



# Now and again: strategies for truthful performance

Peter Fraser  
BA (Arts) Monash

Submitted in partial fulfillment of Master of Arts (Theatre Performance)  
Centre for Theatre and Performance  
Monash University  
2014

## Table of Contents

<b>PRELIMINARIES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>INVITATION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>OUTLINE OF THESIS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Key themes.....	8
<i>Style guide: use of indented text in this thesis .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<b>IDEAS OF TRUTH .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>HOW DOES THE BODY PLACE US IN THE WORLD? .....</b>	<b>12</b>
The unknown and knowing body .....	12
<i>What is a body? .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Body, motion and self.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<b>STRATEGIES FOR TRUTHFUL PERFORMANCE.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Authentic movement as truth.....	17
<i>Authentic Movement as a practice .....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Identifying the authentic .....</i>	<i>19</i>
Improvisation .....	24
<i>Being in the moment.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>How long is a moment?.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>The performer's approach to the moment.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>A note on improvisation and attention in performance .....</i>	<i>28</i>
Rosalind Crisp's choreographic improvisation - moving and noticing.....	30
<i>Feeble bodied .....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Beginning before the beginning .....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Attention .....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Choreography .....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Proprioceptive awareness.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Feet and hands: awareness by touch - a footnote.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Truth 'in the moment' .....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Frames for being.....</i>	<i>36</i>
Deborah Hay.....	38
<i>The body as a site of enquiry.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Letting truth take care of itself.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>I think not .....</i>	<i>43</i>
Body Weather .....	45
<i>A phenomenology of the body.....</i>	<i>46</i>

<i>The body that is no-body.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Body as ecology.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Training as investigation.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Mind/body... muscle/bone... individual/group.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Stretching, lifting, extending, exploring.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Perception, sensation, space, time.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Site as a place of being.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Images and the body.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>63</b>
A phenomenological account of authentic movement.....	64
Performance investigation: Lizard - a box of gaps .....	67
<i>Script text: Animal lecture .....</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Program notes.....</i>	<i>84</i>

## PRELIMINARIES

### Abstract

This thesis considers whether there is some kind of truth that shows itself in performance and how it is achieved. The investigation focuses on somatic practices and the performer's own awareness. It outlines concepts of authenticity and truth (particularly ontological truth) that might be relevant to bodily experience and (with particular reference to Drew Leder) whether the discontinuity in embodied experience is an obstacle, or a means, to experiencing or perceiving truth. Despite being Husserl's 'remarkably incompletely constituted thing,' the body makes available our sense of a continuous world, a continuous body and a unified Self. These perceived unities, of body, identity and world, block from view the moments and processes by which they come to be, but these unities, as habitually experienced, can be disrupted, creating a 'gap' in which being-becoming becomes available to attention. Central to this process are attention, proprioceptive awareness (which provides both a means of observing the body in its transformations and of making those transformations), imagination and a willingness to improvise. The performance practices of Rosalind Crisp, Deborah Hay and Body Weather (originating from Min Tanaka) effect strategies that open 'gaps' as fields of becoming - focusing on attention, perceiving and being perceived, and omniscient phenomenological investigation. The thesis discusses and documents 'Lizard - a box of gaps', my performance experiment in exploring, from within, the type of somatic experience and awareness provided by, seemingly, incompatible modes and ideologies of performance.

Keywords: attention; authenticity; being; Body Weather; Bodyweather; Daniel Stern; Deborah Hay; Drew Leder; Frank van de Ven; gap; image; improvisation; Min Tanaka; modes of awareness; moment; ontological truth; phenomenology; proprioception

### Statement of authorship

This thesis contains no material accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution, and, to the best of my knowledge, no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



## Acknowledgements

I particularly thank my primary supervisor Dr Stuart Grant for his generosity, encouraging provocation, patience, time and guidance. Thanks also to: my secondary supervisor, Professor Peter Snow, for reliable friendship and support; the dancers and choreographers who inspired or informed this research; Shaun McLeod for opportunities to discuss ideas and share practice from his Doctorial research; Iolanthe Iezzi for filming my shop window performance (used as part of *Lizard - a box of gaps*); and to Tess de Quincey for encouraging my work in dance. Although I have not met him, nor is he responsible for any misinterpretation I may have made of his work, I would like to thank Drew Leder whose thoughtful, accessible enquiry into the nature and meaning of *The Absent Body* led me to a richer, more positive, understanding of embodied experience.

