expected or thought of that is tiring. Even in her sleep, while seen as short moments of resting or break, not only for Ruth but

especially for us, yet these moments are regarded with suspicion. The continuity is tiring for we are engaging with continuous chance – a continuous playing of a game of dice-throwing. We wish to know what Ruth will take up now; we wish to foresee a tantrum. But it is always supplemented; it is always made to escape us by Ruth. Even when she shows that she likes a story over a period of days, or wants to work for a few sessions with a particular adult, we know that we have to tread carefully. We are still walking on mine fields.

Ruth's continuous continuity comes from her dissolving and decomposition. Here I am linking Derrida with Deleuze. I am reading supplementarity – there is always something else alive in what was brought to life even if this may not be seen as detrimental to the life of that thing – as similar to dissolving and decomposition. Ruth supplements or decomposes what we want from her and what we want her to be, she decomposes what we make her do. In the words of Deleuze she produces *nothing* from all that is given or expected from her.

It seems that we are able to live the singularity of the passing moments of the day differently from Ruth. We want to order, to understand, to measure and write in our daily schedules and lesson plans and tick boxes by the end of the day. We want to know in order to prepare, to extend and generalise the task for Ruth. We want to know in order to prepare resources. Ruth however experiences these moments. She lives them. For me this is a clear example of the distinction of the types of question that Deleuze and Guattari suggest. I imagine Ruth asking: does this work for me? while what I ask as her teacher is: how can I understand better Ruth? What is her reasoning after this action? Can I predict what she can do next?

I want to provide Ruth with possibilities of potentiality – this activity or this task will enable her develop this and that. Ruth however could be interested but ends up doing it her way, or else she could not be interested or does not want to do it, and wants to do something differently. This tires me. I run after Ruth, while she should be running after me. A teacher not in control of his class – his pupil! Even if I try to follow her as often as is suggested by handbooks of working with students with PMLD, I get tired in the wandering. There is no stopping, but what is worse there is no making sense of things. Ruth seems to like this or that, then in another moment she changes. I try to link to

something but she is already far from the thing itself. I try to make a series from the things that she likes, and wants or is doing, for example, if she likes listening to a particular story my lessons will rotate around the characters of the story. But she plays about with my series and goes on to other things. What I as her teacher with the support of my classroom assistants can do is almost just an inventory of Ruth's decomposition. This is similar to the to-do list aforementioned. We can list the things that can stop her or control her tantrum. We can never say what that object: candle, light, ball pool, is providing Ruth with. All we can do is produce a list and add to it from time to time new elements that we become aware of that Ruth has taken up. This is always a reactive position.

Ruth does not only supplement what we want her to do, she also supplements herself. This latter is difficult to explore even if her constant wandering could be seen a manifestation of this. However I think that Ruth was able to decompose, supplement me not only as her teacher but as a person. The concept of supplement and decomposing and dissolving, questions who we are, our identity and what kind of self one can possibly have that is constantly flowing. Whilst Ruth tires me, I want think that Ruth, however, also gave me the possibility of exhaustion. Deleuze argues that exhaustion is produced from before birth, while tiredness comes after. "The possible is only realised in the derivative, in tiredness, whereas one is exhausted before birth, before realising oneself, or realising anything whatsoever" (Deleuze, 1995, p.152). Exhaustion is a stage of the production that is always already underway. During the four years I worked with Ruth, she moved from being one of my students, defined to school hours, to being almost a ghost that haunted me constantly. I spoke of her with my family, I visted her often, I was engrossed in thinking about her, in spite of her tiring me out. I think she was offering me a multiple that I was fascinated to be in, a continuous multiple where I could like her, be wandering, be moving, decomposing and supplementing myself through Ruth.

an appendix (a supplement)

Today as I reread what I have written above a few months ago, I feel the need to write the following: I wish and long to meet Ruth again. It has been 13 months since I last saw her. I ask my friends who are still working at the special school about her. I hope that I will return again one day to be in the company of Ruth.

Story 4: Rain, rain and more rain.

As soon as the children enter the class a series of activities begins. Usually one member of staff is allocated to one child. The communication book linking parents and school is taken out of the child's bag and read. If anything particular is worth noting in the parents' most recent entry, this is shared with the other members of staff. Daipers, food and bibs are also removed from the child's bag and allocated their appropriate place in the classroom and adjoining bathroom. All the children then have to be transferred to their specialised chairs or standing frames, as seen in the previous story, and this is done with the support of another care worker whose role is to help out in handling children. In a short while the children and the teaching staff are sitting alternately in a circle in the middle of the classroom. The teaching assistants sit on wooden stools on wheels while I have a swivel chair. I give out musical instruments which have been made by the class, while I hold an old black tambourine in my hand. While the children are being positioned the adults talk to the children and amongst themselves; when seated in a circle everyone stops talking.

I go around the circle and stop near each child. I give the tambourine a little shake next to the face of each one and say hello. In this morning exercise the aim is for each child to touch or make some form of contact with the tambourine (even if this is only eye contact), after which the hello song is sung with each child's name. Hello Charles. Hello Jonathan. Hello Nina. Hello Ruth. Hello Stephen. Hello Tamsin. Hello Laurence. Hello Annabelle.

More often than not, Nina does not even look at the tambourine, much less touch it. She habitually plays with her hands in and near her mouth and seems to enjoy making sounds, or, as mentioned in the previous story involving Nina, playing with her feet. I try to engage her by placing the tambourine near her face, moving it around and giving it little shakes. At times I try to touch her hand or shoulder with the tambourine. On rare occasions Nina does sneak a little look at the tambourine. With her head bowed low, she may look sideways at it for a few seconds. Then we start singing:

Bonġu *Nina*, bonġu *Nina*,
L-Għodwa t-tajba lil kulħadd
Ġejna hawn ferħanin
Biex nitgħallmu lkoll flimkien

Literal translation:

Good morning Nina, good morning Nina
Good morning to you all
We came here happily
To learn together.

This song is sung to every child and every member of my teaching staff. It is also sung to anyone who comes at that time in my classroom, such as the school nurses. When we sing I go in front of the child to whom the song is sung, while the assistants look at the child next to them, either holding their hand or moving their musical instrument close to their face.

Thus, when the song is sung for other children, the teaching assistant next to Nina usually tries to take her hand in the hand-on-hand prompt position over the musical instrument. Very often, Nina's reaction is to pull her hand back, and also to move all her body to the furthest side of her specialised chair, almost to the extent of falling over to the other side. Our reaction is usually to lean over to Nina and reach our hands out towards her with the musical instrument. At this point Nina tries to move further still and may bend a little over the chair. She may even cover her face with her hands. At times we hold her hand and make her bang her hand on the musical instrument to the rhythm of the song, while she is still trying to move her hand away. On rare occasions she does bang her hand over the instrument and may even lean her body over the instrument. She may also lean towards the person sitting next to her.

The main topic in this term is the weather and thus the weather chart is incorporated in the greeting session every morning. Having done all the singing, all the weather resources are brought in the circle. Four types of weather situations each have their object reference: rain is represented by spraying water; a lit bulb represents the sun; and a hot and cold pack means hot and cold weather respectively. No reaction is elicited from Nina when the bulb, or the hot or cold packs are used. However, when it rains and I spray a few drops of water on her face, an immediate reaction ensues. Nina suddenly becomes very serious. She stops whatever action she is engaged in doing and it soon seems that she is going to start crying. Her lips pucker and tears start rolling down her cheeks. She then reaches out to the water spraying can to try to push it away from her and cover her face with her hands.

All the assistants eagerly wait for this. Jasmine encourages me to do it, in order to see Nina's reaction, while Irene exclaims against what she terms my cruelty. When I spray water on Nina's face Jasmine quickly goes to her and hugs her, another assistant gets a towel. Everyone makes a big fuss of it, sympathising with Nina while at the same time relishing the possibility of doing so. I accept the role of the villain, acting cheekily. I sometimes laugh like a mischievous boy who is teasing a little girl and making her cry. It is the only time during the session that the teaching assistants move from their place or talk directly to one another or to me.

This weather activity was done everyday during the second term. Nina's reaction was so much enjoyed that we sometimes said it was raining even when it was not. When other members of staff came in the classroom on some errand, the classroom assistants would urge me to show Nina's reaction to the sprayed water, and everyone would be astounded at her reaction and immediately sympathetic with her plight. In the third term, one of the books used in the literacy sessions was about a puppy who fell in the water and was saved by a crocodile. Many multi-sensory resources were used, including water. My classroom assistants were curious to see how Nina would react when I wet her face.

Establishing borders

It was very noticeable in the interviews conducted with the staff that their impressions of Nina were different on various accounts. When asked about her, their initial response indicated a 'what can I say about her?' attitude. The interviews were shorter than those about other children and not as varied. As Nina seems able to entertain herself and does not demand attention in any way from the assistants, she is seen as a less problematic child than others who may throw a tantrum or cry. Nina does not even present any difficulties when it comes to feeding, which is an activity around which there frequently are issues when it comes to children with disability. She instantly takes what is fed to her, without indicating that she prefers one food more than another. She may cry a little around noon and it seems that this is done because she is hungry or thirsty. In fact the crying stops instantly on the presentation of food or drink. One of the classroom assistants said that if Nina is left at the side of the classroom she would just be. She would not be noticed or make herself noticed. She will do nothing to attract one's attention. Nina would not cry or shout. Her physical condition does not call the staff to monitor her closely. She is always occupied with her own body, which we would call self-stimulation.

This impression of Nina as self-sufficient and unproblematic is further driven home by Nina's mother, who is also not seen as one of the more participative, possibly also demanding, parents. Nina's mother is a single parent who works and thus her presence is not felt as much as other parents of the children in the class. She seems to be content that her child is in good health and in good hands. She does attend the Individual Education Plan sessions, but not the other small activities which are set up by the class. There is a certain remoteness about mother and daughter and the teaching staff extends this also by feeling that the mother is not as present in her child's life. Nina's mum rarely writes in daughter's contact book, she just signs that she has read it.

The only problem presented to the teaching staff is caused by her size. Nina is big for her age, and is also big when compared to the small frames of the other children in class. Handling her is a problem as she is heavy and also does not respond to changing time or feeding time. She has to be moved without the support which she might give to the process, thus her bulky frame is difficult to manage. Otherwise, Nina does not present any difficulties which require immediate responses from the staff. She can be left alone for hours on end, and seems not to require any interaction at all from others. As seen in the above story, Nina seems self-sufficient in that she creates her own stimulation. She makes sounds and alters them by moving her fingers and lips in certain ways which the staff interpret as intentional. She also moves her fingers in front of her eyes, raises her legs in the air and rocks her body repetitively. The teaching staff says that "she seems to live in a world of her own", and sometimes refer to her as autistic.

Educators and professionals constantly build borders around themselves, and around Nina. What I have tried to show is that Nina's body size, her parents and her autism border Nina in particular ways. Each of these three elements border Nina in particular ways and in particular categories. Teaching staff working around her interpret these borders. Borders have implications and codes are established within her borders. The body size border implies that when she needs to be moved she needs a hoist and the assistance of care workers apart from the classroom assistants. This may sound simple, but the implications to get the hoist for this shared between classrooms and to call the care workers is not easy as it sounds. There is always the negotiation of whether this is worth doing for Nina. For example: shall Nina stay in her chair or will be laid on the mat for a 30 minute activity?

Similar is the autism border. What is being implied by closing Nina is such a border? That Nina can be felt alone for a long period of time while we attend to others? Does it imply that she gets the least input and interaction for she will always be in her world?

The establishing of borders does not only take place between adult educational staff with students, but also among different adult staff themselves. Different professions working around Nina create to maintain themselves and perpetuate the system which is safe and familiar. They spend time building and protecting their own borders and building borders around others.

As part of my interview questions I asked different professionals about the work of other professionals and how they perceived their work. Interestingly, the physiotherapists and speech language pathologists were able to describe each other's role very well – also using technical language in their descriptions. The services of these medical professions are *rented* from the medical services to educational services. One of the school nurses, although employed directly by the education services, told me that she feels closer to the physiotherapists and speech therapists, than to teachers.

The difficulty comes when the professionals from the medical world are asked about teachers and classroom assistants. These professionals found it difficult to understand the role of teachers, in the sense, that they know what the role of teachers is, but not teachers in special school. Before joining special school, I was a teacher in a primary school, and some of the physiotherapists who have young children, sometimes ask of me tips on how to teach particular school lessons to their children. Occasionally I may go through the series of steps of how a lesson in, say, mathematics, is usually tackled in a class, so that they may know which method to follow when consolidating the lessons with their children. I also sometimes lend them children's reading books which I think are appropriate for their children's age group and language level. Yet, notwithstanding their apparent confidence in me as a teacher, it was evident from the interviews that they questioned my role as a teacher in special education. They responded to my questions with lists of activities that I do, but not only were they sceptical, but also questioned my work, for example, with regard to literacy sessions, asking what the children could possibly be gaining from these sessions if they cannot understand reading?

On the other hand, when asking the classroom assistants in my class about the profession of the physiotherapist and the speech and language pathologist they gave some ideas but not details. Rather than giving definitions, the classroom assistants gave descriptions of particular professionals. They mentioned the arrogance and the superiority that they felt emanated from these professionals. Three out of four classroom assistants interviewed said that physiotherapists make children cry, and resent that when children are brought back to the classroom in tears then they are the ones who have to deal with it themselves. When asked about the profession of speech and language pathologists, there was more vagueness and a sense of mockery about them. In a group discussion with the physiotherapists I told them about fact that the some people see them as those that make children cry. The head of the physiotherapists was almost offended, and she kept returning to this point often in our discussion.

Apart from borders established around different groups of people, there are borders established around individuals within the same group. This idea came across with the classroom assistants. The four classroom assistants have very different working contracts and working conditions, relating to the different qualifications required. They talked about the relationship in class as though it were a family, and reiterated how comfortable they feel working with each other, and how much they share. They have however established themselves in particular ways. Ritienne says that she is the grandmother of the class, while Jasmine, being the youngest, is seen as the one needing most protection. Joanne, being the most qualified is the one who is responsible for the class in my absence, while Irene is seen as the one who is the most lenient with the students. When asked in the interviews they all said that they had their favourite student. This comes out clearly in the activities that are carried out in the day. However some children are not favoured by any one of the staff; Nina is one of these children.

Invading borders

When conducting the meeting in which Nina's Individual Education Plan (IEP) was set up, the main focus was to increase Nina's awareness, taking such awareness as a very basic level of communication. We wish from Nina a response which we are willing to interpret as an acknowledgement of our presence. It is as though we are trying to strike a compromise with her, trying not to expect too much, but insisting that she gives us so much.

The following are the targets established for Nina in the last scholastic year:

- to move her head in response to a movement and to visually focus on an object held within Nina's field of vision
- to develop hand awareness
- to be aware of an increase or a decrease in stimulus
- to show awareness of number rhymes and songs

In the morning circle time activity, Nina's chair is brought to the circle along with the rest and everybody listens and adheres to what I say as I am the central focus of the circle. During the hello song I have all the eyes of the other assistants looking at me. I am the teacher and I should know what to do. The same happens with the classroom assistants when they are working with Nina and I am observing them. Teachers working with children with profound and multiple learning disabilities know that most of their work is trial and error. It is not simply a question that every child is different, but is a question of not knowing what to do when faced with a child like Nina. We feel helpless when faced with her intransigence.

The implied insistence that everyone should follow what I say means that I have established what at that moment is desirable and 'normal'. With my tambourine and my swivel chair I invade the boundaries of each and every person in the circle and require them to respond appropriately. It is Nina who refuses and protests against my violation, and, in doing so, highlights the aggressiveness of my actions. The classroom assistants follow my lead and extend my actions. As I am the main focus of the circle, I may be more conscious of my intention and am aware that I modify my approach according to different children. The assistants join in the song and focus on the children next to them. As they are following my lead they may be less conscious of their actions and their actions can be less careful and more aggressive as a consequence of this. The children's hands are grabbed and shaken as they join in the activity wholeheartedly.

If questioned, we would refer the person to the targets written out in the IEP. The targets incorporate with them strategies which can lead to reaching such targets. Circle time, hand-on-hand prompts, multi-sensory strategies, intensive interaction are all techniques which help to do so. However I wish to point out that all these techniques are aimed at reaching

out to the child and sometimes invading what seems to us to be their closed world. We do not respect the boundary but invade it and try to bring the child over to our side. We need to invade Nina's space as though it is through being close to her, or making her close to us, that we can care for her. As Barnett (2005) writes, are we afraid that distance may lead to indifference (Barnett, 2005, p.6)? If Nina were not forced to react, there would be no form of closeness whatsoever. All we can do is invade her boundaries as we do not wish to leave her without a form of contact. Even her attempts to resist the invader are better than indifference. So we continue to violate those boundaries.

When Nina reacts in such a way to the sprayed water, there is gleeful anticipation. All the assistants want me to do it, although they then come in to comfort Nina and pretend to sound her exclamations against what is called my cruelty. They treat me as though I really were a naughty boy teasing, or even bullying, a little girl, who then becomes upset. Nina's puckered lips and tearfulness brings her into our realm and the assistants feel that they can then feel close to her. When interviewing the physiotherapist who was following Nina at the time, he described her as a little ogre, as she has a disproportionately big head and scruffy hair. He resembled Nina to Mrs Shrek (see film Shrek), and shocking though it was to hear him say this, I understood and agreed with him. The way Nina looks and her complete detachment from anyone around her makes us uncomfortable. When she starts to cry we feel pulled to see her as cute and to cuddle her, in a way that we are accustomed to feel towards other children. Nina makes us feel needed and that is a situation which we can cope with.

When faced with Nina, it is a moment when we can play with the freedom that we have when we decide to violate Nina's borders. The interviews conducted with the classroom assistants show that they feel freer to try anything with Nina than they would with children with lesser difficulties. Nina's strangeness means that we do not have any pre-established ways of coping with her, so we try anything, in the hope that something might work. Nina is described as seeming to live in a world of her own. We enter uninvited in her world, and because we do not know the laws or the culture or the language of that world we feel free to do a number of things. With other children the laws are more or less more specified in our eyes and our role is to adhere to them. When it comes to Nina, if we err we can always say that it is not really our fault.

Nina reacts in two different ways – she either resists the violation of her boundaries or complies with the actions required. As the story shows, Nina may lean so far back in her chair that she almost topples over. She may try to shield her face with her hand, or even wave away the object bothering her. On the other hand she sometimes touches the tambourine for a few seconds, as though she knows what it is that we wish from her. For the assistants and for myself, both reactions are positive in that she acknowledges our presence. Furthermore these actions are marked and measured so that they are made accessible in terms of the achievement of the IEP. Tick boxes are used to register these responses to the stimuli presented to the children. Thus whether Nina improves or not depends on how many tick boxes can actually be ticked.

Violating our borders

There are also occasions in which Nina violates our borders and takes us completely by surprise. Nina not only opens her borders and reaches out to us (enters our borders) but makes us question our borders as we do not know how to deal with her entry. In the words of Derrida (1992d):

> *...what is proper to a culture is to not be identical to itself*. Not to not have an identity, but not to be able to identify itself, to be able to say 'me' or 'we'; to be able to take the form of a subject only in the non-identity to itself or, if you prefer, only in difference *with itself* [*avec soi*]. There is no culture or cultural identity without this difference *with itself* (p.9).

Nina's violates the border that we establish around her and around ourselves. It is a violation for when she enters into our borders it disturbs *me* or *we* – we experience a loss of identity. The certainty that makes *me / us* has been shattered. But we can view this as positive – as a possibility for becoming. The violation of Nina into our borders can be viewed as a block of intensity – a virtual block that can be actualised.

Two occasions, in which Nina has violated the borders, are of particular note. One is recounted by a classroom assistant in the interview and another which I observed and participated in class.

When in the heated pool in school, Nina is supported by a particular teaching assistant. The approach to swimming adopted by the school is one where the instructor acts as a swimming aid, as opposed to the use of other external aids. The raison d'être of this rule is

that the instructor is meant to give the appropriate help that is required by the swimmer. The teaching assistant supports Nina from the lower back while Nina plays with the water by splashing with her hands. She does not interact with the teaching assistant. However, the moment that the assistant sits with Nina on the steps of the pool, Nina puts her arms around her. There is close proximity throughout the pool session between the teaching assistant and Nina, but still the moment that Nina puts her arms around her this is an unexpected action and takes the assistant by surprise. The closeness is welcomed after the momentary shock. The violation is accepted. The contradiction is, however, that Nina's action is one which is appropriate to us, and still we are uncertain what to do with it. When this happens the moment Jasmine comes into class after the pool session she tells everyone of what happened to her. She questions her perception that Nina is autistic and comments how is it possible that at time Nina is able to be so loving for short moments.