## INVITATION

### Shut your eyes

There ...  
already you are in somatic exploration  
it's gone dark,  
but is that the first thing you notice?  
are you thinking,  
or feeling?  
do you feel your thinking self where your eyes are  
- as small children do?  
this is your life taking its course  
what do you notice?  
when you notice one thing,  
and then another thing  
do you *make* the next thing occur, by your looking around?  
or does it just *turn up*?  
you would think that you might be occupied with *thinking*  
if you sit still and close your eyes,  
but it isn't so,  
or not only so  
there are movements.  
and, even if you don't notice that you are moving,  
your body, literally, presses its attention on you.  
zones of feeling  
float up, hover , drift away  
like dark fish in a dark sea,  
in an absent body  
- the unknown greater part of you  
Noticing something of this,  
I sense the currents opening spaces in the weeds  
letting the sun splash across the sand  
I stir this golden sediment  
It rises in glittering particles  
I am swept into a swirling truth.

This is the world I want to explore in this thesis: the world of somatic experience, where you can find truth, even with eyes shut, with your body. This thesis investigates strategies of perception and attention that open a space for truth to appear in performance.

## OUTLINE OF THESIS

This thesis considers whether there is some kind of truth that shows itself in performance and how it is achieved. I have confined my investigation to somatic practices of which I have personal experience although I call on musicians' views about the nature of improvisation in 'the moment.' I am interested in the phenomenology of embodiment and the act of performing rather than the choreographic, dramaturgical, technical aspects of performance.<sup>1</sup>

In summary, I begin my enquiry in philosophy and biology, move into somatic experimentation, examine the performance strategies of several remarkable dancer-choreographers, then, I describe how I explored the same issues in a solo performance.

I consider standard philosophical concepts of truth that might be relevant to bodily experience and whether the discontinuity in embodied experience is an obstacle, or a means, to experiencing or perceiving truth.

Husserl describes the body as 'a remarkably incompletely constituted thing' (Ideas II, 1989, 159, cited Carman, 1989, 207). Nevertheless, the body makes available our sense of a continuous world, a continuous body and a unified Self. These perceived unities, of body, identity and world, block from view the moments and processes by which they come to be. I consider ways in which these unities, as habitually experienced, can be disrupted by actions, attention and imagination so that we can both 'see' and use their generative processes. Central to this process is proprioceptive awareness with its unique sensate capacities of being able to reach inside the body and also to be observed in its working (vision and the other senses focus on objects not on themselves). Proprioception is both a means of observing the body in its transformations and of making those transformations.

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, 'somatic', 'bodily' and 'embodied' are used interchangeably to describe experience occurring within or by means of the body. 'Kinaesthetic' and 'proprioceptive' are used interchangeably for sensed positions and motions of the body - although, strictly speaking, kinaesthetic awareness concerns motion of the body in space and proprioception the relative bodily position and extension of the limbs. 'Body image' and 'body schema' have distinct meanings: respectively, the imagined characteristics of one's body, and an unconscious awareness of its spatial spread that assists our negotiation of the physical environment. 'Awareness' and 'attention' connote a reflective, that is conscious, state of active sensory, perceptual engagement with the internal or external environment, involving any or all of the body's senses.

I describe somatic practices that have the potential to create experiential 'gaps' used as fields of becoming (and argue that these are what generate the sense of liveness in performance). It is 'becoming' or the experience of 'being' that I associate with performance.<sup>2</sup> The strategies for truthful performance that I examine are: authentic movement, improvisation and the choreographed improvisation of Rosalind Crisp, the perceptual practice of Deborah Hay, and the phenomenological investigations of Body Weather (derived from the practice of Min Tanaka).

I conclude with a summary, linked to video documentation, of my attempt to test questions about truth in performance - by creating a work juxtaposing conflicting ideologies or modes of performance that each took a different approach to the relationship of body and meaning.

## Key themes

I conclude that the somatic experience I associate with truth is an active experience of 'being' or, better, of 'being-in-the-process-of-becoming.' By using this unwieldy phrase (subsequently shortened to 'being-becoming') I am trying to convey the durational sense of life welling up. It is an inherently transient experience that requires sustained attention, of body, consciousness and/or imagination. The audience can feel this attention empathetically, in body, time and space. An opening has been made in two bodies reaching out in contiguous space, each going beyond its usual formation. In a site of attention: a box of gaps for being-becoming.

The performer strategies that serve this process are fundamentally investigative tools that open gaps in the known; tools that help the performer to get out of their own line of sight in order to see what is arising before them: For improvisers, a commitment to side-stepping the known and planned; for Deborah Hay the 'here and gone' awareness of perceiving and being perceived (dissolving the 'I'); the constant use of 'what if' koans (dissolving knowing) and the cellular imagination of the body (dissolving the body); for Rosalind Crisp, sustaining an alert attention on the body moving in time and space, using strategies that disrupt or move the attention, or body, to re-engage the dancer's attention

---

<sup>2</sup> I have focussed on 'being' rather than 'presence', which, as shown by Jane Goodall (2008), is a broad and elusive concept involving audience projection, cultural fashion and/or personal charisma.



and interest; in Body Weather, the development of an omniscient bodily awareness; a body open to its environment and restored to its ingenuous state.

A secondary theme has been another sense of truth that does not quite fit with traditional philosophical ideas of truth. It is the feeling of 'not lying', of having experience that seems whole and unalloyed. I have considered this in relation to the concept of 'authenticity' - whereby things are exactly what they are: an emotion or aspect of personal psychology expressed without apparent modification, or dance in which movements seem to flow of their own accord, or a feeling that one is completely in accord with the universe. If these holistic experiences have the form of a truth, it is a truth that stands somewhere between a Correspondence truth, in things being what they are said to be, and an Ontological truth, in the sense of being in touch with life.<sup>3</sup>

I am not sure whether my practice of public performance constitutes the sort of 'clearing' that, for Heidegger, makes possible the unconcealing of beings. But as a poetic, or a phenomenology, his account of things reflects my experience, in dance, of some sort of truth that comes forward in being reached for, but evades capture. When I first encountered the practice of Body Weather - a performance discipline based on somatic attentiveness - I felt that I was 'truth-divining' with the body. ('Divining' in the sense of physically discovering as in water-divining). I will try to show that our 'undivided' attention reveals free areas that our attention has not written over with anticipation and foreknowledge, that can be explored as domains of what I understand to be truth.

### Style guide: use of indented text in this thesis

In this thesis, large quotations are presented in indented text. I use roman type when quoting my own written ideas, from diaries, and italics to convey voices - the speech of others, or my own 'internal voice' reporting the phenomenology of somatic experience.

---

<sup>3</sup> 'Feeling true' like this has resonances of the expression 'rings true' which originally described a test for a coin's not-being-false. A coin that 'rang true' when struck was made of the right metal, not an inferior alloy.

## IDEAS OF TRUTH

When I dance well I feel that I am ‘truth divining with the body.’ What ground is there for that? In what way could felt experiences and actions comprise Truth? Why not just say I am enjoying myself?

‘Truth’, in everyday usage, concerns veracity: it means that things are as they seem or present themselves to be. Or, truth connotes an absolute quality that inheres in or underlies things and accounts for their being: this singular truth may nevertheless manifest in various forms of beings.

These two uses or meanings roughly match the two main philosophical concepts of Truth as Correspondence, which concerns facts - or, more precisely, the relationship of propositions and the states of affairs that they propose - and Ontological Truth, which concerns Being. Another theory of truth, Truth as Coherence, proposes that the requirement for truth is that a concept or belief fits in to a conceptual or belief system. Ontological truth is, I believe, the species of truth that is available to dance in its acts of moving, noticing, thinking and deciding. Heidegger regarded Correspondence truth as a pragmatic but inadequate concept of truth that had obscured a deeper sense of truth as being that was evident in Plato, but absent from later Western metaphysics. This originary sense of truth (*aletheia*) is revealed, not conceived.<sup>4</sup>

Ontological truth is the primary focus of this thesis.<sup>5</sup> But I have also considered whether ‘immanence’, and ‘authenticity’, may be synonyms or stand-ins for truth, because they are often used in this way in contemporary arts and bodywork discussion. For Deleuze, ‘the artist ... is *creator of truth*... [Truth] has to be created. There is no other truth than the creation of the New...’ (Deleuze, 1989, 146, 147).<sup>6</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s *A thousand plateaus* (1987) is a cornucopia of such inventions that seemingly celebrates a relativistic,

---

<sup>4</sup> This view of truth informs this thesis, but it should be acknowledged that Heidegger finally considered he had been mistaken in translating *aletheia* as ‘truth.’

<sup>5</sup> In this thesis, ‘truthful experience’ means an experience of truth, not experience that is accurate or correct.

<sup>6</sup> For the record, Min Tanaka has performed for Felix Guattari’s patients: an event shown here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgErye7jXbI> Accessed 10 August 2013.

anthropomorphic idea of truth as something invented by acts of assertion and opposition. However, Hallward (2006) shows that Deleuze is concerned with multiple instantiations of one truth, being, that becomes immanent in every creating (by which we escape an habituated, thing-like state). 'What is primary [in Deleuze] is always the creating rather than the created...' (2006, 1). Seen in this way Deleuze's immanent truth aligns with the somatic, ontological truth investigated in this thesis - a truth that comes forth in the process of makings but is not a created product.

The concept of authenticity, on the other hand, seems to combine ideas of ontology with ideas of accurate correspondence. In a later chapter I will describe my attempt to find and understand authenticity in movement. Truth or not, the subject of this thesis is something that occurs in somatic experience, by means of an actively engaged body. The next chapter attempts to analyse the connections of body, world and self, and the unique role of proprioceptive awareness.