The other violation of borders took place in the classroom during a drama lesson with a peripatetic teacher. In circle formation, the teacher was dressed up as a witch and was recounting a story. Props and costumes of the different characters in the story were available to be worn by all the children in the class and the teaching staff and I helped out by putting the clothes on the children and distributing the props. These were soft toys and were offered to the different children according to the character they were dressed up in. Nina resisted putting on the costume. Since her specialised chair resembles a throne, the drama teacher allocated the character of queen to Nina. However she did not want the crown on her head or to hold the sceptre. She resisted most strongly to holding the puppy soft toy while we try to dissuade the drama teacher from insisting on this, explaining that this was always the way that Nina was. Eventually the drama teacher gave up, the puppy was placed on Nina's tray, and the lesson went on.

Suddenly, one of the classroom assistants called us all to look at Nina. She had taken the soft toy in her arms and was hugging it close to her. When we had least expected it, Nina surprised us! Most of us cheered and even clapped. The drama teacher in an acting way made a big fuss of it. This session had been photographed and when I was showing these photos to the drama teacher a few days after the session, she commented as the classroom assistants had that Nina was hugging the puppy. The drama teacher commented that "there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with Nina. What sort of disability does she have?"

Dragged into non-place

When reflecting about borders, Derrida come up with a contradicting phrase that disturbs the formation of borders: "there is no such thing as *x*, there is nothing but *x"* (Derrida 1998, p.21). Derrida in *Monolingualism of the Other or, The Prosthesis of Origin* (1998) uses this contradictory statement for language: he tries to argue that "we only speak one language" and "we never speak only one language" (Derrida, 1998, p.7). I do not focus on language, but using Derrida (ibid.) I want to say that:

> there is no such thing as *teachers*, there is nothing but *teachers;*
> there is no such thing as *physiotherapists*, there is nothing but *physiotherapists;*
> there is no such thing as *speech and language therapists*, there is nothing but *speech and language therapists;*
> there is no such thing as *Duncan*, there is nothing but *Duncan;*.
> there is no such thing as *Nina*, there is nothing but *Nina.*

In the first part of this statement, Derrida helps us to question that which we have become accustomed to regarding as fixed and unconditional. There is no such thing because when one looks closely, one discovers how what one had thought was fixed and established is really only the result of a multitude of contingencies. From the interviews, questions and observations, it comes across very strongly that assumptions about professionals and children, in this case Nina, seem to be absolute, determined and founded. Therefore, the first part of the contradictory statement: there is no such thing as *x*, is removed, is made invisible and forgotten, transforming each particular group of professionals, or individuals, in our case Nina, as absolute, as *beings*. When the focus is just on the second part of the phrase: there is nothing but *x*, contingency, uncertainty, experimentation are eliminated and removed.

It is this play between "there is no such thing as *x*, there is nothing but *x*" that I find interesting and is what gives us opening for students like Nina. I have argued that Nina violates our boundaries, but I want to add and, in doing so give great importance to the thought, that she drags us in her own boundaries and her space: the hugging space, or the looking-sideways space, as depicted in the above stories. Is the space similar to our space? The spaces of Nina are what I call non-space. The spaces of the hello song, or pool or drama lessons are calculated spaces. Spaces that have ends and focuses, that is, measured space. I am calling Nina's space non-space in that it does not resemble our spaces and does

not seem to have an intention or aim as we have in our spaces. It is not something where one can actually know where she is or where she is going, or what the aim of that space is. Her space does not confer to us a sense of place. Similar to this is timing within this space. Timing within our space is heavy and slow. Movement is coded and constantly needs processes of interpretations. This contrasts Nina's time that is fast and it seems that it flows - a quick hug to the soft toy or a quick look, enough to alter us, enough to cause a stir in the people around her, enough to grab us and drag us in her space. Timed people grabbed into timeless time.

Nina's hug brings the teaching staff closer to her. There is a reversal of roles: the teacher who tries to get closer to Nina and Nina who gets the teaching staff close to her. Therefore there is a difference between the proximity that Nina brings about and the proximity that I try to bring about with Nina during the hello song. Nina's hug brings forces that are short, immeasurable and meaningless that together that can bring about a stir in the classroom. My proximity is a calculated proximity through which I measure and calculate Nina. There is a paradox and a contradiction between the proximity that I try to bring about with Nina, and the proximity that Nina brings about in us, even if this is of minimal durability. The Nina-hug, or split second look, brings about in us a "leaping in the place of the whole body" (Deleuze, 1990, p.149). It causes a stir, an *ooh* in the staff. Surprise. Astonishment. Something that grabs us and calls us into her non-space.

Chapter 6

In the *middle* of the school day.

In this chapter I focus what happens mostly during the middle of the school day, lessons and activities. In the title of the chapter I play with the word *middle* as a Deleuzian concept of being in between, intermezzo. As though there is a being there and not. This chapter will start off with Charles. It is a heavy story that has brought many tears to my eyes when writing it and every time I read it over again, followed by Matthew's sounds and Ruth's party invitation. Like Ruth's invitation, I invite you to enter in the middle of the stories. Deleuze's invitation is always to start in the middle of things and see where it takes you, so maybe one should start reading this thesis from Chapter Six and then work the way up, or down.

Story One: Finding a Position

The class now is doing a maths lesson. This week's subject is time. I give each of my classroom assistants a big clock that produces a loud tik-tok noise and also task cards. Each card contains an instruction indicating where in the school they are to go while counting tik-toks, for example: to the heads office; or to go to Class 2 – the reception class. The classroom assistants take one of the students with them, and wheel them to the place in the card. They take the big clock with them and count how many tik-toks the clocks counts until they arrive at the destination, and back. While my four classroom assistants go around the school with four students, I wait in class with the remaining students. When they come we note on the chart how many tik-toks it took them to arrive to a certain place and how many to return. Off the classroom assistants go again with students. Joanne arrives from the creative arts room with Charles. It took them 24 tik-toks to arrive there, and 30 tik-toks to come back. Joanne explains to me that on the way back they met the head of school who asked about the activity. While saying all this she is interacting with Charles, as if she and Charles are saying this to me. She uses phrases like: 'Charles tell Mr. Duncan what the head asked,' while she will do all the talking; or 'Charles how many tik-toks did it take us to get there?' 'Twenty-four,' Joanne would emphatically say. Charles is crouched in his

specialised chair. He looks as though he is in pain. We cannot sort out his seating. I take a deep breath and look at Joanne. Charles' head is lowered on his chest, he constantly dribbles. He needs to have his bib changed. I go and get a bib to change it from the changing room which is part of the classroom. I massage Charles's neck. When I do so he lifts his head and takes a deep breath. I change his bib – it is soaked. Charles' eyes are big and blue. Irene says that someone with those eyes will have women running after him. Joanne suggests that we change his place. I agree, we wheel him near the couch and place him there. Joanne and I lift him together. I move my swivel chair to where he is. Joanne goes again around the school measuring tik-toks with Angie now.

After Maths, we have a Maltese reading session. Today we are tackling a poem. All the students are in class, with us adults seated in between them. As Charles is still on the couch we are close to him, and although on the couch he is still part of the circle. But he is breathing heavily. His breathing – gasping for breath, echoes heavily around the class. I get the triangular wedge, place it on the couch. With the help of Irene, we turn Charles and place him head down on the wedge. So he is now on the couch on a wedge, head down. We have to keep him like this for at least 30-40 minutes a day. This we do in order to help drain his lungs. Irene gets lots of paper tissues and places them under Charles' chin. She unstrips Charles' hand splints. She sits on the couch near Charles and first massages his hands, then she pats his back where his lungs are, as instructed by the physiotherapists. We have a reading session in Maltese. First we read the poem softly, in whispering voices. Then in normal tone, then we shout out the poem. Now we read the poem in snail's pace, that is, we read the poem very very slowly, then at hare's pace – fast reading of the poem.

The reading session is over. Re-positioning of the students is next. The care assistants are called. Ritienne and I will be positioning Charles. The standing frame is first adjusted to fit Charles for it is also used by another child. It is placed in a horizontal position. Before Charles in placed in the standing frame we have to put on his Ankle-Foot Orthosis (AFO). These are necessary to control Charles' ankle and foot and keep them in place. I always get mixed up which one goes on the right and which on the left – as they are made to measure they are plain in their make and so do not indicate clearly. Then I remember that the straps of the AFO's should be on the outside of each leg. I bend Charles' knee to a 90 degree angle and put the heel fully down and back in the heel of the AFO. Then I fasten the ankle

strap and then the calf strap, and lastly the toe strap. After I check each strap again I fit the foot with the AFO in a shoe.

Then Charles is placed on the standing frame. First his feet and his behind are strapped. Pull the straps, but not too much. I always need to remember to clip the buckles. Then his back and shoulders are strapped and supported. Then he is slowly turned into a vertical position. Charles' arms are placed on the tray of the standing frame and are strapped in the splint. Charles' arms are contracted, and in order to overcome this contraction and keep his arms straight they are strapped to a arm splint support His head is up. He looks at us, and gives a smile. But I wait near him. Not long after, his head falls down on his chest. I look at my watch. Soon Charles starts crying. First a short moan. It will get louder, but soon it becomes unbearable. His feet are giving way, and are breaking the AFO strap settings, his ankle seems to be popping out of the shoe. I try to adjust them. I look at my watch again. Just five minutes passed. According to the physiotherapists he should stay in the frame for not less then thirty minutes. Eight minutes have passed, now ten. Charles is now crying and sobbing. I turn him in a horizontal position again to start unstrapping him. Irene asks me where we are going to position Charles now. I don't know. All the possible setting options have been tried out today– none seem to work. Irene asks me the question again.

Finding a master key

The positioning of Charles' body is viewed by different professionals working around him as important and crucial for a variety of reasons. In this story I look at how various professionals and I perceive Charles' body and what we do to it for various reasons. A thesis on students with PMLD cannot escape a discourse on the body. I am focusing on Charles's body for the level of impairment that this body carries in it. Out of the five children that are involved in this thesis, according to my judgment, Charles and Luke show signs of extreme pain and suffering. Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze, 1983; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) are constantly talking of the body, and how the body becomes. So this uncomfortable discourse of body could find a comfortable place, or at least a place, in Deleuze and Guattari's work. Uncomfortable, because I know that such discourses are easily judged to be medical, to focus on the personal tragedy story. What echoes in my mind as I write this is the famous statement made by Mike Oliver (1996a) "disablement has nothing to do with the body" (Oliver, 1996a, p.41-42) and that by Tom Shakespeare: "the achievement of the disability movement has been to break the link between our bodies

and our social situation and to focus on the real cause of disability, i.e. discrimination and prejudice" (Shakespeare, 1992, p.40). Uncomfortable, not only because the effect that such discourses have produced in disability arena, but also because of the frustration and helplessness that accompanies those working around Charles' body.

The people involved in the education of Charles desire or want his body to be better – we are motivated by this desire. Charles lives on the edge of life and death. We draw action plans of how to make and produce a better body for Charles. People around Charles have an ideal image of a body for Charles. Different people have a sort of ghost image of a healthier, *not-so-much-profoundly impaired body* for Charles. Different approaches are developed to try and bring to life this profoundly impaired body. Charles' body can be fixed, even if often temporarily. Educators in schools often seem to think of a not so much profoundly impaired body in Charles' profoundly impaired body. An idea of a body that goes beyond Charles' actual body. A perfect body or rather, a not so much profoundly impaired body, in a profoundly impaired body. Yet as will be shown, Charles' body slips through our action plans; his body seems to encrypt itself in itself.

I am thinking of Derrida's idea of crypt (1986c). A crypt, is present as a non-place inside the Ego. It can disrupt the Ego, but on the other hand it is necessary for the Ego. Charles' impaired body is constantly projected by us, but it constantly escapes us. Charles' profoundly impaired body, as well as our wish for a *not-so-much-profoundly impaired body*, haunts us educators working around him. Both our wish of *not-so-much-profoundly impaired body* and profoundly impaired body haunts us. Derrida reminds us that to be haunted is to be called up, is to ask for a response. The question is, can we respond? Can we be friends with this body, with Charles' body? Or are we enemies to this body? What haunts us? The "sole memory that is 'in me' or 'in us'" (Derrida, 1986b, p.33). But this haunting that calls is just another double-bind: on the one hand we are called or invited to respond, but on the other hand we have a call and invitation that is a resistant invitation – an impossible invitation to respond to. I look at a number of ideas that show the discourses and constructions around Charles' body caught in the im-possible response, always hoping to find a master key (a secret, a password) that can unlock Charles body.

Charles is a constant concern for the physiotherapists who work at the special school. They constantly monitor him for a number of reasons. First Charles' breathing is considered to

be of great concern. His lungs, which are squashed due to his chest malformation and scoliosis, give him great pains in breathing. Also, due to a lack of the swallowing reflex, Charles' saliva and liquidized food goes into his lungs instead to his stomach. But apart from the medical reasons for the constant monitoring by the physiotherapists, there is also the 'pestering factor'. My classroom assistants, the school nurse, the speech and language pathologists and the parents constantly pester the physiotherapists about his position. Each group would have its reasons to moan with them. The school nurse's concern is the breathing, the scoliosis, Charles' hand and lips turning blue. The concerns of the speech and language pathologists are his dribbling and swallowing. All the professionals working in school seem to feed each other ideas and pass on ideas and responsibilities to each other. The school nurse and speech and language pathologists, and myself as the class teacher speak mostly to the physiotherapist, while these three categories of people are fed mostly from the classroom assistants moaning, and other teachers working in the school, for example, the teachers working in the pool, or multi-sensory room. All have a comment on the positioning of Charles.

The physiotherapists, school nurse and the speech and language pathologists on the other hand try to explain to the teaching staff the why and how of certain decisions and therapies taken as regards Charles' positioning. In the story Irene is tapping Charles' lungs to help him in his breathing. This technique was taught to her by the physiotherapists. In the interview on Charles, Joanne was unable to mention the main reasons why Charles would benefit from staying thirty minutes in the standing frame. The following day she came to class with the following list of reasons that she had found over the internet on the benefits of positioning students. We discussed some of them:

- Improved range of motion
- Decreased joint & muscle contractors
- Decreased pressure issues with changing positions
- Improved circulatory & respiratory functions
- Decrease muscle spasms
- Assist with normal skeletal development
- Improved bowel function & regularity
- Improved kidney & bladder functions
- Lessen or prevent progressive scoliosis

- Help maintain bone integrity

However, even with these benefits classroom assistants, care workers, and other specialised teachers still complain about the use of specialised chairs, standing frames and other positioning options. They argue that often none of the available options seem to work for Charles. Even his recently acquired chair that took three months to be delivered seems not suitable for Charles. Often I am caught in between the physiotherapists and the classroom assistants in these arguments. After taking so long to position Charles in the standing frame as recounted in the above story, after ten minutes he is removed by the classroom assistants and me. And ten minutes is considered to be very good amount of time. Sometimes Charles' position is changed even earlier, at times even after two minutes. The same happens in pool sessions with Charles. After he is taken in the pool area, changed into his swimming trunks and showered, he is lowered into the heated pool. The classroom assistants have not even entered in the class when we are called by the pool staff to go and shower him. Charles has difficulty breathing and therefore needs to be removed quickly from the pool water. Water creates more pressure on the lungs than atmospheric pressure. I usually get these outbursts of anger from the classroom assistants because after the laborious process of undressing and showering Charles to prepare him for the pool, after five minutes he is out of it. Usually I go and shower Charles myself and dress him in order to placate them.

There are also what I call DIY adjustments to the specialised positioning equipment done by the classroom assistants or care workers. Get some cushions, usually those provided on aeroplanes (Ruth's father can provide as many as we want for he works at the airport. When he asks for them it is known that they will be given to our school so we are given loads), have at hand a role of strong Scotch tape, and some foam, and polystyrene. The last ingredient to DIY adjustments is: be creative, experiment. It may work, it may not. So you see this designer standing frame which cost a few hundred pounds and at one side of this standing frame you see a shabby, but very often functioning, even if temporary, homemade adjustment. When the head of school or James or Marcella, the physiotherapists, see these adjustments they go crazy. If these DIY adjustments are done for Charles, again, I end up arbitrating between my classroom assistants and the head of school or physiotherapists.

The hassling, time consuming and laborious processes of buying specialised equipment for Charles and other students is an experience I have to go through every year with a group of other people. This group is usually formed by the head of school, myself, two or three physiotherapists, the School Council President and the school doctor who comes in when she is needed. The main aim of the group is to determine around February which specialised equipment is need for a particular student. Get the tenders public. Vat these tenders. Negotiate with the Maltese Education Division Accounts Department on the yearly expenditure, and order the equipment. Chase the importers to have this equipment in school by the end of September when school starts again. Each section of the process has its concern. The physiotherapists have to make a judgment of Charles' body now in relation of how they think he will be in six months' time. As in Malta we do not have a specialised equipment clinic; all that we have during these meetings are leaflets and brochures, and our fertile imagination trying to see how Charles would fit in this chair or standing frame. Lots of technical terms are used by the medical professions during these meetings to justify one positioning better than another. However there is another important factor: the agents. The agents will not get all kinds of equipment, but will try to convince us to get the particular products that they are agents for. The interesting part is the negotiation with the Accounts Department, where the obvious charity and tragedy models are used by the school to convince them. The meetings are not held at school, so the head of school prepares pictures of each student that is going to be discussed to show them to the Director of Finance and his accountants. He capitalises on the body structure that each student has and pain that they experience. Usually the Accounts Department satisfy all requests. Every step of the process requires lots of meetings and discussions. After all efforts have been made, on one occasion I was called by the school secretary to answer an important phone call in the absence of the head of school. One of the agents had phoned to tell us that there was an important detail that the group had missed out. I was already panicking, and asked him to fax me all the missing details. I could not believe my eyes when I saw that the order had stopped because of the outside design of a young child's standing frames. To animate these standing frames pictures of animals: lions, dinosaur or penguins are stuck to the side of the frames. We had neglected to choose which animal we wanted on the side of the standing frame. I chose the dinosaur picture.

Charles' having a good body position is important if assistive technology is to be used with him. The assistive technology that is available in the school is considered to be state of the

art at European level. All the possible gadgets that can be used to teach cause and effect are available at school. Some linked to computers, other to small electronic equipment. You press a switch and a disco ball goes on. You press a switch and the fan goes on. You press again and it goes off. You press again and the CD player starts. Press again and it stops. Apart from the different electronic equipment, some with seconds of delay to give the effect, some with automatic on and off, and many other options, it is the switches that I want to point out. Switches that are activated with the slightest movement of the hand palm. These are mercury switches, so with the slightest tilt they are activated. Then there are switches that are attached to the feet. They become activated when you press on them. Head switches: these are attached on the specialised chairs, through robotic arms, and head movement will hit the switch that in return will trigger a stimulus. Eye tracking switches, sip and puff switches (breath actions as on/off signals, and can be used for a variety of purposes, from controlling a wheelchair to navigating a computer). I get lost in these switches and manuals, as well as in the wires running from one switch to a particular device. But Joanne seems to instinctively know how all these gadgets work. Ritienne gave up on all these electronic equipments, while Irene looks on amazed. It is not just the hassle of getting the right things together, but timing is crucial. If Charles is working on the side of the classroom and he needs to be moved for some reason, it means moving Charles in the specialised seating position, together with a robotic arm sticking out of his chair, attached to a switch, which is attached to a device that is attached to a stimulus. So there is this procession when moving Charles: myself moving Charles, Irene holding one thing and Joanne holding another piece of equipment. There is always some resetting to do for some socket and pin always gets dislocated!

During the Christmas concert, or when a school activity is taking place and parents and other important guests are invited we are always reminded during the morning assembly by the head to have the students placed on the specialised chairs, etc. The school acts as a showcase for specialised equipment. The parents see their children in these chairs and equipment – we are seeing an increase of parents who are getting more of this specialised equipment for their children to use at home. One of the effects of this is that different professionals have to help the parents fill up complex documentation to get funding for these equipments. The parents have to apply to two different entities to get funding for each piece of equipment, so everything has to be done twice. The documentation for getting specialised equiment requires medical justification and a letter of medical necessity

written by several professionals, stating the child's medical, functional and social development, explaining why the equipment is needed and how it will aid functional goals/outcomes of the particular child. The physiotherapists help out by carrying out home visits and then have teaching sessions with parents on handling and lifting children, keeping in mind that a lot of parents of children with PMLD have already had surgery for slipped disks in their spines.

The concerts also act as showcases to the important guests. The parents of students with PMLD who attend mainstream schools argue that if students in special schools can get specialised equipment, then their children who attend mainstream classes must be provided with specialised equiment, as had happened in the case of Luke who had a specialised chair which was rarely used due to lack of proper setting. As part of the process of converting the special school into resource center, the head of the special school is trying to sell the idea that students attending mainstream can come to the special school to see what kind of specialised equipment their children can have. Then the particular mainstream school can make its own order. Sometimes a physiotherapist or a specialised teacher comes to my class to borrow a standing frame, or a buggy or a chair belonging to one of my students to try it out for some other student who comes for 'a fitting'.