## HOW DOES THE BODY PLACE US IN THE WORLD?

*The body does not exist unless one is astonished with its ingenuous state* Min Tanaka

*Thank God for the limitations of the body!* Deborah Hay

*It is not quite true that I have a body, and not quite true that I am one either*  
Terry Eagleton

### The unknown and knowing body

I was drawn into this research by noticing gaps in self-experience.<sup>7</sup> I interpreted these gaps negatively, as patches of myopia, or ignorance, or as proof of my having an incomplete Self. Much of my body was out of sight, out of mind, out of sensation. Hunting for my body, using its own resources of mind, sensation, imagination and action, I could only find parts of it. For instance, if I turn, now, from writing, to my body, I feel:

*...the base of my palm pressing (painfully, now that I have noticed it) on my cheekbone; the pain is how I am aware, at all, of my cheekbone; my fingers clutch the skin of my bald head, my teeth are clenched together, making me aware of an area of the other cheekbone; my eyes are dry; due to the raised angle of my foot, which I have not noticed, I feel the base and lengths of my big and second toes pressed hard into the floor; the side of my shin leans into a short length of chair leg - in fact I sense an intertwining of shin and chair leg, and my thinking about whether the experience is of a single line of pressure or a flicking between my leg and the chair's leg has made my entire body disappear momentarily; other than this, my awareness comprises the side of my clenched writing hand brushing the table, a slumped bulge of my belly, my tinnitus and the peripheral bright light in the room (Author's diary notes).*

So my body is barely there for me - even when I attempt a phenomenological snapshot of

---

<sup>7</sup> 'Gaps' are a key theme of this thesis in which my understanding of gaps shifts, from experiencing gaps as limitations, to an appreciation of gaps as deliberately created breaches that provide observational and experiential openings onto truth.

my body and it comes towards me, blocking out the world. And it is not simply that my skimming glance overlooks aspects of my body. My body and its boundaries are in many ways permanently and inescapably out of reach.

Below, I reflect on the gappy body and its seeming continuity. I note that discontinuity is inherent in our being other to our environment, and therefore having a perspectival relationship to it. Noticing, or deliberately making, discontinuities enables the new and unfamiliar to appear.

Our body is less consistent than we assume: more visible to others than itself, it supports a Self that moves without knowing how; it surpasses its physical boundaries by using symbols, yet still feels situated somewhere around the eyes;<sup>8</sup> it can just reach to arms-length by one modality and to the stars by another; its hands, but not usually its feet, anticipate or accompany its thoughts; it perceives a continuous world from experiential scraps; and, it loses awareness each night and awakens confident that it is the same body and Self.

So, I begin by asking: What is a body, and how is it related to our sense of Self and world? How might the body invite awareness, or presence of truth?

### What is a body?

For us, the living human body (*Leib*) exists on multiple levels: as head, torso and limbs; as a system of organs, nerves, capillaries; as an ecology in continuous, dependent exchange with its environment; as 'empty space' rendered solid by the unimaginably fast motions of infinitesimal particles; as a cellular entity replicating 25 million cells each second; as old, arthritic, painful. The body is experientially incomplete or imperceptible as most of those levels: Leder (1990) notes, for example, that our gall bladder is only disclosed to awareness when dysfunctional.

Our body comes and goes: our pulse, the blinking of our eyes, the feel of our clothes on our skin appears and disappears. Our body is part object, part subject - we can touch, prod, look at it and are, at the same time, the body that does those things: 'Though there is no absolute coincidence between the observing and observed body, there is no absolute division either. These are dimensions of a single lived body' (1990, 23).

---

<sup>8</sup> At least I do, at times, and so, it appears, do young children, who when covering their eyes believe that 'they' can't be seen, but understand that their uncovered bodies can be (Neisser, 1993, 52).

Our body is many bodies: '[S]ome ten quadrillion bacteria live within my body... My body everywhere bears the imprint of Otherness' (Leder, 1990, 66). Our body permeates the world: it leaks, issues, radiates, combines and exchanges its substance with the environment. It is part of the moving space of the world. Ingold argues that we do not move through an empty surrounding space as if we were independent objects; 'the environment' is not a space surrounding our bounded bodies, but 'a domain of entanglement' in which we exist as a mesh of relations (2011,70-71).

Our world, also, is peppered with gaps that we don't notice. Noe describes a famous experiment in which observers looking for particular aspects of a basketball game failed to notice a man in a Gorilla suit enter and dance amidst the players. A hot, smooth, surface might feel only smooth, or only hot, according to our purpose. A black cat behind a white picket fence shows through as a cat, not strips of cat. As Gallagher, and Merleau-Ponty put it, elegantly: 'The body and its natural environment work together to deliver an already formed meaning to consciousness' (Gallagher, 2005, 139) and 'To have a body is to possess a universal setting, a schema of all types of perceptual unfolding and of all those inter-sensory correspondences which lie beyond the segment of the world which we are actually perceiving' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 326). In literature, Borges and Nabokov have each imagined the nightmarish consequences of a breakdown in this perceptual meaning-making.<sup>9</sup>

### Body, motion and self

Our movement in the world gives us our first sense of agency according to Stern, Gallagher, Sheets-Johnstone and others. A sense of Self, that Neisser (1998, 36) calls the 'ecological self', is produced by the discovery that we move as other to the environment.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Jorge Luis Borges' *Funes the memorious* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Signs and symbols* show the crippling effect of perceiving without an intentionality of the normal sort: their characters experience the world, in the first case, as a temporal flux without thing-like boundaries, and in the other, as a set of personal portents and messages.

<sup>10</sup> Neisser identifies five different modes of self: an *ecological self* perceived with respect to the physical environment; an *interpersonal self*; an *extended self* that develops its history across time; a *private self* whose experience, such as pain, is not shared by others; and a *conceptual self* or 'self-concept' framed according to various contexts such as role in society, religious beliefs, politics (1988, 36).

But the meeting of body and environment would surely be experienced as something like a series of sensational 'stains' or 'events' if there were not some way in which the body was already a coherent reference point. Proprioception provides the means for the body's *feeling* itself as such a reference point. Gallagher calls proprioception a 'primitive, primary, pre-reflectively phenomenal, and non-conceptual self-consciousness': a form of self-awareness 'from the inside' that gives me awareness of 'my body...*as my own*' (1998,105).

Proprioception is a mode of knowing about our movement *inside* our body and in the world, but it is not *about* the world. In this it is distinctly different from, although linked with, the five senses of exteroception that help us to manage and navigate the world to which our consciousness is almost constantly directed, and which are therefore more closely entangled with conscious action and thoughtful planning concerning the external world.

Proprioception gives me an experience that is something like 'riding' the body's movement. I sense it in its activity of sensing. When I call on it, consciously or prenoetically, to move my arm, I can think about my arm if I wish, but there is no need, I generally just notice and use the proprioceptive sensations as they unfold. In this, it is quite unlike the other senses that draw our attention to objects in the world, but are themselves absent from awareness. I cannot, for example, 'see' the act of seeing.

In performance, proprioception lets me initiate movement in outer space by accessing tiny movements in 'inner' space, or to change the tone of my body by using minute movements to 'feel through' the body. I converse with my body through proprioception. It enables me to 'go along with' movements that are already happening, and to discover what it means to re-direct them; for instance, to discover what implementing the idea of moving my wrists away from each other feels like, and what trajectory is developing, at what pace. Proprioception provides a felt sense of the body's situation but it is not arranged according to the spatial dimensions of external, perspectival space.

Proprioception uses a 'non-relative, non-perspectival, intra-corporeal spatial framework' (Gallagher, 1998, 138). This releases my body and imagination from the confines of strictly perspectival space into an embodied, exploratory space.

Many of the performance strategies discussed in this thesis, are ways of proprioceptively leading the body into uncharted territory - for instance, in *Body Weather*, moving as a 'mist body.' It is proprioception that enables such verbal and pictorial images to develop their physical form. This embodied imagining can help us to escape presumptive concepts

and experiences of the body - although it is imagination too that supports scientific views of the body: an organ, for instance, begins and ends just where, and because, we picture it so. Re-imagining the body frees it from these and other formative perceptions.

Where our inner unknown living body meets our environment, 'we' occur, as a reflective, sensate awareness. We touch the surrounding flux and that brings some things forward in an intermittent and perspectival way that, paradoxically, we experience as complete and whole. We perceive complete things, rabbits, landscapes... We always perceive and feel the world, including the world of our body, *from* somewhere and *in* some way. Somatic attention helps us to bring these shifting perspectives out of hiding.



## STRATEGIES FOR TRUTHFUL PERFORMANCE

### Authentic movement as truth

*Once, I had to beg of myself, 'Please, please leave, please just let go.' But of whom did I ask this? Of my body? Of my soul? Of life itself? Anyway, before I realised what was happening, my arms suddenly soared away. ... They didn't try to bolt into the distance but instead remained hanging around within close reach. [...]*

*Look at those hands [of mine] over there! They're writing melodies of their own making. ... At that time, I was struck by how my soul, my essence, could detach itself with out any effort on my part, even though the very 'I' who perceived this separation of body and soul, continued to exist. Now I'm able to look upon that essence as though I simply were looking at someone else.'*

Kazuo Ohno<sup>11</sup>

Dance therapists, dancers themselves, critics, often evaluate bodily movement in terms of its 'authenticity.'<sup>12</sup> Dancers try to find ways of moving authentically and 'authentic movement' has become a therapeutic practice. Is 'authenticity' a form of truth? Mary Starks Whitehouse, founder of 'authentic movement', certainly thought so: 'Authentic was the only word I could think of that meant truth - truth of a kind unlearned but there to be seen at moments' (Whitehouse 1979, Pallaro, 1999, 81).