The complex and different discourses that I have shown above in trying to find a suitable body position for Charles in order to bring about a not so much profoundly impaired body in spite of having a profoundly impaired body still lacks an important discourse. The special school was for many years supported by a teacher from England, who came for a couple of weeks every year. Apart from being a teacher of students with PMLD, she was a MOVE (Mobility Opportunities Via Education) instructor. In the words of the founder of MOVE, Linda Bidabe: "The ability to move is the first stone in building personal dignity" (http://www.move-international.org/). Therefore here we have another important discourse that was influencing the adults in my classroom in our perception of Charles' body. A student who sits well is able to learn. Sitting is the first step to learning. Positioning the body well is the first step to learning and is an important step to personal dignity.

The slipping body

Although educators search for the *not-so-much-profoundly impaired body* and a body that provides the first building blocks for personal dignity for Charles, yet this body always

seems to slip, to get inside of itself, what I referred to as a crypt in the above section. This is the focus of this section, seeing the slippages of Charles' body and how these slippages encrypt him, yet call us towards him more forcefully.

The examples of slippages are almost all highlighted in the opening story. Charles' heavy breathing is constant. After he is placed on the couch his breathing gets heavier until he is placed head down. When I think about it today, placing a child head down, I wonder if then, just less then a year ago, I was in my full senses to do such actions. But even then, the dribbling and the discomfort of Charles would give way to changing position again. In positioning in the standing frame, the twisting of the ankle and the almost bursting out of the shoe and tearing the flesh, that it cannot take any more the body weight, even after 5 minutes it is considered more than enough. After the hand splint it put on, the hand turns blue, almost black, and is freezing cold after a while, so that it needs to be removed and quickly massaged and the nurse has to be called to monitor it. When in his seating chair, after all the settings and strappings, Charles used to push against the chair and stretch his body. He would stretch like a straight piece of wood holding on the palm of his feet against the guard of the chair and the back of the neck, his behind high in air from the seating place, leaving an empty space between the chair and his body. A spasm? All I know is that the strapping and settings of the chair would all become undone. Then he would fall into a squashed position, his body all over the chair.

The movement of the head was also another slippage. We would spend time massaging Charles' neck at the back and verbally prompt him to lift his head up using a number of stimulus. He would try, but then let it fall again. But there were moments when he would hold his head up, and almost call us with this gesture. An unexpected gesture. That would produce Irene's comments on how nice his eyes are. But almost a terrifying look, sometimes accompanied either with a smile or a look of great pain. However Charles' crying is something that almost always used to make us panic. There were various levels of crying. In the story above it was a cry which I interpret as 'get me out of this position'. But there were moments when he would cry and sob – a heart-breaking cry. What to do? I don't know? I would just untie him from any position he was in and I would sit and hold him in my arms like a baby, a position that is forbidden by professionals. It was my inability as well as the inability of all those who happen to be in my class to cope with that situation. He would cry and sob. He would not stop even when he would be in my arms.

All of us adults in the classroom would be around him, and most of us would have tears in our eyes and would feel bad for long periods of time.

These body slippages create the distinction between us educators and what we try and do with Charles' body and Charles and what he tries to make out of his own body. In order to give Charles a good body position, which is *not-so-much-profoundly impaired body* in spite of having a profoundly impaired body, we Other him from himself, the "Other would simply be another 'I'" (Deleuze, 2002, p.17). Deleuze reminds us that an object does not have a signification, it *is* its signification (ibid). Therefore Charles' body does not need us to be a body. However, we think that for Charles' body to be "the expression of a possible world" (ibid., p.18) he has to be Othered. Why do we do this? Deleuze asks us: can we cope with Charles' body? Are we ashamed of it? Or do we want to destroy this body in order to give Charles an*other* body? A body that is close to us? A not so much profoundly impaired body?

In order for Charles to be Charles with his particular body he has to encrypt himself. He has to keep himself a secret from us. He does not need to *other* himself in order to be able to express a possible world. He is himself (ibid.). Charles' body is a possible world. But this possible world which is encrypted draws us towards it. Charles makes his own body very different from what we try to make him. We try to make him "find himself again" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.151), a not so much profoundly impaired body, while he tries to go in himself, forget himself, make himself *zero.* Make himself forget his organs. This is why he needs to encrypts himself – we are not able to cope with this. He makes his body a *zero* body, an organless body so as to allow crying, breathing, stretching, squashing possible, to allow these intensities pass and circulate in his body, while with our idea of giving him a not so much profoundly impaired body we close these intensities and forces. We want to reason Charles' body, while he experiences his body and what flows from it. We want to measure and calculate and predict and foresee. He takes any position we offer him, he slips through it, he creates an organless body and just makes himself a set of valves, locks, floodgates, bowls, ankles, head down, strapped, that allow crying, pain, stretching, crouching, sobbing to pass. While for us these are unacceptable, and should be prevented, these are Charles.

Although encrypted we are still able to be pulled by Charles' BwO and his intensities that pass in this body. We are pulled by the flow of intensity of crying. We cry with Charles. We are pulled by Charles' heavy breathing – I look at Joanne and I also take a deep breath in. For a while I allow Charles to be *zero*, and almost allow my body to be *zero*. I allow my body to despair and be frustrated.

The greatest intensity of all

Charles died in his sleep. According to his mother who found him dead when she went to wake him up in the morning, Charles died because his body was positioned in a way that blocked his breathing. It was not possible for him to move himself from such a position.

Once again he slipped from our settings and programmes. He sunk himself in himself, he encrypted himself, leaving us to mourn. "We weep precisely over what happens to us when everything is entrusted to the sole memory that is 'in me' or 'in us'" (Derrida, 1986b, p.35). Leaving us in another impossibility – the impossibility of true mourning.

He left in tears his mother, grandmother, three sisters: one of who was his ever-caring *twin* sister.

He manages to bring tears in my eyes every time I think or write a few sentences about him.

Comments: this is what I wrote in my personal diary the following day after Charles' funeral. The school nurse in her arrogant voice scoffed when she saw my staff and me in tears and feeling sorry for the loss of Charles, saying that it was better that he died for his own sake and that of his family.

Story Two: Humming away

In every mainstream primary classroom there are three computers, usually situated at the back of the classroom. Matthew is sitting on one of the computers, usually at the middle computer. With the right hand he holds the computer speaker close to his right ear. With the left hand he navigates the computer mouse. He is surfing through internet pages of Disneyworld. He sits sideways to the computer not looking at it directly and has one leg crossed over the other. All the while he hums and makes vocal noises according to the

tunes he is listening to from the website. He quickly surfs from one page of the internet to the other. From the Disney website he goes to the Dreamworks website and to other sites. He clicks to hear a song, he hums and vocalises to the songs and quickly surfs on to the next song. There were days when he would hear the same song over and over and would hum and vocalise to it endlessly. The following is a transcription of one of Matthew's vocalising and humming. Today he is hooked on the famous Winnie-the-Pooh song by Richard M. Sherman and Robert B. Sherman:

Wiiiiiiiiipu
Wiiiiiiiiipu
Tabcab all staf FLAF
h Wiiiiiiiiipu
Wiiiiiiiiipu
Wilhillisi, OLD BER

The following are the lyrics for those who have forgotten it:
Winnie-the-Pooh,
Winnie-the-Pooh,
Tubby little cubby all stuffed with fluff.
He's Winnie-the-Pooh.
Winnie-the-Pooh.
Willy, nilly, silly, old bear.

On this day I was sitting close to Matthew at the end of the classroom and I caught myself, after a while listening to Matthew humming and vocalising, humming to the tune. The classroom assistant sometimes tells Matthew that because he has played the tune over and over many times he has her *hooked* to the tune and she also hums it or sings it over during the day. At other times she tells him that she wonders how he is not bored to hear the same tune over and over again. Matthew also constantly plays with the volume switch of speaker. He starts with a very low volume. Usually when he switches on the computer he is reminded by the classroom assistant about the level of the volume. But then this gradually goes up and up after a while. He occasionally gives a quick glance to see where his classroom assistant is or what his class mates and classroom teacher are doing, and he will increase the volume. Not only will the volume of the speaker go up, but so will his vocalisations. He is quickly scolded by the facilitator who gets a complaint from Will. Will

is a student that sits near Matthew's desk, close to the classroom assistant, for he needs support. He seems to constantly watch out for what Matthew is doing.

The classroom teacher is doing an English language lesson, a comprehension lesson. During the last few weeks the teacher has been reading the story 'the BFG' by Roald Dahl. The year four students will be do an adapted version of the BFG at school for the Prize Day concert. So the class teacher is trying to incorporate the Prize Day activity with the English lessons. Today the comprehension focuses on the description of the food *snozzcumbers*.

The teacher asks the students to read it individually first. She then reads it out loud herself. She explains the difficult words and phrases of the passage. She then asks the students to read in pairs. Then some children are asked to read it out loud in front of the whole class. Some children lift up their hands. They are all given an opportunity to read it. The teacher corrects them when needed. She calls other students to read out the poem even if they did not lift up their hands. Some do not want to read. She negotiates with them about the reading. Alexia will read only the first paragraph. Another girl will read only the first two verses. She supports the students in this exercise, and is quick to scold any student who laughs at those who when reading make mistakes. Will also has a chance to read out loud; he is supported by the classroom assistant. He staggers a lot in his reading. Then they are given time to work out the questions that follow the text. In the fifth question the students are asked to invent words to name strange food and they have to describe this invented food.

While the students are working, the teacher goes round. The classroom assistant calls Matthew, and on her insistence he will eventually leave the computer and go to his desk to do some writing activities. But he will play up. First he will pretend not to have heard her, and then he will give his back to the classroom assistant while still surfing on the internet. When she is near him, she has either to switch off the computer or pull Matthew away threatening to tell his mum or the head of school if he does not do some writing activities. He sits eventually at his desk. He has a letter-writing exercise. He does not want to do it. He is still humming and vocalising some song or advert that he has picked up either from the internet or television. I am able to differentiate some of the sounds that are familiar to

me. The classroom assistant scolds Matthew and asks him to start writing and stop his sounds. He writes with a lot of hand-on-hand support.

In order to encourage more English conversation, the students are encouraged to recount stories in English. So everyday, just a few minutes before break time, according to a roster the children have to go in front of the class and recount a story that they would have prepared beforehand. Today it is Matthew's turn. The classroom assistant goes out with Matthew in front of the class. She has a CD player. She presses play and we start hearing the story of 'The Three Little Pigs'. Matthew vocalises and does sounds that are similar to the tune of the story-telling. He even does some actions to accompany the sounds he does, especially to the puffing of the wolf. He puffs and puffs. All the students and the teaching staff clap. He seems to like this. He hops around and claps when he is clapped at. The classroom assistant calls him to continue. The story narration of the CD goes on.

The students go off for their break in the yard. During break-time Matthew tends to stay alone. He does not play with others, but is alone walking at the sides of the yard, humming and vocalising sounds. He is at times interested in looking at students playing marble games, but does not participate.

I arrive at primary school half way though the school Sports Day. From a distance I can hear the song 'Angel' being heard. It is the top song at the moment, for it is the song that will represent Malta in the Eurovision Song Contest. Everyone living or staying for a couple of days in Malta will have to listen to the song endless times. You would certainly come to know it. When I arrive next to the students of the classroom, they come up to me and tell me that Matthew is going to sing 'Angel'. I recognise his hum and voice. With the microphone close to his mouth, and doing some movements, Matthew makes sounds to the song 'Angel'. The whole school claps with the assistant head of school who is the DJ for the activity - she asks for another round of applause for Matthew.

Tuning the orchestra

In this story I try to produce in writing some of the many sounds that were occurring in Matthew's classroom. I acknowledge the complexity and impossibility of this endeavour, however I still want to persist with it. We are used to clear and systematic writing. The writing of this story may seem confused as the main text wraps in it many different bubble

texts. Each bubble text is a particular talk that is going on in the classroom. I am encouraged and sort of follow Derrida's style where in his writings *Glas* (1986a) and *Cinders* (1991) he tries to write beyond writing. Derrida suggests that our writing should have 'a change in style', one which will "speak several languages and produce several texts at once" as he suggests in his early essay *The Ends of Man* (Derrida, 1982b, p.112). Thus I will start this section with a reverse idea of what is being suggested by Derrida, then in the next section I will move to several languages at once.

Those who are acquainted with primary classrooms know the many sounds that one can hear and can be produced in such environments. Most of these sounds are produced vocally, usually through talk. There is a lot of talk taking place in our classrooms. The different text boxes that this text wraps are different *talk* taking place in Matthew's classroom. However, following Derrida, I want to argue that the different *talk* that is going on in the classroom by different agents are swallowed up into one language (see Derrida, 1998). There is the assumption that there is one language that can make sense for all of us, for all those in the Matthew's classroom. Derrida uses the metaphor of eating used by Levinas that difference (Other) is masticated and swallowed up in the Same. This is what happens to the different talk in the class. They are masticated together and swallowed up into one talk. In this section I will give some of the apparatus that does this in Matthew's class.

This assumption of one language is brought about in Matthew's classroom through the intervention on the teacher. Ms Rita, Matthew's classroom teacher is seen in a metaphor used by Deleuze as a conductor leading a symphony. Ms Rita is the figure of the conductor who is the guarantee of sound coordination in her classroom. She coordinates sounds by making the various sounds and talks taking place in her classroom reproduce her own sound and talk. Therefore making the various sounds in tune, making the various *talk* in the classroom one *talk*.

> That is a squelching tricky problem around here, *the BFG answered.* In this sloshflunking Giant Country, happy eats like pineapples and pigwinkles is simply not growing. Nothing is growing except for one extremely icky-poo vegetable. It is called the snozzcumber. The snozzcumber! *cried Sophie.* There's no such thing. I beg your pardon? *Sophie said.* And the humplecrimp? What's that? *Sophie said.* And the wraprascal? The what? *Sophie said.* And the crumpscoddle? Are they animals?' *Sophie asked.*

The beginning and end of all *talk* starts, is filtered, controlled and ends with Ms Rita. If classroom physical spaces are recounted in the first story in classrooms are as controlled *Talk* in the classroom has to be co-ordinated *talk*. If not controlled and *square* as Chapter Five, sound spaces in and even furthered manipulated. sense *talk*; it has to be tuned *talk*, coordinated, if not tuned, if *talk* is not sense *talk* – then it would be better to have void talk, no talk at all. No talk would mean that the students do not talk at all, or talk when they are asked to or when they are required to. This therefore implies the absence or reducing as much as possible of noise. Noise would mean sound that one does that disturbs and disrupts the classroom orchestra.

Wiiiiiiiiipu
Wiiiiiiiiipu
Tabcab all staf FLAF
h Wiiiiiiiiipu
Wiiiiiiiiipu
Wilhillisi, OLD BER

Ms. Rita is a class teacher who has an excellent classroom control of the sounds happening in her classroom. This contrasts to the other year four class where Luke was placed, where the level of sounds was so high. During my observations in Ms Rita's class, a student teacher was also observing the class and the assigned task for this student teacher that week by her university tutor was precisely to focus on the sounds and noises taking place in the classroom. She had a check list on the sound and noise level in the classroom. She had nine areas to focus on, write comments about and rate the sound in the classroom. At the end of the day when the student teacher was asking questions to Ms Rita about the sounds in the classroom, I was somehow drawn in the discussion by Ms Rita and the student teacher. The discussion between the teachers and student teacher was interesting, for the build-up of this section. The student teacher was asking her how she is able to control her classroom, that the noise level is so low. Ms Rita answered that her physique and use of voice were the key factors. Ms. Rita is a very tall, well-built teacher, who could perhaps be called chubby. I was not aware that this was a factor that she

Far away
In a lost world
I hear your voice
Calling for heaven
Cast away
Caught in mem'ries
You must believe
Love will come through

I be yr ein glle
In yr night
I be yr detttiny
Waitt by yr side
I be d suni
Feeling Bllluuuee
I'm al her
FOR YOUUU

Comes a day
Heart on fire
When all your faith
Seems to be missing
Go your way
And you'll find there
A land of hope
A land of dreams

I be yr ein glle
In yr night
I be yr detttiny
Waitt by yr side
I be d suni
Feeling Bllluuuee
I'm al her
FOR YOUUU

And when you loose it all
And nothing seems right
Just keep holding on
To me

I be yr ein glle
In yr night
I be yr detttiny
Waitt by yr side
I be d suni
Feeling Bllluuuee
I'm al her
FOR YOUUU

used in her advantage. It then dawned on me that the students are eight year old boys and girls. Ms. Rita's body structures and sizes could be daunting for the students. They need to look up while she needs to look down. However the use of voice is evident that Ms Rita is aware of the importance of her voice in controlling student talk. She used different voices with different students and they reacted differently according to her. She addresses particular students during her lesson. She calls them with their name and asks them if they understand and are following. To check if they are, she gives them a particular example to work out. She praises good practices. After my three weeks' observation, I was able to say which students were good in particular subjects and area and which would need a second explanation, or would find it difficult to understand. With these latter students she sometimes calls them to come to her desk. She gives individual explanations and helps them accordingly. There are moments when Ms. Rita scolds some children in front of the whole class, in order to 'put them in their right place'. If some students are talking among themselves, she stops her explanation and cross her hands over her chest, look at them and makes signs of impatience. If the students who are talking do not realise immediately, other students call their attention. Ms Rita raises her voice and shouts at them. If the students are talking when they are doing some assigned task it is unacceptable to Ms Rita that students talk to each other, unless it is whisper. But she will not stand any nonsense. Karl and Steve, two students were showing each other Pocamon cards under the desk. Ms Rita noticed. I got a fright at the reaction of Ms Rita. The students sobbed for an hour.

Two weeks ago I read a fantastic book called *Percy Jackson and the Olympians, The Lightning thief*, written by Rick Riordan. I enjoyed reading this book because the story is action packed and full of adventure. The protagonist of the book, Percy Jackson, goes through a new exciting adventure in every chapter. The plot is well thought and the author puts ideas together to create an exciting story about a boy my age. The story mainly talks about Greek mythology, gods and the Titan. I find Greek mythology fascinating.
boy reading in front of class before break-time

Ms Rita very frequently reminds students that this year is a very important year for them. In Malta, year four students have to sit for the first time for a formal examination. According to the outcome they are streamed for the last two years of their primary education. Ms Rita made certain that they worked hard. This was evident in her classroom – there was no time for nonsense, leisure or fun. The students worked constantly, moving from one task to another. It was amazing the amount of work the students covered in a day. Every Monday morning she gave the class a reflection of the previous week, so that students could think about it during that week.

When Ms Rita wanted to stimulate the class, her voice was energetic and alive. The language would be fast and bubbly and this pulled students to act similarly. The same when she wanted to calm the class down, she would lower her voice down and stop dead silent and this also a similar effect on the students. I would say that Ms. Rita's use of voice was an ideal example of a teacher's manual.

I will dress as a ballerina. I am going to wear my ballet stuff.
I am going to dress as a cat woman. The custom my sister wore last year.
What are you getting for the carnival party?
Mum will buy some biscuits.
conversation between two girls

There is an achiever in me.
Don't be afraid to make mistakes, try again.
Nothing comes from nothing.
Believe in yourself. There is no task you can't carry out. I will try my very best, that's all I can do.
We grow wiser by reading.
Never rush your H.W.
Be your best in everything you do.
Don't run out of attempts.
these are some of the thoughts of the week the teacher gave the students.

Ms Rita is on the school council and she is also a very influential teacher in her school. Her class is very close to the administration offices. A lot of different people came during the day to come and talk to Ms Rita. Parents on the school council came to ask about school uniforms, people in the administration come to ask about the school concert, while classroom assistants come to borrow some resources from her teaching files. There is always this bustle and hassle taking place near the door, or better still on the doorstep of her classroom. Often when people came up she would set the students on a task and she would cater for the needs of the people who come over. What impresses me is the ability of the students to work very quietly, with minimal talk amongst them even when Ms Rita was not there. Usually the classroom assistant takes over to see that the running of the class is going on well in the absence of the teacher. In this class, the intervention of the classroom assistant was minimal.

bees – swarm; books – library; cows – herd; corn – sheaf; cutlery – canteen; elephants – herd; fish – shoal; friends – party; furniture – suite; islands – group; kittens – litter; musicians – group; monkeys – troop; soldiers – regiment; oxen – team; flowers – bunch; thieves – gang; whales – school.
teacher explaining English lesson.

The classroom assistant seemed to be caught in this process. On the one hand she is an adult and part of the teaching staff of the classroom. She reported in one of the interviews how much she likes it that Matthew's classroom is so ordered, thanks to the

teacher. Therefore there are moments where she helps in forming this one *talk*. She quietens students down if they start chatting. She supports some students that need additional help and support. On the other hand, she herself is caught in process. She whispers when she is talking to Matthew or other students. Even when she needs to get out of her place she moves the chair very softly, trying to create the least noise possible.

The students seem to be caught in the process of policing each others' sound production. Students *shush* each other, or else they report each other to the teacher. Will in the story above tries to do the same with Matthew. Will seems to be constantly monitoring Matthew, and reminding Matthew, or tells the classroom assistant that the volume is getting higher.