In this chapter I consider the relation of authentic movement and truth. I outline my philosophical understanding of the relationship of 'authenticity' and truth. I describe my attempts at 'authentic movement,' a journey from stasis (waiting to be moved), to being swept along in a near seamless flow, to a mode of 'dancing' with my experience. This dancing was a doubled experience of prompting, going-along-with and following bodily sensations and movements: perhaps this was what it felt like to be 'moving and being moved' (Whitehouse 1958 in Pallaro, 1999, 43). It seemed that noticing, and deciding, were what gave 'authentic' movement its value as a process of improvisatory discovery.

---

<sup>11</sup> From: Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's world from without and within*, Trans. John Barrett, Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2004, 297, 298.

<sup>12</sup> The critic, John Martin, writing in 1933 about the dance of Mary Wigman may have been the first person to use the term 'authentic movement.' Mary Starks Whitehouse studied with Wigman.

Otherwise, the authentic was merely a tautology: something being what it was and could be no other than. This is consistent with the principles of Authentic Movement therapy, or 'movement in depth' or 'active imagination' to use Jung's term. The movement becomes useful when brought to conscious awareness. Chodorow compares this held tension between unconscious and conscious to the awareness of the Shaman who remains aware of the surroundings even when in a trance (2003, n.pag.).

### **Authentic Movement as a practice**

'Authentic movement' was developed by dancer Mary Whitehouse as a therapeutic process in which the body's movements are pathways to inner life. Whitehouse felt that Western life, and the Western body, was excessively outwardly focused. She described the typical adult body habitus as 'a whole series of distortions, short-circuits, strains and mannerisms accumulated from years and years of being assimilated to mental images of choice, necessity value and appropriateness' (Pallaro, 1999, 44). 'Shrunk to the size of the ego, movement appears as inhibition, self-consciousness, poverty of gesture, deadness' (Whitehouse, 1963 in Pallaro, 1999, 54). This is in marked contrast to the way infants and children respond or reach out to the world with their whole body, rather than just curving their mouth in a grin, or extending a hand in greeting. Whitehouse was after something that came from the self, or psyche, not something deliberate or constrained: 'When the movement was simple and inevitable, not to be changed no matter how limited or partial, it became what I call 'authentic' - it could be recognized as genuine, belonging to that person' (Whitehouse, 1979 in Pallaro, 1999, 81).

But one person's idea of authentic might be not be another's. For dancers such as Min Tanaka and Hijikata, the very movements most easily and naturally at hand, signature movements, unmediated movements and gestures, are, in a sense, inauthentic, when they follow pathways shaped by habit, rather than by the desires and inflections of the body itself: 'I want to be *unnatural*...why give precedence to self-expression of an inside that society and history has made?' (Tanaka, 2007). In a sense, Authentic Movement is antithetical to the dancing processes celebrated in this thesis. It uses bodily movement as a window to individual inner life (the psyche, or spirit, or emotion, or the unconscious, or being, or the numinous).<sup>13</sup> The dancers keep their focus firmly away from self.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> From various essays by Whitehouse, Chodorow and Adler (Pallaro, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Having said that, Authentic Movement also uses ego-centred, self-knowledge as a necessary step towards 'the big [transpersonal] Self, the Unknowable, God' (Whitehouse, 1979, Pallaro, 1999, 78).

## Identifying the authentic

But, to begin with, what is an authentic movement, and how and where does it happen? In general, movement, unless it is a deliberate act, might arise from sensation, image or emotion. It may have various individual tones: 'One is more emotional, another more kinesthetic, another more thoughtful, imagetic, or tactile' (Adler, Pallaro, 1999, 195). And it may take different forms according to its psychic source: Chodorow found that different aspects of our being, the personal, the cultural unconscious, the primal unconscious or the Self, produced different modes of movement - idiosyncratic, gestural, non-human or geometric (Chodorow 1984 in Pallaro, 270-275).

I explored these issues of authenticity in movement with dancers Nikki Heywood and Shaun McLeod who each invited me, and others, to participate in their research. I began, eyes shut, watched by a supportive 'witness.'<sup>15</sup> My goal was to test my assumption that the authentic would move me inescapably, of its own accord. I documented my first struggles to be authentic, trying not to initiate any movement, rather, to be overcome by an autonomous necessity to move, and yet, to be able to notice any movement as it emerged. It was like being the hunter and the hunted at once. ('Sounds like a mind-fuck' said my witness Nikki Heywood). I found it hard to know whether I was making it happen, letting it happen, or both.