> Are the children always so quiet in this class?
>
> Yes. *I answered*.
>
> I have never seen such a well-behaved class. They barely talk!
>
> Yes. Impressive. *I answered.*
>
> Well I will not get much from the observation today. I have to mark everything excellent for Ms Ritienne.
>
> The student teacher ticked another box.
>
> *whispered conversation between student teacher and myself, while constantly looking at teacher, not to get caught*

Wiiiiiiiiipu OLD BER

While the constant process of forming one *talk* is taking place, on the side of the classroom, at the back, Matthew is constantly vocalising and making his sounds and various tunes. I read Matthew as being able to resist himself in being caught up in this process of reproduction. Instead of reproducing, he is being creative and innovative. He is able to make his own talk and make it heard. In spite of the efforts and warnings of classroom assistant he still raises the volume of the music. With caution, but still it gets higher and higher. He is still able to hum while doing his writing exercises in spite of the many warnings. He is able to risk. Buchanan (2004, p.15) reminds us that music stares death in the face. This is very different from the class who does not risk. There are no risks where there is one talk being produced in the classroom.

This sort of transgression on the part of Matthew however does not remain only his, but is somehow able to pass on to other students and teaching staff. His humming is contagious. It is like a virus. It is very difficult to resist the humming and thinking, while producing a smile on one's face, about what that tune means. It is difficult to resist reminding oneself of the TV advert that that tune came from. These tunes and humming are constantly being repeated in the class and around the school – they become ritornellos (refrains). They are

like territories – small islands. They exist for a period of time and then vanish, while another island is formed. Although they are repetitions, however I read their repetitions very different from those of the repetition of the one talk taking place in the classroom. They are a secure territory for Matthew. Students commented with me that Matthew's humming reminds them of cartoons, TV and home – of security, of being alone in front of TV at their homes, of playing with their toys alone, of listening to their own music. The ritornello for Deleuze is able to produce a secure space. This is different from class where students have to give up their talk and form one talk. Matthew's territory is also a creative one. Not only he is able to adopt and vary the tunes and music, but he can also create something on his own without following others. This is contrary to the other students who are constantly following the conductor and playing the same score of music. Matthew who creates his own minor talk. This is talk that Matthew then is also able to share with others. We become infected with his humming.

Then there are those moments when Matthew also becomes the class hero for the class. He has no difficulty in saying the story in front of the class. He has no difficulty in singing in front of the whole school during the sports day. Students push Matthew to the front. They know that he does not talk like them, yet they promote him. They are too shy, or afraid to make mistakes. They cry if they are pushed too much.

The Prize Day Concert play

As already hinted Ms. Rita is very active in the school and involved in a lot of various activities. One of these activities is the school Prize Day. Every prize day is a big event for any school. It is a showcase of the school, usually with the presence of important personalities attending. Both the year four classes are involved in producing a play. This year's play is based on the BFG. Ms Rita had written a stage version of the book with the help of other teachers. During my observations they were still at the initial stages of the rehearsals. One of the greatest difficulties was to try and get the students who were acting out the BFG and Sophie to pronounce the words and say them with the relish and fun that the BFG is intended to use in the book, such as: gloriumptious, hopscotchy, whoppsy whiffling, humbug and jumbly amongst many others. My favourite paragraph in the script which was driving Ms. Rita mad was: *Oh, Majester! Oh, Queen! Oh, Monacher! Oh, Golden Sovereign! Oh, Ruler! Oh, Ruler of Straight Lines! Oh, Sultana!* (Dahl, 2007, p.87). The student who was acting out the BFG would say this in a monotone, with no

emotions. With his hands straight down his sides. Ms. Rita would raise her voice and act it out herself and turn towards me saying that it is impossible to put in some expression in these students. During one of the rehearsals the classroom assistant turned towards the student who was acting out the BFG and said that he should say the words like how Matthew does his sounds…

Story Three: The Party Invitation

Irene was feeding Ruth. As usual, Ruth immediately asked for a story. Knowing Ruth, this was not a request but a demand, although both would be represented by the same sign. Her birthday was coming up and this had been the topic of most of our conversations with Ruth for the past days. It was her eighth birthday and we used this excuse to extend our teaching of numbers to the number eight. With prompting, Ruth was supported to clap to the number eight.

Although it had been agreed that story-telling with Ruth should be limited at feeding-time, Irene decided to tell her a story around the giving of invitations for Ruth's birthday party. Mummy Sylvia was going to give a big party to celebrate Ruth's birthday and a number of guests were to be invited. At this point, Irene started asking Ruth whether she wanted to invite Duncan. Ruth signed no. Irene repeated verbally Ruth's sign. No, then, shall we invite Jasmine? No again. Shall we invite Irene? No also. Shall we invite Ritienne? Again a negative answer. Shall we invite Joanne? Yes. Irene said: you only want Joanne at your party? And Ruth put her hand in front of her chest and laughed, moving her right leg in the air, an action which she normally does when enjoying herself. The teaching staff were suddenly involved and very interested in this play and asked Irene to go through the story with Ruth all over again. They suggested that this time Irene should change the sequence of the names recounted to Ruth.

And so she did. But once more Ruth only invited Joanne for her birthday party. The whole process was repeated several times, still with Joanne being the only person chosen from the school staff. The teaching staff now was participating and commenting on Ruth's responses. They tried to reason with Ruth in vain and persuade her in various ways to change her mind. Their arguments were similar to the following: You say no to Jasmine, but she is the one who escorts you home everyday – now is that fair? And Duncan, who loves you so much and spends so much time with you – don't you want to invite him to

your party? The staff members became concerned at Ruth's refusals and not a little offended. There were moments when Joanne was trying to excuse herself and explain why she thought that Ruth would choose her. She tried to convince the others that Ruth was only joking, that in reality she does want to invite all of them.

This episode did not stop there as the same story was repeated on the following days. Irene would start by asking Ruth during feeding time, prompted by the other classroom assistants. Ruth often chose different people as her guests. It would not always be Joanne, but once chosen, a particular person would continue to be Ruth's guest for that day. Cries of joy and some teasing could be heard when Ruth chose one staff member over another.

Keeping Ruth in mind

When planning a lesson or an activity, Ruth always needs to be kept in mind. This is the case even when a simple activity is planned for, one which does not ask much of Ruth. All may have to be put aside depending on just how much Ruth wants the persons around her to meet her immediate needs and follow her agenda. Very often, Ruth wants the person next to her to tell her a story, and it is possible that by complying, that person may then be able to follow the planned activity. If, however, the latter is invariably followed, it is very likely that Ruth will give a tantrum.

Sometimes, Ruth may be willing to follow and participate in the planned activity. On these occasions, which are rather rare, she can be very cooperative and participates in what is presented. I once observed a session in which Jasmine was trying to teach Ruth the different parts of the face. With hand-on-hand prompting, the assistant said the word *nose* and placed Ruth's hand on her nose, doing the same action for the rest of the face. By the end of the session, which did not last more than 30 minutes, Ruth was able to point to different parts of her face when told to do so. Later in the day, when the teaching staff shares with the rest of the class the activities which had been carried out, Ruth demonstrated what she had learnt – when anybody asked her to point to a part of her face, she could do so. She even clapped for herself every time that people praised her when she got what was asked correct. It goes without saying that this was demonstrated to her mother (this means bonus points from Ruth's mother), who in turn demonstrated it to all her family members. Jasmine's face was beaming with pleasure. The satisfaction of

success with Ruth is very rewarding, as Jasmine told me later, "…and Ruth cooperated without needing to be told a story" she emphasised.

However, more often than not, Ruth will not want to do anything unless she is told a story. Whenever she is not sleeping or happily listening to music, she will sign for a story. One has few options when Ruth signs for a story: one can pretend that the sign was not seen and thus ignore the communication. This may seem cruel but we unfortunately sometimes resort to it as it is a way of avoiding directly saying no to Ruth – it buys us some time. She signs again, again and again and will then start making noises with her mouth – a sort of faint calling voice. If no one responds to her repeated requests, Ruth then starts kicking and will throw a tantrum as discussed in Chapter Five. She cries, bangs her head, and will then not stop when she is given the attention she seeks. The teaching assistants maintain that Ruth wants to pay them back for the amount of time she had been waiting to get personal attention. We thus prefer not to ignore her signing and instead try to distract her attention and involve her in an activity which we think she will enjoy. Here again, we try to delay telling her a story.

The focus of this story is story-telling. Whereas, with the other children, we try to engage them in learning through story-telling, the target with Ruth is to reduce the telling of stories to set times in the day. There was a distinct moment when this shift took place. Ruth was introduced to stories through the multi-sensory method which I started applying in class. Today, however, Sylvia jokingly accuses me of being the cause of most of her daughter's tantrums. She tells me that I was the person who had started the family off on story-telling. Now, everything has to rotate around telling Ruth stories. Ruth's parents even resorted to recording their own voices telling her stories in cassettes. Wherever they go, they carry them around so that if Ruth wants a story, she can choose the one she prefers and listen to it on her walkman. Sometimes, however, Ruth signs that she prefers to hear a freshly-made up story. Thus, she keeps on stretching the boundaries and pushing at the limitations which her parents try to put up.

Thus, in Ruth's case, the target was to reduce stories so that her engagement in curricular activities could increase. As Ruth is the only student in the class that is able to respond to teaching, as shown in the above example, then she is expected to spend more time learning. Incredibly, stories are now viewed for Ruth to be almost a waste of time. Notwithstanding

the setting of this target, however, a lot of time with Ruth is still spent in story-telling. The irony is that while our aim is to lure Ruth from her stories so that she can enter into our activities, instead the teaching staff is drawn into her story. As shown in the beginning of this section, the classroom assistants are pulled in the story; they become part of it and are active participants in it.

An invitation

Before moving on to the next section, I extend an open invitation to any person willing to recount stories to come to my classroom. The more stories can be told the better. There is always room for stories and for anyone willing to recount them.

The big black spider

> The big black spider lived in the kitchen. The big black spider had eight legs: one leg, two legs, three legs, four legs, five legs, six legs, seven legs, eight legs. Ruth and her papa would feed the big fat black spider everyday. It liked baked beans, with lots of tomato ketchup, and vanilla ice-cream. But mama Sylvia was really afraid of the big black spider. She would scream and scream…
>
> Mama Sylvia called Ruth Red Riding Hood and asked her to take a basket of food to her nanna. In this basket mama put some cake, vanilla ice-cream and dindins (the word used for food). Mama Sylvia told her not to stop and talk to the big bad and ugly wolf…

These are the beginning of two stories that I have recounted endlessly and which I have heard endlessly recounted in my class by the classroom assistants. Ruth's name is now synonymous with story-telling. After agreeing with Ruth's request that she be told a story, the classroom assistant or myself would start the process of finding out which story she wants to hear. Ruth has favourite stories which she retains for certain phases. When this is the case then the choice of story is easy. Sometimes, however, Ruth accepts that a new story be told to her, even if it is one which she had never heard before. But Ruth may also sign *no*, and sign again for the story of her choice. The elimination processes commences. The person who is to recount the story has to name all the stories which Ruth knows, while she signs *yes* or *no* to each one. Needless to say, with the passing of time, the list of stories grows, and still the whole list needs to be gone through. Ruth does not tire of stories which she has been listening to for years. Not so the adults who have to tell them.

During the interviews, the classroom assistants were asked for their beliefs on why Ruth loves stories so much. The responses of all the interviewees were that they believed that through being told stories, Ruth enjoys being given individual attention. Jasmine and Irene said that she does not want their attention to be shared with someone else and has found a way of keeping it all to herself through story-telling. As long as the name of the story, Ruth's own name, and that of her parents are inserted in appropriate places in the story, the assistants maintained that the content is not relevant. It could even just be a long babble of words. Ruth's father has recorded a number of cassettes of his voice recounting stories which do not make sense – literally hours of recorded words strung together. Ruth, however, welcomes anybody who would tell her a story. The person who would be about to start is quickly informed about the basic pre-requisites, but no other skill is required.

How does one stop recounting stories to Ruth? Story-telling has to stop at some point – the teaching staff have other children to attend to and curricular activities to carry out, assessment sheets to complete and entries in contact books to write. It also cannot be denied that, after a while, telling stories becomes tedious and tiring. The classroom assistants reported that they have developed a number of strategies, aimed to prevent her from asking for another story for a while at least. On rare occasions, Ruth sleeps halfway through a story. Many times, when the end of a story approaches, Ruth is prepared for story-telling to be over soon. Notwithstanding, Ruth still protests against this, so we resort to music. On other occasions, the story is relayed to another person.

Ruth – story – the person saying a story. Ruth forces herself on other persons through her demands for stories, whether that person extends an invitation or not. She enters in that person's immediate attention, whether that person is willing or not. The metaphors used by Derrida of a stranger and a house are apt here. Ruth is a stranger, although one that we know, or think that we know. It cannot be emphasised enough that she is different from the other children in her class; she has some basic signs with which she requests what she wants. Yet it can still be difficult to understand her needs. She can never figuratively say her name and place of origin.

Derrida's house delineates the inside and outside, which however are accessible to each other through doors and windows. The person who owns a house can carry out whatever

project s/he wants in it; s/he can do what s/he pleases with it. The house can be seen as his/hers, be this person the classroom assistant, the teacher or anyone else. Ruth, the stranger, signs – she knocks on our house and wants to enter. We may try to resist her for a moment, but as shown above, sooner or later, story-telling has to start, and we have to invite Ruth inside. In the beginning of this section, Ruth asks for a story, Irene has options with ensuing consequences for the various options. Irene knows that if she does not start a story, she will have Ruth kicking and banging her head, her feeding would stop, and she would give all the staff members a hard time for the next hour. Irene thus goes along with Ruth in opting to say a story. Ruth, the stranger, forces her presence on Irene. Irene may not have been in the mood to tell a story; she may have been tired. Irene may even have been determined to uphold the targets which were set for Ruth. But she gives in and welcomes Ruth in her house. Derrida reminds us, however, that when we say welcome, come in my house, make yourself at home, this is "a self-limiting invitation. Please feel at home, act as if you were at home, but, remember, that it is not true, this is not your home but mine, you are expected to respect my property" (Caputo, 1997, p.111).

The law of hospitality motivates us to follow laws that are established. These are established with the best of intentions and are made to cater for the *other*, in our case for Ruth. Story-telling is something that the teaching staff do, on Ruth's request. Although it is often done to keep Ruth calm and quiet, Irene does note that "seeing Ruth clapping, participating, putting her hands in front of her chest and her right foot in the air (both signs that are associated with Ruth enjoying herself) when we tell her a story is also satisfying". Structures have been built, on the one hand, to accommodate Ruth's requests, and on the other hand to protect the teaching staff. There is acceptance on the part of the person saying the story, but not too much. I invite you to enter my house, but please keep your place.

A note on spiders

The focus of this story is the relation between the narrator and Ruth. I started this section by narrating the first few lines of the spider story that I have recounted endlessly. Deleuze (2006) says that a narrator is a spider. So I, the narrator, am a spider narrating stories about spiders. The spider for Deleuze is good for nothing. It does not understand anything. You can put a fly in front of it and it won't budge. But Deleuze points out,

> as soon as the slightest edge of the web starts to vibrate, it moves its heavy body. It has no perceptions, no sensations. It responds to a signal, nothing else. Just like the narrator. He also spins a web – his work – and responds to its vibrations while spinning it. A spider-madness, narrator madness that understands nothing, doesn't want to understand anything, isn't interested in anything except the little sign back in the background (p.31).

What you will be reading in the next section is not something that one understands. If we understood we would not do it. We would think of ourselves as mad. Teachers who do not want to understand – is this ever possible? It is not Ruth that makes us move, but the vibrations at the ends of our web that are caused by Ruth cause us to freak out – they make us move. As you will read in the next section, what is insignificant becomes so important. We are carried away with it. It will change us. So be aware.

Inverting roles

Ruth knocks on the house and invites herself in. The assistants are willing to keep her as a guest, knowing that thus far, they are able to exert some degree of control over the situation. Were they to ignore her knocking, Ruth's entrance would be unmanageable. However, with the story of the party, there is a reversal of the above. Ruth, the guest, becomes the host and the previous hosts are the ones asking to be invited in. She has taken over and they are the ones who want to continue telling her stories so that she can include her in them. This is a case of Derrida's absolute hospitality (2000), which is when the original host (classroom assistant) becomes a guest in her own house, and the stranger (Ruth) becomes the host of the original host.

The classroom assistants are now seen as strangers asking to enter Ruth's (the strangers) house. We have a reversal of roles. Ruth is no longer the guest, but becomes the host in the *story-space.* The classroom assistants, while still saying the story, are now the guests in the story. They almost compete among themselves to be invited for Ruth's party. Ruth's invitation is able to take the classroom assistant into *another space*. A place of absurdity, but maybe a real place for Ruth and the classroom assistants in that moment and also the following few days.

Reflecting on the opening story of this section, if Ruth is seen as the stranger, she can be seen to violently intrude in the house, the classroom assistants in this case. The stories which she demands may seem absurd to us, and sometimes are only seen as a way of

keeping Ruth happy and keeping her dreaded tantrums at bay. Her intrusion as a guest is tolerated, knowing that her sojourn will be relatively brief and peaceful compared to what would happen if her entry is resisted. However, there can be moments when the story becomes more realistic. My classroom assistants were really interested in seeing whom Ruth would invite to her party. Ruth is inviting people to her party. One can actually laugh at this point. But it could be seen as Ruth's ability to entice the classroom assistants even for a few minutes in the absurdity of her stories, in the way that she perceives life, and lives it, mainly through stories.

They start to invite her more willingly and ask her to stay for longer, as long as she chooses them for her party. Who is the host here? Ruth or the classroom assistants? We think that we welcome the *other* and make preparations for the other, but the *other* takes us and challenge us with her presence. The classroom assistants are drawn into Ruth's story world.

The story that Irene is telling Ruth, and how Ruth is opening herself to the story as well as all the other assistants, can be considered a space (a virtual space) through which different intensities are passing. Party intensities are passing, party intensities of a different kind that we are accustomed to: rivalry intensities, jealousy intensities, sincere intensities, children's intensities, happy intensities…

The use of language is interesting at this point. Ruth has some signs, basic signs, but through these signs we seem to get an understanding of Ruth's wants and needs. The question which I constantly pose myself is if these needs that Ruth demonstrates have the same meanings as they have for us. But that is very difficult to say. In relation to the story recounted, Ruth signs, and Irene translates the signs into verbal language, even if every one understands the signs. She almost loses her language to the language of Ruth. She uses single word language when talking to Ruth, while interpreting signs that Ruth uses. The sign language that Ruth uses is unique to her, we all had to learn it, and when we come up with a new sign it is discussed by the parents and us. A lot really depends on Ruth's physical abilities, yet there are moments when she herself comes up with signs or adopts signs like the music and story signs. The world of Ruth is made of stories, of intonations and exaggerations. Irene who is Ruth's guest, who decided to enter into her world with a story, seems to lose her language or better still takes up Ruth's language. This may have a

big significance to Ruth. The question is how much can Irene continue with this language that she is using to interact with Ruth. Is it momentary during the story or will it take the whole six hours of the school time?

My classroom assistants know that Ruth's invitation to her party is an example of an impossible invitation. The classroom assistants are aware of it. They know that there is no real party as we usually understand parties. They know that there is no food, no games, no conversation. Yet they want to be invited. They feel bad that they are not invited. They want to participate in this which does not seem to exist. Those invited need to justify themselves with the others, for their invitation. This comes very clear from the interview with Joanne, that, those invited feel responsible for such an invitation, and almost as Joanne was saying, she needs to make a self examination for lately she was not giving Ruth enough time. Joanne said that Ruth with her invitation was showing that she really loves her, and on the other hand, she was lately not reciprocating that love. It seems that both Joanne and Ruth are experiencing their lives through each other. It is therefore not just a momentary experience that story telling can bring over to Joanne, with all the intensities that could be involved, but this could result in a change in Joanne's attitude towards Ruth. Why Ruth chose Joanne on that occasion is something that no one can explain, but her signing yes to Joanne, whether conscious or not, seemed to have influenced Joanne, and in turn her relation to Ruth.

Fortunately or unfortunately there is a moment when stories come to an end. There could be several stories in a day, but there is a moment when they have to stop. The story that I recounted at the beginning happened during feeding. Ruth's IEP target stipulates that story telling should be reduced during feeding. This is mainly due to the fact that at home Ruth wants stories, and the parents are finding it difficult to cope with that especially during feeding. So the above story seems to be a breach in the order, an unlawful event that one closes an eye upon. The ending of a story could be seen that the refusal from our part to accept the absolute hospitality that Ruth is offering us. We prefer the law of hospitality where I, like the host, am in total control and I can question my guest, or the stranger that comes about. The lessons that I do, the activities that I plan seem to follow the structure where I or my classroom assistants are in control. So after the story it could be that I turn towards Ruth and ask her to put her feet down and tell her to start selecting switches, or interact with us at a given activity. Instead of seeing these two things as opposing each

other, Derrida suggests that "it is as though the laws of hospitality, in marking limits, powers, rights, and duties, consisted in challenging and transgressing *the* law of hospitality, the one that would command that the 'new arrival' be offered an unconditional welcome" (Derrida, 2000, p.77, author's emphasis)**.** While going along with our lessons, activities and targets, maybe there is this longing in myself and my teaching staff at times to lose ourselves in Ruth's stories, in Ruth's absolute hospitality, where we can enter the word of parties and non-language. And this is to our advantage as it may seem that we are not able to sustain Ruth's absolute hospitality for long periods of time. Her absolute hospitality could be too much for us to handle for more than short periods of time.

Once upon-a-time

I want to end this chapter on a personal note. Half way through this study I was asked to attend a workshop on digital story-telling in Karlstad, Sweden. Digital stories derive their power by weaving images, music, narrative and voice together, thereby giving deep dimension and vivid colour to characters, situations, experiences, and insights. A digital story is a 2-to-4 minute digital video clip, most often told in first person narrative, recorded with one's own voice, illustrated mostly with still images, and with an optional music track to add emotional tone.

I was told before the workshop to take with me personal photos and music that I like. After being explained the process, the course participants were asked to do a digital story themselves. I stood there wondering what to do. Some did a digital story about their pets, others about their children. I did a digital story on Ruth and her stories. It is only when writing his chapter and thinking along the lines of Deleuze-Guattari about becoming-story that I then reflected that this was an experience that I had gone through. Like my classroom assistants, I was making mine the intensities offered by Ruth and her stories.

I end this chapter by presenting parts of the script, as it is impossible to present the digital story:

Once upon a time there was girl. Three years ago I was asked to teach and work with an eight year old girl. Since then my class changed. From the moment she entered my class, head banging, kicking and shouting became everyday practice. Understanding each other was difficult. Then we made a great discovery – telling stories. Since then I never stopped telling stories.

Once upon a time there was a big black spider. This spider had eight legs. One leg, two legs, three legs, four legs, five legs, six legs, seven legs, eight legs. The big black spider lived in the kitchen. Ruth feeds her daily. Mum was really scared of her. She would scream loudly every time she would see her.
Once upon a time there was little Red Riding Hood. Mother asked Ruth Red Riding Hood to take some food to her grandmother who lived at the end of the woods. Ruth Red Riding Hood, can you take this basket to your grandmother, but please be careful – remember that there is the big bad wolf and the big black spider. Once upon a time there was a duckling, an ugly duckling. The duck looked into the water and there she saw the big bad wolf running after the big black spider. The spider went next to mum and as soon as she saw her she started shouting. In came the woodcutter to save her, but there were no wolves, only two swans who ran away when they saw him coming, leaving the ugly duckling behind. Grandmother took pity on him and made him a red clock for him that had eight feet.
Fairytales
Once upon-a-time
Stories
Once upon-a-time
And more stories
Once upon-a-time
And more and more fairytales
Once upon-a-time
And even more
Once upon-a-time
f… word tales
words
Once upon-a-time
And more words
Once once
Upon upon
a a
time time
and more words
Once once once
Upon upon upon
a a a
time time time
lost in words
everything became a story
everyday
every minute of my class
Once upon-a-time there was a man called Duncan

Chapter 7

At the end of an*other* school day.

The closure of the school day is seen as a gift for many educators and students alike after spending five to six hours of one's day in a particular educational context. Whether considering that school day as fun, or a day like many others, or a day to be forgotten, the school day always comes to an end. In this chapter two stories are given that focus around the last few minutes of the school day and the way out of school. Charles and Luke close the school day with a transgression to the economies of gift and sender-message-receiver. They are able to double – open up what is we close and offer us impossible gifts and impossible messages for us to engage with.

Story One: The Dance: tip tip tippiti tip

I was in the head's office, assisting him in inputting the data of all the children's assessments according to the new curriculum. The data consists of teachers' reports of the reactions that each child makes to given stimuli. These stimuli are presented to the child according to the Performance Indicators Scale (P Scale) she is working on. Most of the children at the special school, fall under P Scale 3 (ii), which implies that the children are working at a very basic level, giving instinctive reactions to stimuli. The reactions of individual children are noted according to a list of alternatives and then put in a database which is sent to the Central Office of this particular curriculum. This office, located within a British University, collects such data from other schools using this curriculum in the UK and around the world, so that each child can be compared to other children with similar needs.

While we were busy with this rather tedious job, the school's educational psychologist, who happens to be my wife, called me urgently from the secretary's office to go immediately to my classroom. Charles was dancing. In retrospect, I know that what I imagined was that someone was holding Charles on her lap, maybe sitting on the swivel chair and moving him around. I do that sometimes. So I responded in a rather lukewarm

way, but was exhorted to go and see Charles *now*. The headteacher was receiving a phone call, and I nipped out of the office to my class to see Charles dancing! I entered my classroom and I saw a euphoria: everyone shouting, very loud music on, people crying. In the far corner of the room I have a couch where Charles is placed to rest a little and gets the chance to stretch his body. Charles was on the couch and Ritienne was beside him, dancing. She was moving her body from left to right, each time bending the leg which was not bearing her body weight, and clapping. Ritienne is not tall and a bit on the chubby side. She frequently tells us how Freddy, her husband, teases her that she is fat and that she is always eating, especially when he is not around. She was now holding Charles's hands. The other classroom assistants were around the couch while the children were seated in a circle formation. I went in. They told me excitedly that Charles was dancing. They stopped the music and chose a particular song. Charles was lying on the couch with the mat under him, no shoes on. They told me how he was moving his legs and hands, that he could not stop laughing and that they had to lift his head so that he could breathe well. Joanne, Jasmine and Irene were crying. When the music was on again Charles moved his feet and hands. They told me not to go too close to him, for it seems that when I speak to him he stops dancing. Ritienne is sweating and her face is red but she is unable to stop dancing. I glanced at the other children, especially at Chiara. That day Chiara was there. She rarely comes to school, but out of the few times she did attend, she had to be taken to hospital four times. Yet she is there alone. I say nothing. My assistants are telling me how happy they are, with tears in their eyes. They had never seen anything of this sort from Charles. I see other teachers and classroom assistants coming over in my class to see Charles moving, or dancing as my assistants were calling it. Everyone was telling me that I had missed it all, Charles had been dancing for a while and his movements were so rhythmic and with great effort. Charles now was reducing his movements. The assistants decided to switch off the music. Charles is tired they told me. He really looked it. He was smiling. I left the class to go back to the office to continue the work with the headteacher. I comment on my entry in the office that Charles was doing movements that I had never seen in the two years I have worked with Charles. The head tells me to continue inputting data.

The above happened on a Friday. I worked with the head until it was time to go home so on that day I did not see my classroom assistants again. On Monday morning, as soon as we entered the classroom we all spoke about Friday's event. What struck me and Joanne (as she reported during the interview) was a comment which Ritienne passed which was

more or less the following: Last Friday, Charles did not just make my day, but my scholastic year, and I think it was one of the biggest things that happened to me in the last twenty years. After the hello song, the classroom assistants want to try Charles again on the couch. This time there is no mat. They place him on the couch and put the music on. Everyone is cheering up near Charles. Ritienne took her position. She starts off with the dancing again, clapping and taking Charles's hands and moves them a little. Irene suggests removing his shoes, for he did not have them last Friday. They also tell me not to speak to him. Charles this time does not move. After a few minutes we all started attending the other children. Still the assistants were speaking about last Friday but we were all doing other things. This time Charles did not dance.

In the last week of school before the summer break I asked my classroom assistants to take an A4 sheet paper for every child in the classroom and to write comments on each child. Not an annual report or some sort of progress report, but their feelings, or something that they wanted to share with the parents of each child. Each classroom assistant wrote down on the papers on each child and these were laminated and then sent to the children's homes. The following are the comments on Charles' sheet:

> Dear Charles, It was a pleasure to have you in my class for scholastic year 04-05. I tried to give you the best I could: love and care, the most! The biggest satisfaction for me at the end of the year was when you tried to dance to the music. I will always keep this memory of you dear, from Ritienne D.
>
> Sweet, Precious Charles. Thanks Chris for giving me so many precious moments. I will never forget the first time you danced to the music!!! That moment will keep on dancing in my heart…and also when I watch you following the lights you love so much … my heart starts dancing again. Irene.
>
> Dear Chris, I feel very fortunate that I have worked with you during these last two years for I believe that you have taught me so much… One has to have a lot to moan…you know how to appreciate the least thing or action done to you and receive it with such a smile. Lately you have showed us that you 'feel' music that you know how to dance. You have even managed to make me shed tears of joy… and with reason! Joanne.

Giving

Does not the idea of giving: giving time, presents, resources, lessons come across in this story? Everybody in it is involved in giving or receiving. Some are also able to acknowledge and reciprocate such giving. This theme is present in many ways and forms

in education, and is perhaps particularly prominent in the area of disability, inclusion and special provision.

The gift for Derrida is "the impossible" (1992c). This is important to highlight. It is one of those impossible possibilities that we are caught in, already mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 3. We want to give, and there are times when we want to give freely – we want to give gifts. However, Derrida draws our attention to the impossibility in our wishes, and notes the narcissism that accompanies giving and especially gift-giving. We are caught in wanting to give and knowing the impossibility of giving. One gives and one expects to receive, depending on the contract between the persons or entities exchanging. This is not giving but is a system of economy. A gift does not come in a system, and is not tied to expectations. It is aneconomical.

> There is gift, if there is any, only in what interrupts the system as well as the symbols, in a partition without return and without division, without being-with-self of the gift-counter-gift (Derrida, 1992c, p.13).

Derrida reminds us that a gift should not be tied to expectations. The true gift would assume the total absence of return (the countergift) and of trace, and is also one in which there is no memory either of the giving or of the receiving. "For there to be a gift, it is necessary that the gift not even appear, that it not be perceived or received as gift" (Derrida, 1992c, p.16).

In this section, I give examples of economies of exchange that surround Charles in the school setting where he is being educated. Different economies of exchange work like cogwheels fit together, very often controlling and maintain each other. In the following section I focus on Charles and his gift-giving, which interrupts our economy of exchange. It thus provides us with a possibility to think of giving in a different way, even if this is impossible.

The incident with Charles, which I refer to as dancing, occurred when the head of school and I were inputting the performance ability levels of the children in the school. Charles's level is P1. It is ironic that so much was happening in my class, while we were engaged in inputting data of each child's abilities in the school. The school had bought a curriculum for children with profound disabilities, rather than applying the Maltese curriculum for its own children. The particular curriculum chosen was preferred as it came with its preset

assessment package. Thus, besides helping teachers work with students with very profound learning difficulties, this curriculum also made the measurement of the teacher's performance possible through the measurement of the children's abilities. I see this is as large system of exchange which may even run the risk of making us forget Charles himself. Charles' development of his abilities, which is annually measured, is expected to increase with the teacher's input using the curriculum. Before starting the curriculum, the child's abilities are measured and it is assumed that they will increase when the child accesses the curriculum. A return for what is given to Charles is expected in terms of an improvement in his abilities, as measured in terms of units specified in the curriculum.

At P1 level, the units of measurement are such that they are sometimes described by the classroom assistants as absurd. At this level, when Charles blinks his eyes at a sudden sound, this is measured; when he changes his head position slightly, it is measured; when he dribbles, it is measured. All the movements and small noises which Charles makes are noted and given meaning, even if they apparently have no purpose. They are put down under the subheading intensive interaction, and are viewed as data.

When these are keyed in and sent to a central office, the results are compared to results from all the schools which used this curriculum internationally. Considering the uniqueness of every child with such severe difficulties, such that there may not be other students with the same profile in the same school, it is difficult to comparably note the progress of each child following a certain curriculum. Using the assessment package bought by the school, Charles, for instance, could be compared to other children of the same age and with the same performance level of ability in different schools following the same curriculum around the world.

Charles' performance is not compared to his class peers. It is measured against his performance in previous years and compared to the progress done by other students who are invisible. Teachers are given feedback on their students' progress by a standardised programme led by a British University. The persons leading this exercise have never met Charles and yet they comment on his progress. The teacher, who happens to be me, and his parents are given a progress report on Charles – they are the persons who spend every minute of the day with Charles, yet an invisible machine tells them about his progress.

Charles's performance measurement is based on the assumption that the persons working around him are transferring skills to him, which will later be measured. It is assumed that, due to his impairment, Charles does not have access to everyday stimuli that non-disabled children of his age access and manipulate. Thus, the curriculum tries to provide Charles with a variety of experiences in a deliberate, albeit rather artificial, way. Therefore we try to give Charles a variety of educational experiences that try to help him move from P1 to P2. The teaching staff and other professionals are expected to mediate the experiences through their lessons and interventions. The curriculum and the lessons become resources of experience that could be measured. Therefore teachers are mediators of these experiences. I will give some examples.

A switch is placed near Charles's right hand in a dark room. The switch glows orange under ultraviolet light. When he presses this switch enabled by a hand-on-hand support, the running light turns on, simulating the experience of Charles to turn the lights on and off. This usually happens in the multi-sensory room. What we want to give Charles are experiences of cause and effects: if he does something, something different will happen as a consequence. A sizable multi-sensory room was built and equipped with this specific aim at the special school. The idea is to provide a space where students can have artificial and controlled stimulations. What is given to Charles in that particular environment is controlled, manipulated and recorded. Some very expensive light/sound machinery was acquired for the multi-sensory room, and the support of a teacher specialised in this area was hired to support teachers and classroom assistants in their activities with Charles and his peers in this environment. Charles has two slots of activities in the multi-sensory room weekly, where, accompanied by one of the classroom staff, he is made to engage in artificial cause and effect situations. In the multi-sensory room Charles is positioned in as relaxed a position as possible and given all the time he needs to react to stimulation. I want to point out the expense of running a room such as the multi-sensory room. Having a room like the multi-sensory room is considered a luxury and Charles' attendance in the multi-sensory room twice a week is considered, especially for the educators working in mainstream schools, a privilege. So it may be considered that Charles is receiving an expensive gift from the special school.

Sensory equipment is not just available in the multi-sensory room, but in my class every year I would be given a number of resources that I could use in my lessons. Some

resources are specific to particular students. For Charles we got a sort of switch board. This board was made up of six big switches, that emitted a recorded sound when pressed. We had various sentences recorded and saved in the switch board according to the lessons that I was doing in class. It was placed in front of Charles when sitting or staying on the standing frame or when he was head down, and if accidentally he touched it, the switch board gave a sound. Usually this would make Charles give a slight head movement upwards and sometimes even a smile. We are allocated a small sum of money for each classroom to get this sensory equipment. So with my classroom assistants, I would have to review a number of magazines that advertise these *toys*, and see what would be good. Irene on one occasion went to sit near Charles who was placed on the couch and she put the magazine near his hair. She was seeing the different *toys* while talking to Charles to keep him company. She was asking him rhetorically: would you like to have this? Or would this be better?

But having resources and not having human resources, that is classroom assistants, at classroom level is useless. So my role as a teacher is to provide evidence of the amount of support each one of my students needs at the beginning of the year. I make a rough calculation of the support we are to give Charles if he is to receive an adequate level of education in my class. Chiara needs one to one support. She is apnoeic and therefore she needs someone to monitor her breathing and shout for the nurse the moment her lips start turning blue. The amount of human support needed is tricky for Charles. He is not a student who needs one-to-one support, yet he cannot have shared support (that is one staff member with two students). In my opinion, Charles is a student who needs 2/3 support. He needs to get a little bit more than half yet not full support. Somehow I work it out. In a classroom of 25 square meters there are five adult staff members, me and four classroom assistants and nine students on the book. Chiara rarely attends; the trip from her home to school is something she finds difficult to handle. The amount of support allocated to her I give to Charles.

What I give to Charles on a very regular basis are lessons. Teachers have time-tables, and have to have at least a literacy and numeracy session almost everyday, with other subjects taught a particular amount of hours per week. As already mentioned, this particular special school adopts the multi-sensory approach with the students (see Longhorn, 2001; Parker, 1998a, 1998b, 2001; Reading for All, undated). Park (1998a) argues that story-telling is

important because through the mediation of the senses, children with severe learning difficulties are able to demonstrate the following skills:

- The capacity to recognise themselves and other as things which think;
- The capacity to recognise mental states in themselves and others, as a capacity different from merely 'experiencing' such states;
- The capacity to refer explicitly to their own and others' mind and to use such concepts in explaining and predicting what they or other persons might do or say (Park, 1998a, p.2).

For children with PMLD, Park (1998b and Park and Grove, 1996) suggests literature as a tool for early communication functions. Before children start saying their few words, they are already engaged in two different types of communicative interaction: the proto-imperatives – "I want" behaviour and the proto-declaratives – behaviours designed to share information. Therefore story-telling mediated through the use of the senses is important to develop the *I* (the Cartesian cogito). Here is the economy of exchange: the teacher gives multi-sensory lessons and Charles is given the opportunity to develop this *I* – even is at a *proto* level that indicates the "earliest types of functions" (Park, 1998b, p.115).

Although these theoretical ideas are at my level of consciousness as a teacher, often the lesson seems to be more a question of *doing* than anything else. Today as part of the technology lesson we are doing different textures. After I had searched my house and even my mother's house for as many different kinds of textiles, with different feeling and colour in the drape, as I could lay my hands on, in class each assistant was sitting between two students and were talking about the different textiles and making them feel the different drapes. Ritienne was covering Charles' face and all his body with different drapes and pulling them softly, letting the drapes scratch softly over his body. This was repeated over and over for thirty minutes. Each time Ritienne would write the kind of drape she was using and Charles' reaction.

From the interview that followed the above lesson it is very evident that the theoretical basis of multi-sensory teaching is not known to the classroom assistants. A sort of simulacra happens here. When interviewing Ritienne about the multi-sensory approach, she explained it by saying, you make Charles feel, smell or hear. I had never thought about it in such simple terms. When observing not only Ritienne but also the other classroom assistants, I realised that she was describing the actions which were taking place in class. A length of material is introduced to the lesson so that the Charles could feel the texture: the

classroom assistant would pass it over the hand of Charles and move on to the next child. It seems that the classroom assistant does not see the multi-sensory approach as a means of mediating a story, but as a means to stimulate the senses. What becomes important is to give Charles' senses an exposure to the material, and quickly move on to the next stimulus.

All measures were taken at school level so that the staff could keep the child in mind, so that rather than applying Charles to a curriculum which is not appropriate for him, the curriculum can be adapted to Charles's needs. Daily programmes are set up within the classrooms, timetables are organised so that each class could have equal access to the multi-sensory room, the heated pool, computer room and the light/sound machinery. The special school, which only a few years back had beds as resources, now started to function like a mainstream school, with routines and schedules, with teaching roles and targets. The aim of all this is so that the curriculum can be adapted to and accessed by children like Charles. What I want to question, however, is whether Charles's place at the centre of the school's aims has been supplanted by the quest for resources. During the interviews with the classroom assistants this became very clear: when talking about the school, they all listed the different resources which the school provided, but made very little link between these and the children. The head of school would bring visitors to the school round the classrooms – but rather than introduce the staff and children, he would point out the variety of equipment and invariably tell the guests the costs involved in obtaining such equipment. When an expensive piece of equipment was bought, a day was organised in which the sponsors and important persons in the Education Division were invited for the opening. In Christmas concerts, all the classes were told to use as much of the equipment as possible, so that the invited distinguished guests could note the school's resources and their use with children, hoping that in seeing that the equipment was being used they would donate more. There is a prevailing assumption that the more resources teachers can use and avail themselves of to help them impart skills to Charles the better, as this is expected to bring results which can be measured and compared to other students with the same level on an international basis.

The parents of the children in my class report that one of the main reasons for which they decided in favour of special schooling is the fact that this school promises that their child will have specific resources for their needs. It seems easier to obtain specific resources in special school than it would be in mainstream school.

During the IEP session carried out for Charles, I (the teacher) am present with one of the classroom assistants, two physiotherapists, a speech pathologist, the school nurse, the head of school and the mother. Charles was also present. Charles attending the IEP session is a thing I had fought over some years. Charles will not contribute directly, but his presence I argued would help us keep focusing on him, and never lose track of him. Each professional would have assessed Charles, and thought about the targets that they want to work on for the coming year. Thus by the end of the IEP session, a written list of all the targets that different professionals, given their time and service to the child, want to work with is drawn up. Although theoretically everyone knows that IEPs should be a common set of goals that focus on Charles, from the IEPs observed each individual professional has his/her goals to work out with Charles. Sometimes these goals seem related or closely linked, but this is coincidental as it is not the result of a coming together of the professionals. Each professional group has a list of the skills that they want Charles to have. The professionals cater for different aspects of Charles, in that the given becomes specialised in specific areas.