I felt it would be inauthentic to 'make' a calculated move. So I waited, and asked myself:

*Do I just wait? Will an impulse take over or must I notice its call and then actively go along with it? Can I choose at least the source of action, such as: following the effects of gravity and imbalance; responding (as I would in sleep) to niggles of discomfort; scanning my body and finding new states and shapes emerging from the darkness of my 'absent body' (Leder); discovering an emerging feeling state, or a sort of character; staying with a tiny impulse or*

---

<sup>15</sup> Having an imagined witness is central to Deborah Hay's practice. She writes: 'She learned to project another self out from her body, but turned facing herself. Whole and changing, she invited being seen by the projected witness. After some years, she projected a second witness, even further out and looking from a different perspective, who could see herself being seen. With the help of these witnesses...she was able to make choices about how and where she was in space and how and when she appeared in time. [...] [T]he more places she could project herself, the more intimate her dancing felt' (Hay, 2000, 62,63).

*letting it be superseded; enlarging an emerging movement or pressure; deliberating changing the focus; using an image; allowing the consequence of durational holding or moving; noticing how pseudo-infinity of closed-eyes spaces immediately shrinks and reverses itself when the eyes open on real space; the way closing the eyes creates a sense that they are damming up thought behind them?* (Author's diary notes).

I tried various strategies for getting started. I had come to interpret lying motionless on my back, eyes closed, waiting to be moved from an inner (preferably emotional) impulse, as a strategy. Lying down restricts the movement of the body, but it does quieten the body and mind and it enables unhabitual movements that would cause imbalance when standing. Another strategy was simply to move and to just 'go along with' that moving until something shifted or changed. Yet another was to move in accordance with an 'image' - fleshing out the form, tension, structure and movements of an imagined state or an imagined being - a dog-monster for instance. Another strategy was to choose an arbitrary, open-ended task such as moving two body parts away from each other, or deliberately interrupt, at random, an established pattern or action. In each case, although there were decisions involved, I felt 'authentic' so long as my focus was not on the decision, but on what, as a result, was unfolding. I was not 'performing' planned effects or actions.

I initiated tasks as soon as I thought of them and was thus released from the thought. My awareness was, as much as possible, confined to my immediate circumstances, so I sometimes scarcely remembered what happened. But I had been actively perceiving throughout - using whatever perceptual resources were available to me to continuously 'scan' my body, actions and sensations. I have appended my detailed phenomenological report of the first part of a 40-minute authentic movement session from which I drew the following observations:

My struggle to move only in response to unprompted impulse was very counterproductive. Over time, I found that conscious decision-making and impulse could work together as long as my decisions were to do with the placing of attention at different areas of the body and then responding to the resulting experience of gravity and bodily mechanics.<sup>16</sup> At times, I found

---

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Behnke describes this as 'somatic matching': '(1) awareness of something in one's own body; (2) an inner act of matching or aligning oneself with this; (3) allowing something to change. In actual practice these can flow together.' Cited Fraleigh (2004, 268).

myself in something like an automatic flow of movement that, later, I was unable to recall in any detail. This extremely pleasant filled-in experience lacked the reflective awareness that would be required in performance where the parameters of space, time and audience energy need attention.

The value, for me, of seeking authentic movement, was discovering how to replace personal, reflective conscious thinking-about. This form of consciousness, that, functionally, organises experience around the needs of a 'self', is antithetical to an authenticity that needs to remain open to discovering itself rather than knowing and serving itself (Author's diary notes).

My colleagues discoveries seemed to break down into the three main areas of what motivated the body's movement; what counted as authentic (immobility at one extreme and pure habitual behaviour at the other); and, what sort of attentive skills were needed to detect an incipient authentic movement. These themes are evident in the following examples of their comments:

*'I figure our bodies are trained to be very efficient - so they wouldn't move easily without a reason. How does this sort of 'purpose' enter the picture?'*

*'Why move? The body enjoys being at rest.' (This dancer finally 'seeded' the movement by moving a little and by noticing the ever-present 'small dance' of breathing).*

*'I like my dancing habits - they're me, and I'm using them.'*

*'I tried to notice what is there, but there's so much there! I had to listen past the noise - not pushing but gliding. I found myself within textures and qualities, lines in space, open and closed spaces' (Author's diary notes).*

As dancers, we tended to 'listen' for provocations to move in space - effectively, to dance.<sup>17</sup> We ignored, for instance, use of the voice and barely dipped into personal feelings and narratives. Authentic movement as I had seen it in therapy covered a more expressive