At times, in order to give a service, compromises are needed. When it is time to take a child for therapy there is always a moment of compromise between the different professionals involved. If, for example, Charles has a physiotherapy session but is at that moment asleep, the physiotherapist and I try to come up with an alternative time. There is a bartering of time or space where Charles can receive what others can give him. It sometimes happens that an argument crops up between different people or different groups of people or professionals. I carrying out a lesson in the hall one day, and I asked my assistants to fetch something from the multi-sensory room. I had forgotten that the speech pathologists were there. My assistants went in, and took what was needed. The speech pathologists were offended by the classroom assistants' actions and perceived them as arrogant. As the days when they attend school are limited, they do not want to be disturbed and do not want anything taken out of the room where they are working. They not only told me and the headteacher, but when I was walking along the hall and met a physiotherapist, I was told "You lost cookie points today". I tried to figure out what he was saying. He continued "…with the speech pathologists. I would be also offended if you had done this to me."

We do not only give ourselves but we expect others to give. My assistants and I think that other professionals are there to give. The common joke when speech pathologists come and take Charles to the multi-sensory room is that when the Charles returns he will start talking. Although it may come across that classroom assistants do not understand what the work of other professionals involves, the expectation is that something is done for the child. It came across in the interviews that the perceptions of the teaching staff are that certain professionals have magical wands. You ask them, and they will give you a solution. So if Charles is not sitting well, then call the physiotherapist. If he is not eating well, call the speech pathologist. If his hands turn blue, call the nurse. The same happens with the psychologist, although not in Charles's case. In Ruth's case, the psychologist was called in to give us a behaviour programme for Ruth. This idea of giving children culminates in IEP meetings.

As already mentioned in other stories, and specifically in Charles' first story in Chapter Six, Charles is given different setting and standing opportunities and this is done through the physiotherapists giving a lot of their time observing, setting and re-setting Charles. This is also done with a lot of time spent in class in strapping and unstrapping Charles, lifting and moving him from one piece of equipment to another. Here I want to focus on the amount of time he was given by the speech and language pathologists, whose part of their work focused on helping students in their breathing and feeding. James, a very patient speech therapist used to spend hours trying to feed Charles and find the best way how do this and to see what kind of food was good for Charles. The food – which comes blended, is provided by the school. The special schools in Malta still offer a warm meal to all its students at midday (another gift). James would add a thickener to bended food until the right consistency was found. The trick is that after a while, the food gets too thick, so you would need to add warm water to find again the right consistency. However the difficulty is to find the right place to place the spoon full of food in Charles' mouth that will help him swallow it. Hoping that it would not either slide out of his mouth or else when swallowed Charles would cough and you would have blended sausages and baked beans all over you. This is something which happened often to James and the classroom assistants and I found ourselves looking at each other and smiling without letting James see us. When James thought that he found a system he would ask us to monitor and see with him all the process in order to learn how to do it. So professional knowledge which is acquired by one professional is given to others. This idea of giving knowledge to each

other is a characteristic of special education in Malta. Courses and in-service training are given to teachers and classroom assistants, and there is a drive in Malta to have as many teachers with Masters Degrees as possible even in the area of special and inclusive education.

It is not enough to give to Charles but I think this is extended to his family. This is done through several ways but mostly through the use of the contact book. The contact book is the means through which all the adults involved with Charles communicate. It seems that through the contact book we are somehow extending what was done with Charles to his parents and the time is also extended from school hours to after school. There is a memory, or a trace, of what Charles was passing through during school hours. The following is an excerpt from Charles's contact book, containing an example in which footprints and handprints are in some way extended over the school time, and given to others:

> Dear Parents,
> Today Charles had a lovely day.
> 1st session – footprints and handprints using paint as a whole classroom session.
> 2nd session – literacy session 1:1 with me. Objective: to indicate more, materials used: percussion instruments namely a plastic pyramid filled with popcorn seeds, comments: he enjoyed it a real lot!

A second reading of the above quote would seem to imply the idea of gratitude that seems to come out. It seems that we look for gratitude; since Charles cannot express himself verbally, we look to his parents to provide us with it. The first thing that is done when entering the class is that the contact books are taken out from the children's bags and read aloud. Different reactions can be seen and heard. Of particular significance are those reactions from the classroom assistants when they do not find a message written the previous day. They comment: "this (parent) never writes anything", or "this parent never says whether she likes it or not". The expectation of gratitude is also indicated in the manner how children are treated. As an example, when dirty clothes are packed after diaper-changing, the classroom assistants treat the clothes of different children differently. The clothes of some children are just stuffed into a plastic bag and put inside the child's bag, while for others the dirty clothes are nicely folded, put in a plastic bag and sent home as if they were clean clothes. There could be multiple explanations for such actions, but I think that the idea of gratitude plays a part. Some parents send goodies to staff; some other parents are very involved - they visit the school frequently and are very eloquent in praising us. Some parents are never around.

There are also moments when Charles is not receiving anything from the teaching staff and is just left alone. This seems to happen mostly in the afternoon when the staff is busy changing diapers and preparing to go home. He is there all alone. He may look up occasionally but usually is with his head lowered to his chest. There are other moments when something calls us to give Charles time and interact with him. For example at times his right hand turns blue, or he may start coughing really badly. These actions that come from Charles call us to be with him and give him whatever is necessary.

The dance

The idea of Charles giving something to the school and to the people working within the school is not something that is given much consideration. What we expect from Charles is that he gives some responses, whether intentionally or not, whether passively or actively. It does not matter, as long as we get a few reactions to the sensorial experiences, or stimulation that we carry out with Charles. This is what we expect Charles to give. If I am doing story telling, I have my lesson plan, with all the multi-sensorial resources possible. I try to fish out a reaction from Charles, something that in turn I can interpret and record, and build on. This is what the headteacher and I were doing, inputting these reactions.

Children like Charles have to undergo the constant receiving of what we adults give to them. There is a charity reading of this giving. There seems to be a compulsion from teachers, professionals and other adults to give, and Charles has to bear it all, to receive it all. The whole idea of special education and special schools rests on the concept of giving.

What I suggest in this section is that while the teaching staff and other professionals are all caught in the economy of exchange, Charles's dancing as recounted in the opening story of this chapter, could be seen as an example of the perfect or absolute gift, in Derrida's way (1992c), as a gift without economy.

Charles did something which the people present called dancing. From my experience of Charles, I believe it is highly unlikely that he was aware of what was happening, not to speak of intention. What we know is that it was not something that any of us expected from Charles. We never looked for it from Charles. We never thought that Charles could take the time to do this thing. He gave us without knowing and the arrival of the gift, of the

giving, the arrival of the movement took us by surprise. It found us unguarded. We did not know how to receive it. We did not even know what it was. We decided to call it dancing. It does not in any way resemble our dancing. We decided that it was related to music. The fact is that we do not know how to take what ever Charles was doing. We could not cope with Charles's gift that we closed it in an economy of exchange.

What then can we give Charles in appreciation for this event? We wrote comments on the laminated annual sheet as can be read above in the opening story, but those will never arrive to Charles himself. They will be read by his mother and three sisters. We could read those comments to him, but would he make sense of them? People were crying and a euphoria was taking place in the classroom, but did that mean a sign of debt or obligation to Charles? We also wanted a repetition (trace) of this gift – we tried to get Charles to do it again on the following Monday.

Oh shit!

I had missed it all. Inputting data vs. seeing Charles dance. The impossibility of his gift - not only was it not traced again, but Charles's death a few months after this event, made it an even more impossible gift!

Story Two: Smile please

All the students are in two straight lines. They are waiting for the last school bell to go. On hearing the last bell they will march out of the school to meet their parents or board the school minibuses that will take them to their homes. The classroom teacher is in front of the class. Luke's facilitators, with Luke in his buggy, are at the back of the lines. The bell goes and the students leave. The teacher, Luke's facilitator and Luke in his buggy remain in the classroom. Luke's mum is always a few minutes late, for she first picks up Luke's sister, then collects Luke after which they walk it back home.

The class teacher goes near Luke's classroom assistant. They start chatting. The teacher bends over to Luke and strokes his face lightly. After a few strokes Luke gives her a very big wide smile. She comments to the classroom assistant that he smiled to her today as well. The class teacher and facilitator pushing Luke move towards the Head of school's office, whiles chatting on the day. At the end of the school day, all the teaching staff before leaving home pass through near the head of school's office to say bye to the head of school and other people of the administrating team. The Head of school, in her last years of service and of big stature, bends over Luke's low buggy. She strokes Luke's face who after a while gives her a big smile. She comments that even today he smiled to her.

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The class teacher goes near Luke's classroom assistant. They start chatting. The teacher bends over to Luke and strokes his face lightly. Luke today is tense. He is crouching with the spasm. He's back is flexed and concave. He barely can stay in his buggy. His face is tense. His face muscles are so tense that they do slight jerky movements. He looks as if he is going to cry. Luke does all sorts of different face expressions: opens his eyes wide or closes them as if squeezing them; his eye brows move in different directions; his mouth takes different shapes and positions; his tongue seems tense as well. The colour of the face changes very suddenly – becoming red and redder. The teacher strokes his face lightly. She will get no smile today. She comments to the classroom assistant that Luke did not smile to her today. The class teacher and facilitator pushing Luke move towards the Head of school's office, whiles chatting on the day. At the end of the school day, all the teacher before leaving home pass through near the head of school's office to say bye to the head of school and other people of the administrating team. The Head of school, in her last years of service and of big stature, bends over Luke's low buggy. She strokes Luke's face but she gets no smile today. She comments that Luke did not smile to her today. They whisper something about Luke.

Luke's mum and sister arrive. After a quick chat with the classroom assistant, she leaves.

An*other* school day is over.

Behind the face

> Ordinary, three roles of the face are recognisable: it is individuating (it distinguishes or characterizes each person); it is socialising (it manifests a social role); it is relational or communicating (it ensures not only communication between two people, but also is a single person, the internal agreement between his character and his role) (Deleuze, 1986, p.99).

Following Deleuze the face is part of the signifying system. What the face expresses is what lies behind the face, even if the face does not always show all that there is behind it. The face seems to be caught up in this sender-message-receiver economy. Richard Rushton (2002) on the above quote argues that the face is always the face of the 'sender'. The sender is individuating insofar that the face is connected to or contained by whoever has the face, but it is social insofar that it has the capacity to hold meanings that are ascribable to the face's owner, and insofar as those meanings can be seen and interpreted by others (receivers). Therefore "ultimately, the face is an instrument whose primary purpose is that of *communicating*… the face allows us to understand what is going on in somebody" (ibid., p. 221).

The double writing of the story: one in which Luke smiles and the other where Luke makes other kinds of faces, seems to emphasise even this economy of message. In this section I will try to see some of the operations of the economy of message that are created by educators.

In both versions of the situation Luke's face is seen as the principle indicator of how he is, of how he feels inside. His smile indicates that he is fine and well - content. Due to the fact that it is difficult on the part of Luke's carers to know Luke's feelings the face gets this dominant position of 'facial machine' – that is the face becomes face-as-object, Luke becomes the equal of his face (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The smile and/or the frowned face become equal to Luke. Luke is nothing more then these two movements of sets of muscles. The assumption is that we think we know how Luke is through his smiling. We summarise and condense Luke's life through his facial actions. Rushton (2002) says that these facial images become Platonic and therefore representational

(p.224). Luke's recording sheets show how his day was focused around these two facial actions: Luke smiling or Luke frowning. The boxes are ticked by Luke's assistant three times a day: arriving at school, around break time, and afternoon period. Every time she writes how she is seeing his face. The face gets this privileged status of identification. This is also reported to the mother verbally and written down on communication book (school – home link diary), or rather drawn. For the classroom assistant draws a simple line face at the side of each page: either a smiling face with an arched mouth going up or a frowning face with the mouth arched down.

The teacher touches Luke's face and he smiles, the head of school touches his face and he smiles. Others do the same and he smiles. Why does Luke smile? Valerie Sinason (1992) argues that children with disability, and this also applies for children with profound disability, which children often smile to cover up terrible injuries. Even injuries of abuse are covered up by smiling. Sinason in her studies observed how non-disabled babies learn how to smile. A particular mother gently drying her baby after bath time however she wipes briskly her baby's mouth. The baby gave a sudden reflex. This action continued and after time the wiping of the mouth started to produce a smile in the child, and every time someone touches the baby's mouth he gave a smile. Sinason argue that the mother abuses the child – the briskly wiping of the mouth was covered by the babies smile (see pg.145). Similarly, even if I know that I could be generalizing too much, the gently touching of Luke's face by the teacher and head of school could be an abusive act that is covered by Luke's smile. I have introduced Sinason's idea because I want to focus for a moment on the touch. For Derrida (2005) 'touching' is the point of contact, a unique place of communication. However in his doubling way, Derrida sees the touch as means to designate the tradition of thought dominated by a metaphysics of presence. Derrida calling this *haptology,* appealing to the Greek root 'haptein' (to touch). Haptology that privileges identity over alterity, homogeneity over heterogeneity, and immediacy over separation, mediation or distance.

Whether the teacher and head of school think of their gentle touching of Luke's face as a possible abuse or not, they are aware of the fact that their gentle touch creates in Luke a smile. They look out for it. They touch – make an encounter with Luke, but this encounter is an encounter that is stimulated from the want of a smile from Luke: the teacher comments that even today he smiled at her (see above story). An encounter that has a

specific desires and wants. An encounter with a particular identity – that of making Luke smile, obtaining this gift from Luke at the end of a school day. With this encounter, with the gentle touch of his face, I think of Luke as having to leave from what he was doing, and conform to their act and smile. It is in this way that I read the point of encounter, this touch, as violence (in the Derridian Levinasian way) towards Luke, an abuse towards him.

The action of gently touching Luke's face is a repetitive action. At the end of each school day, even at other particular times during the day, educators who happen to pass near Luke and when he is not frowning, almost compulsively touch his face and wait for his smile. The whole process is almost a ritornello, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue, a safe place to be. For some people it is the only safe action that they can do to Luke. Their act according to Derrida (1990), would be an act of 'blindness':

> a hand of the blind ventures forth alone and disconnected, in a poorly delimited space; it feels its way, it gropes, it caresses as such as it inscribes, trusting in the memory of signs and supplement. It is as if a lidless eye had opened at the tip of the fingers, as if one eye too many had just grown right next to the nail, a singe eye, the eye of a Cyclops or one-eyed man (p.3).

The reinforcing of a particular identity, a smiling identity on Luke (haptology) is a repeated process that is done often without too much concern. Not only is the action of caressing Luke's face that is repetitive, but what is obvious and repetitive is the exclamation from those who stroke Luke's face and wait to see his smile is always: *Oh miskin daħakli* - Oh, he smiled at me, poor thing. I want to keep the Maltese expression *miskin* – poor thing, for its strong connotations that situate Luke within a particular economy. Luke through his smile brings about an *Oh miskin*. An exclamation – a repetitive exclamation that I, after a few times seeing people reacting in this way, was able to predict their words and keep from smiling every time it was said – while I say to myself, here we go again. Luke's smile, with the *Oh miskin* expression is accompanied with particular facial signs on the part of educators. So the implications of the expression *Oh miskin* is part of Luke's identity.

In the interviews concerning Luke all the interviewees mentioned Luke's smile: "at least we can know how he is", the head of school commented. It is not only that the smile is seen to represent how Luke is today, but it is given signification. The assistant head of school seemed to equate the smile with successful inclusion. According to this assistant

head the measurement of how successful and how much Luke is gaining through the inclusive process is measured through his smile. What comes across is the interpretation that is given to the smile by those interviewed. Some responded that Luke's smile means that he is comfortable; he is enjoying the school experience and being with others. That he is not tired and enjoys the company of others. Luke's smile, which is stimulated by the educators, is giving signification which then subjectifies Luke through particular discourses.

Sourire à deux

The teacher touches Luke's face, he smiles. What does the teacher do? She smiles back. So does the head teacher, and all others. There is a mirror image of Luke. Both Luke and the class teacher smile. This I am calling *sourire à deux*. For the teachers and head of school, the smile is caught in a vicious circle of re-productivity. Here the focus seems to move from Luke's face to the face of the adults around Luke. Luke's smile sort of touches the adults, without an actual physical touch, but is able to produce a smile in them as they are able to produce in him. Luke's smile sort of gives permission in the adults to produce a particular face – a face with a smile. This is the humanity of the face (see Deleuze-Guattari, 1987, p.86).

But I am reminded by Sinason (1992) that if Luke smiles because of an abuse (violence) on the part of adult, what I have called the touch, similarly the adults smile because of an abuse from Luke – his smiling face which we have produced in the first place ourselves. Sinason points out that "smiling then becomes a secondary handicap in the person and in their smiling workers and parents" (p.143). Bringing forth a smile in Luke's face could be seen as furthering a disabling identity on Luke, and also making our selves disabled. "If we believe the smile is a smile we are being stupid idiots and are therefore being laughed at precisely at the moment we feel sympathy or pleasure" (p.148).

Inhuman face

Deleuze-Guattari argue that if a face is produced in humanity, the face is also absolutely inhuman (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.86). The smiling face is only one face that Luke does, and not completely spontaneously but through the intervention of a touch. However Luke's face, which, Deleuze-Guattari remind us, was before Luke's smiling face, is able to produce a multitude of other faces. The production of Luke's smiling face, which

produces a smiling face in us adults, is endowed with identity, with humanity. However, Luke is able to produce a number of other faces to which we find difficult to give an identity and above all we find it impossible to copy and imitate. We prefer to step back when he does these faces. Tense faces, slight jerky movement faces, crying faces, wide opened eye faces, red faces. “Suddenly a frightened face looms up that looks at something out of the field. The other person [Luke] appears here neither as subject nor object but as something very different: a possible world, the possibility of a frightening world” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.17).

These faces produced by Luke are a bit too much. We prefer the smiley face of Luke. That we can cope with, but these faces, these inhuman faces, we are not able to cope with, they frighten us too much. The teacher and head of school still try to force their identity over Luke by trying to touch him even when he is doing such faces. They still try to transform these faces into a recognisable face which copes and to which they can respond. They also start talking of special school as a better setting for Luke, or say that he is not comfortable in their school, or that they do not have enough training or resources, or that he is just having a bad day. They try to justify Luke’s face.

The teacher and head of school today are being offered a different face, different possible worlds through the different faces of Luke. Will they take these up? Will they imitate these faces? How would the head of school look if she started to tense her face, start crying, open her eyes wide or squeeze her eyes closed? Would we not think that there is something wrong with the head of school? Would we think that she is practising for a stage play?

I have to admit that I tried to do some of these faces myself at home, first alone and then in front of my wife. I felt ashamed and helpless. I wondered if that is the reason why we do not engage in the frightening possibilities offered by Luke’s face.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The stories in the previous three chapters situate me in a 'zone of proximity' (Deleuze, 1997a, p.2) with various intensities, that were created by the students with PMLD in my class and in the primary classrooms, which intensities have permeated me. While I experienced all this, the 'zone of proximity' that I have presented was created through the act of writing the stories. It is through the process of writing the stories and comments that I was able to 'make sense' of the 'non-sense' that I was experiencing and engaging with.

It is through re-reading my own stories and realising my process of becoming-PMLD, becoming-teacher, that I can identify some lines of flight that have circulated around the assemblages I was part of. The first section of this Chapter will try to 'plot out' some of the intensities taking place in classrooms and schools that I was involved in. I think the importance of trying to point out some of these intensities is also because they act as points of duration for me. Derrida and especially Deleuze-Guattari call for caution when allowing oneself to be permeated, or as Deleuze says: become indiscernible or indifferent to non-sense. The terms 'becoming', 'permeated', 'indiscernible' and 'indifferent' cannot be taken lightly. As I argued in the Introductory Chapter it is more than thinking again and it is more than opening thinking to itself; one sees one's identity and school / classroom identities as made up of assemblages, where different forces and intensities are operating, often contingent and even contradictory ones, thus creating aporetic moments of identities. But it is through engaging with some of these flows, forces and intensities that I was becoming-teacher and becoming-PMLD.

Allan (2003) argues that teachers need to acknowledge moments where they are caught up in aporia. Smith (2007) draws a distinction between knowing and acknowledging, and suggests that maybe all that we can do as researchers is to ac-knowledge these aporetic moments. We can say the same for teachers. Through working with students with PMLD I felt caught in these moments of aporia, and through primarily the works of Derrida I was

given a vocabulary and even taken further in my feelings about being caught in these moments. However, I want to add more to Smith and suggest that it is engaging with the ac-knowledgement that is important to my becoming-teacher and becoming-PMLD. It is not enough to know of non-sense and acknowledge it, but it is 'making sense' of it that I am suggesting. As mentioned in the introduction, 'making sense' is not to lineate or stratify non-sense, but find a zone of proximity with non-sense, to become indiscernible or indifferent to non-sense.

The stories that I have just presented have teachers (very often I am at the centre of the narration), classroom assistants and other educators in relations with the five students read through the works of Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari. The stories show how thinking again is possible through the involvement within the lives of students with PMLD, and also how the different spaces of intensities provide us with becomings: becoming-teacher and becoming-PMLD, and as Deleuze-Guattari would say becoming-imperceptible.

Yet to these stories, which are my stories as I have argued in Chapter Four, needs to be posed a crucial question which is at the heart of disability studies: are they political? What contribution can these stories have to disability studies? What input do these stories give to the inclusion debate and experience? What does my experience in being with and working around students with PMLD mean for teacher and educators working around students with PMLD? On the one hand I am tempted to generalise my experience to teachers and educators through highlighting points and listing recommendations to teachers; on the other hand I know the impossibility of such a task. Derrida reminds me of how my writing and my formulation of ideas are constantly under erasure; they cannot escape supplementarity and différance. Similarly, Deleuze argues not to give a form to our experiences, ideas and writing. Giving them a form may imply a domination of a form of expression that "claims to impose itself on all matter" (Deleuze, 1997a, p.1). There is the risk that these stories become a 'majoritarian' discourse. When they become so, they will be part of the linear discourse that was highlighted in the first two chapters, which can be oppressive for children and adults with PMLD. Although at present the stories and my experience of thinking again and becoming are still minor language, this does not mean that they are apolitical. They are political because they are inventing a people to come. Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari's work both focus on 'to come'.

The final section of this chapter addresses the question mentioned in the beginning of this thesis: *how does it work for me?* How did engaging with the spaces offered with students with PMLD work for me? How is it reflected in my becoming-teacher and becoming-PMLD?

Planes of sense making – establishing a style.

Space plane

Spaces in schools are calculated, measured, nicely plotted. Every space is maximised and *used up* and seen in terms of productivity. Spaces are coded and mapped out clearly and are required to be understood in a particular way.

Luke goes around the school building, from one class to another, from the head's office to the yard. These school buildings are often clearly marked spaces, with signs showing the utility and function of that place. Efficiency and productivity of school space is often a vital part of the school life. School spaces are monitored and closely looked up – CCTV are great tools for this. From a monitor panel one can see all the spaces of the school at one glance. The therapeutic heated pool at the special school is a typical example of a close monitored school space. Alkaline levels, pHs and temperatures reports are carefully monitored and recorded, and a copy of the report is placed on the school notice boards. Risk assessments are constantly carried out and staff members are often reminded of health and safety procedures. To enter into the pool area one has to put on over-shoes, and specialised equipment for handling students is constantly upgraded. Roles are given and trained for, and everyone is expected to know these roles. If you do not have a role or specific aim, you do not need to enter such places. If you enter the pool space you are asked for your reasons by the pool coordinator.

The school halls of both schools are often conceived of as closed spaces, which are heavily coded. The lined classes with the head of school addressing the students in the mainstream school with the class teachers walking along the lines of students. The head of school addresses the school with the microphone and makes her routine speech. In the special school, staff members gathered at the side of the hall, while the students are grouped at the centre of the hall and the head of school addresses the assembly to the staff, while standing in the middle of the students. The halls resemble a big chess board. Each staff member,

each student and the respective heads of schools, are representing a piece in the game. Each piece moves according to striated spaces. Each piece respects but is afraid of the *other,* and acts according to the actions of the others.

Luke's classroom space is a *square syndrome* – square desks, square whiteboards, square book and square copybooks, and square lessons are carried out which are forecasted on square schemes of work booklets. Later the teacher inserts ticks into squares to measure the successes of the students. The classroom at the special school is small, and full of expensive specialised equipment. Nina's queen-like specialised chair takes a large amount of space and other equipment in the classroom from standing frames, alternative communication devices, to hand made shakers, all have a place in the classroom space and a particular use that is calculated by professional suggestions and advices. All these pieces of equipment are haunted by targets, aims and benefits for individual or groups of student. Their movements in the classroom space are a reminder of this.

The different professionals working in both schools have specific spaces that are often protected and well bordered. Within the IEP space different professionals are brought together, and often a tension or certain kind of jealousy to protect one's space is felt. This can be similarly felt with parental space, either with their constant presence at school, or with their absence. The decision to get these different people together could be *maddening* in the Derridian sense. How much of my space am I going to give up to let you enter and take over? These ideas have been thought of in relation to the house that both Derrida and Deleuze-Guattari use as a metaphor of protection, comfort and stable place / space.

This calculated re-affirmation of space and place with its constant coding and re-coding, are inscribed with nice rhetorical words into professionally made posters either at the school entrances under the title of 'School Ethos' or 'Customer Charters' of the various professionals. But Luke, Charles, Ruth, Nina and Mathew are able to go around these school spaces with comfort. These spaces for them are deserts of wanderings, *go* games pieces. But it is not only that they can go around our spaces easily, but in so doing provide us with new with spaces. Aporetic spaces – maddening spaces, and assemblage spaces – intensity spaces. Spaces that seem to call us, invite us in. Houses without doors; open or non-existent borders. Sometimes I and other members of the school staff took up these

spaces, tried to venture in these spaces, tried to live in these space, or like Robinson Crusoe did not do anything with these spaces – and so just lost them.

Luke going around the school, wheeled by his classroom assistant, is welcomed by all the different school members, yet belongs to no specific space in the school. In the classroom he is at the back of the square classroom space, he seems to have no space. However, he has a non-space - a non-place, where his peers go, and where they are able to engage in an assemblage that helps them exit, albeit temporarily, from the square syndrome. Luke's peers form a small crown. They form a non-square space around Luke. They move in his space, they collide with each other and form assemblages. In this space they sing, they move around, they touch each other, recount stories, act out *mummies* roles. Luke's peers are called from Luke's (other) side, they are called from the non-square space. They are called to engage within this space. They have a possibility of moving into a non-square space and engage with it.

Nina has a variety of spaces: *another space* and *non-place.* My invasion of Nina's space during the hello song, with the tambourine or water spray often distances Nina from me and the teaching staff. That is what we expect her to do. This is what we mark and comment on in her skills profile. However, sometimes she surprises. When hugging the soft toy or Jasmine, she enters into our space, topples us within our space. We experience a space within a space, an unknown space within our space. This we do not know how to handle. We are astonished! This creates an *ooh* in us adults working around Nina.

Body plane

Body movements are of great interest in the stories. Sets of movements are occurring simultaneously. In the special school hall there are simultaneously the body movements of the teaching staff – straight with their arms hanging down to their sides. Nina however is almost falling off her buggy with her with her arms in her mouth, and her feet in the air – as if doing cartwheels in her buggy. The teaching staff standing straight for the National Anthem, Ruth kicking and sort of dancing to the National Anthem (which was originally composed as a children's song). Luke roaming about the school, while his friends are sitting in the classroom. Nina moving her body away from us and almost toppling over in her queen-like specialised chair, then moving towards Jasmine and hugging her very

unexpectedly, creating in Jasmine this feeling of special, love, wonder and confusion. A feeling that she personally needs to share.

The body is caught up in this tension: on the one hand trying to understand what a body is and represents, and on the other hand what can a body do. Charles' body experiences the constructions and manipulations of the various professionals and staff. His body is an arena of makings and doings, of fixing and altering, or trying to get better and gain control. This is done through an army of means, ranging from: expensive specialised equipment, to doing absurd things – such as putting Charles head down on a triangular wedge for more than thirty minutes. I have described this as the effort on the part of the staff to try and make Charles's body *not-so-much-profoundly impaired body*. The complexities of making this body better need to be seen as an ongoing frustrating complex. Charles however slips his own body and our manoeuvrings. He seems to slip the *not-so-much-profoundly impaired body* effort made by us. He is able to encrypt his own body and in doing so pull us in this dark, empty cold body space. His breaking movement of stretching, his ankle giving way under his own weight and his death seem as intensities that move us beyond our constructions of his body.

Ruth's kicking and head banging occur often in the school, a dreaded, energy consuming and frustrating experience to those who have to work around her tantrums. The pain of wanting to have the ability to stop Ruth from hurting her own body and not managing. In order to reduce or hopefully keep at bay these tantrums we plan out the day and try to keep Ruth busy and stimulated, but she always supplements our ideas, tasks and efforts. She is always able to create in us that dissatisfaction of not knowing what to do; she is able to create a feeling of tiredness in our body – to exasperate in frustration.

Charles' body is accommodated by a number of gifts – often expensive and complex sensory devices that we assume can make Charles' life better and his breathing more comfortable. We enter this economy of exchange; we give in order that Charles may give something back. But when Charles starts dancing, when his body movements are moving to the rhythm of the beat, we are being given something that is impossible to cope with that is mind and body boggling.

Bodies touch each other. The touch is an encounter of two bodies that come together, or two forces that come together to form one body. But if a touch is a point of encounter, a point of communication, it is also a point of identity, of point of transfer of one to another. The teachers and head of school gently touch Luke's face, and Luke smiles while they express the phrase *Oh Miskin,* which typifies the deficit discourse within which Luke is thought about.

Luke's face is seen as the culmination of his body. Seeing and reading Luke's face we assume that we know how Luke is feeling physically and emotionally. Above all his smile is a reflection of his educational experience: creating a smile in Luke's face by gently stroking his face, which we interpret as he is happy and OK. It creates a smile in us, what I called *sourire à deux.* But while we can cope and desire Luke's smiley face, we cannot cope and imitate Luke's red face, crying face, or tense face. We are offered different faces by Luke but we do not know what to do with them.

Sound plane

Sounds - abstract noises, music, story telling, strange BFG words, monotones, teachers explanations, teaching, professional language and technical jargon - are all happening simultaneously within these stories. It is a gathering of different tones and acoustic happenings that give possibilities for one to move about with ease from one noise to another, or to listen and produce different sounds.

The school staff sings the National Anthem, while Nina does her *tok-tok* sounds. Her sounds - a particular sound - is other than the sound of the head of school talking about school audits. Joanne tries to attract our attention to Nina.

We sing the hello song to Nina – she moves away, then she does something that creates in us this *ooh* by coming over us and does something that we would never think that Nina would do: she hugs Jasmine. When this happens, we are not able to produce words, but we are able to produce sounds.

Ruth loves stories. She constantly wants to be told stories. If she is not told stories she will have big tantrums. When Ruth has tantrums she is very difficult to handle, and will take the energy of many staff members. She loves the story of the black spider, and she loves to

be a character in the story, so we adapt stories to suit her, such as Little Ruth Red Riding hood. The difficulty is that the story may take long parts of the day. There is constant regurgitation of stories and words from the staff, so that gradually they lose the notion of time and words. The constant continuity of words often lose their sense, and what becomes important is the constant flow of words being said to Ruth. Therefore, more and more words are constantly needed to keep Ruth happy.

But in spite of this tiredness of words, Ruth with her stories is able at times to create particular situations among the school staff through which they create among themselves particular stories. The party invitation, which started as Ruth's story, ended up as the staff story. Ruth gave the staff a story in which they took different positions and characters that created in real life situation arguments and even moments of jealousy amongst themselves.

Matthew's class is seen as an orchestra led by the class teacher as the conductor, while Matthew at the back of the class composes, plays his sounds and hums. The relation of Matthew's peers with the class teacher creates good music – a co-ordination of sounds in the classroom, while Matthew's sounds seem like a bad copy of song. However, this bad copy could be more real then the pleasing music that is going in the classroom. The teacher and his peers seem to be creating good music, but in reality they are just reproducing music. Matthew is creative in his sounds, and he infects us with his sounds. He cannot resist humming tunes and the teacher finds herself recommending that her children imitate Matthew in their rehearsals of the BFG.

Time plane

Slow and fast. Slow time, fast time. The ticking of the clock in these stories seems to go haywire. There is a different timing taking place in these stories. The now often takes the force of eternity. The school day is systematically divided into lessons and time-tables. The school year time plane is planned from the previous year. Both schools in the study have a school year calendar that is available on the website. School diaries are printed and distributed to students on the first day of school with the details of activities during that school year. Similarly the school day space is properly time-tabled and forecast beforehand. Teachers, classroom assistants and other educators all have to forecast what they will be doing in their classroom months ahead. At the beginning of every term, schemes of work are handed to the senior management teams, and weekly forecasts have to

be given in half way through the week for the following week. It is expected that every teacher has detailed planned learning activities, with clearly marked out aims and objectives. Teachers have to manage their time well. They have to spend their time well.

However, Ruth through her supplement brings non-time into time; she sets time running fast and moving uncontrollably in the ordered and programmed time flow of the school day. She can make minutes feel like hours and hours seem like minutes. When she has a tantrum, time seems to be moving slowly, even at times to be still. When we start a story, we take a deep breath. The deep breath is the start of a timeless period for stories are a never-ending process. Yet when we become part of the story during break time, time seems to stop and yet rush. We enter into a different time plane. Similarly Matthew, with his humming and noise, gives a different time to the pace of the classroom. Luke's place at the back of the classroom is able to offer his peers and classroom assistant a different timing that which operates within the square syndrome.

An appendix: a *fantastic decomposition of the "I"*

Other and alterity, BwO and faces, tiredness and exhaustion, trees and rhizome, plateaus and machines: I recognise these terms now through the process of this thesis. Through these stories and workings on them, there is myself, living a life of doubleness, a life of aporia, and becoming. Coming to know Charles, Nina, Luke, Matthew and Ruth, but also Derrida, Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari has been a violent experience for me. As I have already pointed out in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the reader meets me through these stories. These were my stories and me working on these stories. This implies the reader comes to know my body movements, my sounds and my time. I stand straight and move in controlled spaces, I produce and create orchestrated sounds, within particular times and place.

The stories and the workings on them are mine but also not mine. They are the narratives of Charles, Nina, Luke, Matthew and Ruth exercising their agency over me. Yet the narratives are not even theirs. They and I have given birth to a 'third person' (Deleuze, 1997a, p.3). They are able to place me by opening up my space in an*other* space of dwelling, of thinking. This thinking has been a thinking about myself as a teacher, of what

I did and am doing, and will do in my classroom. I appreciated more the work of some of my colleagues, and felt angry at others. Some of this dwelling provided me with opportunities that if I engage with them – and there were moments when I did, I was able to feel, think, act and consider a change within me. I laughed at Nina's movements in the hall, even if it was within a non-laughing space; I felt frustrated and tired through being supplemented, yet wanted to feel exhaustion of infinite possibilities. I was a character in Ruth's story, and was humming around silently to one of Matthew's tunes. I wanted to copy Luke's face and did so at home to my wife. I pronounced *ohh* when Nina hugged Jasmine. Charles, Nina, Luke, Matthew and Ruth have shown me how to be a more a sensorial educator.

P is for Political, or Professional, or PMLD

This thesis was characterised by an ethics of affirmation through the possibilities it offers for the classroom assistants, other professionals and myself of becoming*s* in spaces that are often linear, closed and oppressive for students with PMLD and everyone around them. These possibilities, I have argued, come from students with PMLD themselves, even if this was not ever part of my frame of mind to start with and it never occurred to me while working with them. I like Derrida's idea of stranger to explain this unawareness (see Derrida 2000), someone or something that comes from nowhere and is able to take over us. This has been reflected in my experience - it had not occurred to me that my students with PMLD could enter my space and engage me with possibilities that I could take up. These possibilities are on the one hand very sensorial and yet engage my thinking. In this light I see this experience as one of affirmation, an experience of possibilities and production. As mentioned in the Introductory chapter, this affirmation leads to an ethics of longing – a longing for the students with PMLD.

Therefore, I am suggesting that teachers can have the possibility to experience their engagement with students with disability in a similar way, I highlight points in my own experience of these wanderings with the intensities offered by students with PMLD. Moving away from an engagement of neutrality or oppression to an engagement of affirmation would mean questioning our identity as teachers – the ground beneath my feet was washed away as suggested by Ian Buchanan (2005) and I engaged in becoming-teacher through becoming-PMLD.

Invisible hand

An ethics of affirmation starts with Chapter Two: Cartographies of Identity. It is fairly easy to identify people and children with PMLD. The impaired body, and often their lack of evident communication, is enough to label people and children with PMLD as *others*. While there are some impairments that need more consideration before coming up with a label of *otherness*, somehow we can say with ease that Charles and his friends are this *other.* This not only implies a distinction between them and us, but also the arrogance on our part to define this *other.*

Yet there is another factor worth noting. Rosi Braidotti (2006a, 2006b) reminds us that we forget who we are through our assumptions. We are invisible to what and who we are. Deleuze and Guattari call this the 'invisible hand' (1987). While it is fairly easy to say who the other is, it is difficult to say who we are. The molar category of non-disabled is hard to grasp critically, keeping in mind that non-disabled tends to break down in a number of subsets. This seems to imply that non-disabled have an identity that is somewhat illusionary: we think we know who we are and who we are not, while we know the identity of *other*.

I want to argue a similar position in education, especially in relation to the education of students with disability in our schools. We assume the child as *other,* and believe that we know the identity of the child. We are able to say what makes that child with disability as *other*. While it seems easy to *other* the other, who we are - our identity as teachers seems to be *invisible.* Nothing makes us *other* ourselves and we continue with our assumptions of our own identity. The many different groups of teachers make it difficult to say what the identity of a teacher is. Yet we are all teachers. It is assumed that we know who we are, what our role is, and what makes us professionals. Deleuze would say that this *invisible hand* is common and universal (see Deleuze 1990).

I argue that the teacher's *invisible* identity is preserved until the teacher faces the students both in a group and as individuals. Policies, specialisations, skills, performativity and simulacra tasks keep teacher's identity safe at bay and somewhat hidden. But the encounter with children, and for this thesis an encounter with children with PMLD, is a violent encounter on our identity as teachers. I argue that by learning to view ourselves (teachers)

in front of the other (children and children with disability) we realise that we do not know what our identity as teachers is.

This may seem as a contradiction for it is assumed, and our experience as students ourselves has shown us, that teachers engage constantly with students. However teachers seem to be moving away from children and especially children with disability. Children are being replaced by with policy procedures, specialisations, skills and performativity tasks. The child has taken a second position in education. Ballard (2004) argues that we have stopped talking about children in our classrooms and schools and instead talk of learners. The learner for Ballard is closely related to outcomes. Now educators focus on outcomes of learners not on children. Cormack and Comber (1996) argue that policy documents 'write' the professionals and students "who they should be, what they are to do and say, and when and how they must do or say it" (p.119). As Honan (2004) argues, the ideas and assumptions of teachers are subsumed by the assumptions in policy documents. This process is expected by the same policy document which also assumes that it takes place automatically and is not in any way challenged. Thus the identity of teachers and other professionals within education is in constant development owing to the increase of assumptions of what such a professional is and what is expected of him/her. Contradictory positions are posed without the attempt to iron out the inconsistencies (Cormack and Comber, 1996, p.121). With every update of policy, such change needs to be incorporated, if possible, without the removal of anything in the older versions. Honan (2004) claims that teachers seem to have a *superhuman* identity in policy documents – they have to make impossible ends meet in their classrooms (p.274). Policy document assumptions remove responsibility from the teachers and other professionals, thus reducing their ethical possibilities and providing a risk-free environment, in an attempt to become perfect (Smith, 2006a). All this complicate the *invisible hand* in teachers' identity.

Therefore not all engagement with students with PMLD is seen as an engagement of affirmation. Far from it. Some of our engagement with students is an engagement of oppression and limitation. Other instances of engagement may not be oppressive, but nor are neither liberating.

This thesis, as suggested in Chapter Four, has focused primarily on my encounters with five children; however, I have at times also suggested how classroom assistants and other

educators encountered Ruth, Matthew, Nina, Luke and Charles. Readers of this thesis may be influenced by my becoming in their own thinking again and encounters with students with disability, the focus being the *process* rather than an end product. In spite of the limitations that we teachers work within, with the pressures from Local Authorities to perform and better our standards, I still think that we can carve out spaces in our classrooms and schools that make us aware of what our teacher's identity is (using again Derrida's style - if there is something as teacher's identity) and how we can be non-oppressive in our attitudes towards ourselves and the students. I first had to un-learn and then re-learn who I am, an ongoing process without a fixed target. This is nothing more than an ethics of BwO that readers may be inclined take up. In the following I suggest an ethics of BwO, which is an affirmative ethics such as the one I experienced in working with Luke, Nina, Charles, Matthew and Ruth.

Violence

Slee (2001) makes the powerful statement that inclusion starts with ourselves. 'I' is of utmost important in the process of inclusion. However Derrida constantly questions what constitutes 'I' as the subject. Taking the subject in its 'classical' form: as man, as white and as Western, Derrida argues that the concept of man is never examined. 'Everything occurs as if the sign ''man'' had no origin, no historical, cultural, or linguistic limit' (Derrida, 1982a, p.116). My understanding of who I am is more 'a question of determining the possibility of meaning on the basis of a ''formal'' organisation which in itself has no meaning' (Derrida, 1982a, p.134).

Therefore as part of my un-learning I need to question this 'I'. For Derrida a radical trembling is needed to question this 'I', this trembling which for Derrida (1982b) is necessary, can come only from the outside; it is this that must shake my foundations:

> The trembling of which I speak derives no more than any other from some spontaneous decision or philosophical thought after some internal maturation of its history, this trembling is played out in the violent relationship of the whole of the West to its other, whether a 'linguistic' relationship, or ethnological, economical, political, military, relationship, etc. (p.135).

It should, however, be noted that this radical trembling does not mean that the foundations, which make the subject the subject, should be done away with. Instead, the subject, the foundations, is 'reinterpreted, displaced, decentralised, re-inscribed' (Derrida, 1995b,

p.258). The foundations are questioned in such a rigorous manner that we feel threatened, and it is only by being open that we can realize instead of resisting this questioning. At the same time, we may be right in feeling threatened as it may be that what we believed were strong foundations are in fact contingent and circumstantial; they may constitute our vulnerable points. Thus, the trembling in question would indeed be radical as it might result in a complete shaking of the subject. Nina's unexpected hugs are examples of this shaking.

Similarly Deleuze thinks that we need to open ourselves to violence. Our images of thought close themselves to stupor; for thought tries to be constant and to eternally produce the same (see Deleuze, 1994, p.139), as happens in Luke's class when the teacher encourages the children to role play and they simply go through the motions – how different their freedom of movement when in Luke's circular space. This violence of thought that Deleuze is suggesting comes from the contingency of an encounter **(**see Deleuze, 1994, p.139). This forces thought to rise up and start having the passion to think. This will result in the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and thus brings about "the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself" (ibid.). The vocabulary used by Deleuze, violence and destruction, are indicative of the forces at play. Violence and destruction are important terms which point out that the encounter can only be sensed and is not sensible. This implies that sense (in terms of what is encountered) is problematic to the sensible. Sensible is not only what is sensed but that which is recalled, imagined, conceived – that which we called common and good sense and the constant process of recognition. Therefore the sensible closes down the sense and limits it (Deleuze, 1994).

Derrida and Deleuze are both very strong in their vocabulary and both use the term violence. This is almost contrary to what happens in educational context. It appears natural to try to calm and eliminate any form of violence. However, un-learning might mean an acknowledgement of this violence. Maybe we need to start acknowledging the act of violence that we are submitted to in working with students, particularly with students with disability. Maybe we need to experience (and keep the experience alive) the encounter with the other who brings a radical trembling in us. This has to be seen as an ongoing process. The violence suggested penetrates the assumptions of who we are, and is not just the violence experienced by the teacher of not knowing what PMLD means. It is not a question

of learning what PMLD means and thus levelling out the violence. The violence is that the assumptions of being teacher are questioned.

The fact that who the other is cannot be answered is related to the difficulty of knowing myself. I do not even know where to start with the other as I am still questioning myself, thus making myself other. Derrida encourages this stance as it prevents foreclosure with its ensuing complacency. This may sound frustrating, but certainly it entails an infinite responsibility towards the other because it is through the acknowledgement of, and openness towards, the other that I am in constant engagement with myself. I need the other in order to question myself. Whether we want this infinite responsibility is something that needs to be questioned. Derrida and Deleuze remind us that the problem is that this other and the trembling it occasions comes violently and often unexpectedly.

Listening by following

I have learnt to listen to vacuoles of noncommunication. Maybe this could be what needs to be taught in teacher-training courses. This is different to what usually happens in our classrooms. Teachers listen to communications from students within an environment. They empathise with their students; however on their listening they mark, identify and label students accordingly. Listening implies following students into the cramped, impossible, choked passage of possibility, of creativity offered to us by the students. Take for example the classroom assistants who decided to follow Ruth in her party invitation, in her cramped space. Five adults were cramped in this impossible space. We know the absurdity of this listening – how can Ruth invite us to a party? We were competing jealously over who was invited – what are we talking about here? Is this not an experience of listening by following?

This kind of listening means listening to personal, particular, individual students, where "the individual concern [for example Ruth] becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p.17). Deleuze and Guattari warn us that listening to noncommunication is necessary and indispensable for us. So we cannot afford to loose on listening to our students. This vibration within our students helps to dissolve our identity. Was not my identity as a teacher being dissolved by engaging with Ruth's party invitation story? But also my engagement with the vibrating story offered by Ruth offered me a becoming. I, as a

teacher, am in continuous becoming through Ruth's forces, intensities and encounters. These encounters, forces and intensities do not always have to be human, as in the case of Ruth's party invitation, but could be non-human, as in the case of Charles' specialised chair and standing frame, or Matthew's internet.

Perhaps we should listen by follow without understanding or knowing where we are going, or where this will take us. I think that we teachers want to do this and at times in fact do it.

Willed poverty

Part of the un-learning is an engagement in 'willed poverty' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p.19). Rather than constantly believing that I have reached targets and am making foundations, I can question these seemingly final experiences by noting their limits. We are invited to defer the subjective plenitude (the feeling that the end has been reached and that all discussion has been exhausted) and thus to be critical of what is apparent. This implies that "one strives to see [a boundary] before it is there and often sees this limiting boundary everywhere" (ibid., p.19). Rather than celebrating arriving and fulfilment, we can note the limitations of the experience as these would normally be seen as irrelevant. With Charles the constant issue concerned the measures suggested by the various professionals to 'fix' Charles' body. The willed poverty took the form of a silent 'yes…but'.

We need to become experts in seeing boundaries of limitations. What is happening in the classrooms and schools is seen and experienced as limiting the teachers and the student's experience. What is given and presented to teachers is immediately turned into experiences of limitations rather than a fait accompli which does not invite questions and discourages violence. This does not imply that we should engage in an attitude of negativity and perpetual complaining and grumbling. But it is an experience as described by Derrida's idea of différance, that what is given and what takes place in our classrooms is always limited. There is always the possibility that that action could have been different and deferred for later.

There is always more, there is always something else. Ideas, thinking, actions - words are never complete. There is something which escapes us, leaks, something which is ghosted

even if I try and make everything into neat packages and blocks. It is there and yet not there. These ideas have haunted me throughout the research process and in my work with the students with PMLD. I cannot grasp ALL. There is always more. However this process of supplementarity has been a kind of learning that involved openness. I can never know all – and I had to learn to live with this not knowing, however desiring of it. "Every sign has something enfolded within it, something 'other,' that must be unfolded if it is to be understood" (Bogue, 2004, p.327).

The silent 'yes…but' started taking up the idea *to come* as a slogan for their everyday practice: a behaviour policy *to come*, an inclusive school and classroom *to come,* resources *to come,* an IEP *to come,* a story-telling session *to come,* a troublesome parent *to come.* This *to come* was important to learn for it kept moments as aporetic. The decisions I was taking in my classroom and similarly the decisions I was taking in conducting this research were not simple, linear and straightforward. Decisions are not black or white. Undecidability is as important to live and work with as is decidability. Not to know is not a sign of weakness, but a possibility in my becoming-teacher. In spite of all the training that I had received, the encounter with the particular child, parent and situation calls for not knowing what to do. Not knowing maybe makes one more professional. This is a sort of *writing under erasure*, that is, to write a word and cross it out but let both the word and the deletion stand. It is learning to be a teacher who decides, thinks and acts whilst knowing that this is crossed out and lives in position of *to come.*

This positions me as a teacher in the middle of things. Perhaps a good way of helping me live in an undecidable position and in a position of *to come* was to ask: *where is the middle of things? The things* would be those established decisions, thinking and actions that are taking place in my classroom. In these Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we live in the middle – like rhizomes. Not doing away with what is stable, but linking, creating "transversal alliances between different and coexisting terms" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.237). Being in the middle means and implies that we escape or bypass containments and fixities – I like the phrase that is often used by Deleuze and Guattari *circuit-breaker*: It is when particular actions and thinking move in series and Deleuze and Guattari ask us to break it. Their suggestion is to break this by being *in-between*, by being able to connect different things – even that which often is considered absurd and nonsense.

It is not necessary to introduce nonsense in the classroom because it is there already. I acknowledge it by listening to a child's parent's anecdote of what happened at home the day before, by engaging in conversations with other teachers and classroom assistants. However, there is a point when enough is said and it is time to start doing, as though they realise that they were wasting time. I started to realise that connecting with non-sense was important and not something I could do away with it. Try to keep non-sense while still keeping policy, curriculum, tests and assessments and also audits. This may be an impossible task as Derrida reminds us – but a worthwhile task according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) "try it, you'll see that everything changes" (p.23). Therefore what needs to be asked is: where is the middle of IEPs? What are those connections that I need to make? Where is the middle of this lesson with Charles and his friends? What connections have I left out? Where is the middle of this eating session? What is it that I have to break from what fits in? The focus is not the characters that make up our actions and thinking but the packets of sensations that different people, things and actions and decisions provided me with and that I tend to leave out and forget.

This is why the art of willed poverty – making myself poor by setting boundaries – involves a certain suspicion, a suspicion of being limited by the other, policy, syllabus, projects and different politics taking place at various school levels. Therefore it is emphasised that vigilance is exercised over the above and over the students. This can result in stammering – I, who was the teacher, who had the role of telling everybody what they had to do, I could keep catching myself in vigilance, noting the limitations of everything I said and seeing that there were always things being left out. I created in myself a series of *ands*…, frustrating to myself and to my classroom assistants, although I can view it as a form of resistance. It was a process of learning to be tolerant of myself, with the series of boundaries I would be creating, and being patient in engaging in willed poverty.

For Deleuze and Guattari, engaging in willed poverty as an act of resistance is a positive and productive task. The act of willing oneself poor implies a mechanism to induce continuous experimentation. Rather than allow the solidification of particular politics and cultures in schools and classrooms, instead of allowing for establishing forms and subjectivities of how to control Ruth's tantrums, by willed poverty I could draw "thought and practice back into a milieu of contestation, argument and engagement, and [force]

ever-new forms of experimentation from the intimacy of cramped experience" (Thoburn, 2006, p.44).

Asking questions of Concepts

Our educational systems are imbued with concepts. Currently the educational systems seem to be caught in marketing and economical discourses. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) suggest that we change our attitudes to particular concepts arising from these discourses. Instead of asking if particular concepts are true or false, we could assess a concept on whether it is "interesting, remarkable, or important" (ibid., p.82). Concepts are interesting, remarkable and important when they give expression to new problems or to solutions to problems already posed (Patton, 2006, p.109). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the experience of intensities gives rise to concepts. Therefore, as Paul Patton (ibid.) suggests we ask: what is the problem to which a particular concept offers a solution and what are the conditions of this problem? Derrida reminds us that the way we formulate a particular question implies a particular answer – the answer rests within the question.

Inclusion seems to have lost its political and ethical edge. We recognised the need of inclusion as a human right need and therefore provided for students with disability in our educational systems. The majority of students with disability are in mainstream schools. Services and resources are often provided for and we congratulate ourselves on the success of this achievement. The battles of the first generation disabled activists and parents of children with disability are now almost glorified stories of the past. Teachers in Malta, and in most Western countries, have a history of more than fifteen years experience of inclusion. Student-teachers are brought up in this system and most have received their compulsory education in it.

Therefore, with a certain amount of urgency I need to ask with Deleuze and Guattari: what is the problem to which inclusion offers a solution and what are the conditions of this problem? Similarly, being a teacher working in a special school, I needed to ask to what particular problem is the concept of segregated education offering a solution. I also need to move more deeply into asking these questions at the classroom level: with that particular action or particular mode of thinking which I have been employing for some time in my

class, what problem is it solving and what are the conditions of this problem? Are my actions and thinking interesting, remarkable and important? Are they giving new expressions to new problems or to solutions to problems already posed or am I almost unconsciously reproducing actions and thoughts that have become void assumptions? Is inclusion caught up in this process? Is our thinking and actions about inclusion a regurgitation of *neutral comfort numbness*? If yes, then the suggestion taken from Deleuze and Guattari to ask what my thinking and actions are responding to could be a way to help me un-learn.

Let us learn how to swim

Deleuze offers us a different way of seeing ourselves in front of the other; he offers us a powerful metaphor that could help us respond to Slee's (2001) exhortation that inclusion starts with ourselves. The metaphor is that of someone who starts learning how to swim. How does one learn how to swim? How does one learn how to be in front of the other? How does one unfold that something other in the other? Does one practise on the side of the pool and pretend arm strokes and feet movements then jump into the water? Does this practice help in any way? Not really. Do we learn by imitating someone who tells us "do as I do". For someone new to swimming, this is not a helpful suggestion.

One learns to swim through the immersing oneself in the sea, in a system of different relationships. This implies madness or incalculability in the Derridian sense. To jump into the water without knowing how to swim in order to learn how to swim could be seen as nonsense and madness. But that is the only way one learns how to swim. This is the only way how one learns about the enfolding other of the other. This is how one learns about inclusion of the self (Derrida would perhaps say the self touch of inclusion). From the body movements that the learner does we know she is still alien to the sea. The person who is learning how to swim encounters the unknown. The body movements gradually adjust to the sea, and the body movements and the sea form an interactive system of motion, a different relation and singular points that extend across swimmer and sea. The person learning how to swim becomes an apprentice in the process of learning to swim. This apprenticeship is no "longer that of the Same, but involves the Other – involves difference, from one wave and one gesture to another, and carries that difference through the repetitive space thereby constituted" (Deleuze, 1994, p.23). Learning how to swim therefore is a creative act on the part of the learner and the other. Each one undergoes a shared

deterriorialization. Semetsky (2003) reminds us that the learner has to emerge from the water not sink (p.24). Therefore the learner with "her newly acquired knowledge becomes an *emergent* property contingent on ever-changing local conditions with which the athlete must interact in order to learn" (Semetsky, 2003).

I learned through experience with the other, through engaging with the other. Pre-training, modelling and self-reflections could hinder instead of help me. Instead of trying to equip me with pre-packages, my experience suggests that I should engage in 'astonishment', 'perhaps' in front of the other and be active in this 'astonishment' and 'perhaps'. Spaces, time, bodies, and the other intensities mentioned in the first part of this chapter enabled me to be taken by 'astonishment' and 'perhaps', yet it was swimming within these that has helped me in my becoming-teacher and becoming-PMLD. It was swimming in Ruth's stories, Charles' pain, Mathew's sounds and Luke wanderings through the school that I was involved in. I never knew where I was going, but I swam with some intensities in particular directions as expressed in the stories. I did not know what my becomings where, and where I would go next. I was an apprentice in my encounter with the other, with different intensities and this needed constant work in learning how to swim in not-knowing-waters. A possible way in which I can think of inclusion is by starting with myself as an apprentice of experiences.

Potential and its workings

If teachers become aware that inclusion and working with students with PMLD is nothing more than its potential connections and activations with the students with PMLD they may become more radical. There is a shift from vertical-relations to horizontal-relations between teachers and students. If we as teachers see ourselves as our connections and activations with students, then we start to desire students and believe that students have a fundamental space in our schools and classes, and in our lives as teachers.

If we as teachers view students with disability in our classroom as children who need additional support, resources, IEPs, who take our time for special team meetings and endless proformas to fill, and have to be endured in order to appear inclusive or on the side of human rights, we will end up devoid of humanness, life and potential. We already face such danger and risk a reproduction of the same that will tire us always more and more. If however we have to see ourselves in relation to the students with disability, if we had to

see ourselves as needing students, we will latch onto life, full of relations and potentially full. From the experience of working with a group of students with PMLD and observing other educators work with similar students, I could see that a sort of relationship could start between students and myself and other teachers that was not based on a set of given conditions, but a potentiality that may or may not come to actuality, and may come into actuality in particular times, circumstances and places, producing us as teachers that can go beyond our bordering. The relationship with students is not just an extension of who we are, but is opening us to a new plane, or what Deleuze-Guattari call higher deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, 1997, p.197). Therefore it was important to view and experience students as potentials – as virtual spaces that have the possibility for actualisation.

This means that I experience a sense of ownership of myself and my classroom. Having a point of view according to Deleuze. This leads me to constantly ask the very important question: *How does it work for me?* Instead of asking the meaning and intention of things, and trying to find the original of every action and trying to be therapeutic about it, I can ask how things work for me. How does this experience of having this child in class work for me? How does this experience of helplessness in front of this student work for me? How does the lesson adaptation work for me? Colebrook suggests that by asking *how it works?*, we see "how laws are effected, subject positions carved out, desire instituted, and ideas of presence and ground produced through textual events and questions" (2000, p.124). I see the questioning of *how does it work for me?* as very important; while it is simple, the answers can be astonishing and awe-inspiring.

Conclusion: Desire

Rather than outlining suggestions for teachers, I hope that readers of this work can see some of my becomings -teacher, -PMLD. Every teacher and educator needs to engage in her process of un-learning through experiences of violence, asking the question of *who?*, listening by following, engaging in attempts of willed poverty and asking the question *why concepts?* She also needs to re-learning by being in the middle and acknowledging supplementarity, learning how to swim, learning how to engage in higher deterritorialization, and learning how to ask *how does it work for me?* The process of un- and re-learning should be simultaneous and ongoing for every teacher and educator.

All the above experiences that I have tried to plot show how as a teacher I have been caught in the middle of the lives of students with PMLD. I have neither understood nor made sense, but have been an apprentice in the lives of these students through the intensities that they were providing me. This thesis is not complete, but it is more of a moment in my becomings-teacher, -PMLD. The plural of the word becoming is important in emphasising a multiplicity of myself. I am aware of the complexity in trying to give a style (not a form) to my becomings, however I hope that this has been helpful for teachers and educators. My un-learning and re-learning should point to inventing or creating concepts, or putting concepts to work in new ways. Concepts ought to be means by which we move beyond what we experience so that we can think new possibilities. Concepts ought to express states of affairs that teachers find themselves in contingent circumstances and the dynamics of such events that lead to, and follow from, them. It is in this way that teachers politicise their circumstances and echo them collectively. I like the idea of fabulation given by Deleuze and Guattari (1995, p.174) – putting together of different packets of intensities, but the process involves *inventing a people* (ibid.). In their writings on Kafka (1986) they urge to foster the invention of people. The greatest challenge to inclusion and disability studies is to fabulate our experiences with children and people with disability, to invent a people to come. The great possibility that teachers have is to present fabulations. Teachers can create concepts through the engagement with students with disability. As I have argued in Chapter Four, this is different from listening to voices and empowering students – teachers fabulate if they become-disabled, or, as in this thesis, become-PMLD.

In Chapter Three and Five I make reference to Deleuze and Guattari's use of the idea of games: chess and Go, the former an ordered game with rigid laws and regulations, the latter game being more fluid. So the exhortation is for teachers to see fluidity in rigid structures: "to make connections, to open spaces and undo fixed mental and physical borders and barriers, to travel in space, between identities" (Conley, 2006, p.107)

However I also warn teachers and other professionals to go slowly in playing metaphorically the Go game. While suggesting an engagement with the flows offered by students with disability that are there living in rigid and oppressive spaces, I believe we need to do this very slowly. We need to be patient with ourselves. In the words of Deleuze

and Guattari (1987) we need to have a new plot of land every time, while experimenting with it and see how the land works for us, see where it takes us and then we move on to new land. We need to stratify the smooth space before moving on. If we engage too fast and recklessly that will be our death - like Ahab in Moby Dick - we will destroy ourselves. Teachers should, like small children, hum to comfort themselves when they are afraid (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.311). Teachers are exhorted to make sure that they are secure enough while engaging with connections.

At the introduction of this Chapter I argued for an ethics of affirmation, which I think is related to an ethics of BwO. This calls for caution. This ethics of affirmation questions our identity, or according to Deleuze, this sort of ethics calls for an engagement in the fantastic decomposition of the "I" (Deleuze, 1995b, p.5), a loss of one's own self. For Braidotti (2006a, 2006b) this ethics of affirmation calls for:

> the movement across and beyond pain, loss and negative passions… it is not about avoiding pain, rather it is concerned with transcending the resignation and passivity that ensue from being hurt, lost and dispossessed (2006a, p.90).

This is painful for teachers but if Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari are right, then we can live life to its fullest. It implies also that we give the students with disability and the inclusive process a possibility, a possibility to live life to its fullest.

However there is an opposite caution point. We can decide not to engage with the students with disability. Like Robinson Crusoe we can decide to reproduce and represent what we already know and have. Not all engagements with students with disability, even if teachers do this with the best of intentions, is becoming. To become for Deleuze (1997a) is:

> not to attain a form (identification, imitation, Mimesis) but to find the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or identification where one can no longer be distinguished from *a* woman, *an* animal, or *a* molecule – neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and nonpreexistent, singularized out of a population rather than a determined in a form (p.1)

This leads me to the last point in concluding this Chapter: desire. Do we desire children? Do we desire the student with disability? Do we desire Charles and his friends? Do we desire the inclusion process? In Chapter One, I wrote that in the research process I started longing for Charles, Ruth, Nina, Luke and Mathew. I understand this longing in the light of the idea of desire that I have suggested to teachers. Why did we become teachers?

Although a number of contingent factors influence this decision, perhaps a desire to be with children and to help them was in our ranking list. Maybe this needs to be put on top of our priority as teachers: engaging with children and students. Teachers who have been for sometime in the service of teaching should be reminded of desiring students, while student-teachers should be made aware of its presence in them. Desiring students does not mean a desire of lack, a desire of what you do not have, but a desire of connection with the student, an enjoyment of flows of matter and energy that connects through the classroom and school networks that comes from the students and educators. A desire of experimentation, with the self and other flows. A desire for the other, a desire to live *otherwise*, a desire for the student with PMLD.

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