---

<sup>17</sup> And perhaps we had what Jung called 'motor imagination' with, in Chodorow's words, a tendency 'to experience life in terms of spontaneous movement activity and to imagine with and about the body' (Chodorow, 2003)

range including moans, humming, shaking, repetitive action, positions of rest, self-protection and self-touching. But this expressive range did appear to be very selective in its forms and dynamics. This suggested to me that authenticity was a very broad church, and that being authentic did not necessarily mean reaching bedrock or even escaping habits. It meant that the body was the voice of the Self. And the self had layers and aspects and habits, as did the body, 'all the way down.'<sup>18</sup>

So authenticity appeared selective in its focus, and its mode of expression - and in each domain (dance, improvisation, therapy) the movement was encouraged or steered and tilted in particular directions. Therapeutic authenticity did not seem to be a fundamental, primal state of truth, but, rather, it provided zones of attention where, by 'active imagination' one can try to trace the consequences of something instigated, somehow, in the body - to feel its meaning as an expression of an aspect of one's embodied being.

Eila Goldhahn, who has worked with Janet Adler, argues that anything we do is authentic; that there is no special internal state to be discovered that is *the* authentic self. '[I]t could be construed that Authentic Movement chases after an original source of movement, in my view it is rather concerned with the *here and now*.' (Goldhahn, 2009, 58). And this seems to be the view our dancing group developed. But even if there is no single authentic self, not all of our actions are authentic except in a tautological, trivial sense.

Authenticity in movement involves *living out* something - something comes to the fore and is allowed, assisted, to continue as itself. My experience was that authenticity was something I noticed emerging and that I chose to 'stay with' as it was occurring. I tried not to instigate an action from an idea, although I might nudge an action along, or thematise it, once it had begun its emergence. If I simply 'made up' an action its implementation became a sort of re-enactment in which one has already stood back from what one is now doing. It is also a technical problem: to throw before oneself the idea of a movement, and then attempt to inhabit it, takes time; an 'inauthentic' period of adjustment.

Authenticity in movement, in my understanding, is not a passive or unconscious event; it is a 'dance' made by attention to the immediate circumstances of the body in its

---

<sup>18</sup> Referring to the popular story of the guru who believed the Earth rested on the back of a tiger. 'But what supports the Tiger?' asked a disciple. 'It stands on the back of an elephant.' 'And the elephant?' 'It rests on a giant turtle.' The disciple considered this, then asked: 'Well, what supports the turtle?' 'Ah', said the guru, 'After that it is turtles all the way down!'

environment. (In Authentic Movement practice this environment is often simplified by having the eyes shut). Noticed and nurtured by active attention, the body's being-becoming (a process that is continuously occurring, on multiple fronts, at a multitude of scales for as long as we live) is made available to experience *as* it is becoming. For the performer, this noticing and becoming initiates and sustains truthful performance.

## Improvisation

*He who binds to himself a joy*

*Does the wingèd life destroy;*

*But he who kisses the joy as it flies*

*Lives in eternity's sunrise.*

William Blake

*Truth cannot be accumulated... it can only be found from moment to moment*

J. Krishnamurti

*If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness then he lives*

*eternally who lives in the present*

Ludwig Wittgenstein

*Improvisation can be considered as the celebration of the moment*

Derek Bailey

*Only in the active meeting between an intention and an attention is there a work of art*

Gerard Genette

## Being in the moment

I have interpreted 'Authentic movement' as an expressive device - something that loosens movement from aesthetic or functional goals to express otherwise unavailable aspects of embodiment, aspects of the psyche, of feeling-life, and, for us as dancers, of movement itself. In this, it shares something with improvisation, which is considered in this chapter. I did not find that 'authenticity' necessarily implied an ontological truth.

But I have mainly considered bodily awareness of space and sensation. Perhaps time provides another avenue to the experience of somatic truth. Can we engage with pure, innocent, uninflected moments of being? I will also look into the meaning of 'the moment' in felt experience from the perspectives of psychology and phenomenology. I will take as my performance focus, the practice of improvisation in dance and music. My reason for doing so is that, often, performers and audience alike regard 'being in the moment' (as when improvising) as an ideal ontological state that might be expressed as an experience of 'being in being.'



I will look, in particular, at the strategies of dancer Rosalind Crisp, whose open but composed approach to dance exemplifies how decision-making does not confine the freedom of improvisation.<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, decisions enliven the dialogue between curious attention and a highly available body (a body that is not held together in a fixed mode of organisation).<sup>20</sup>

One of the ways in which Crisp prepares the body, and the attention, for this dialogue is by allowing the body to be 'feeble', 'useless', or 'dumb' - a strategy that releases the body from its dance-trained and social obligations. Crisp says, 'By 'dumb' I mean a condition whereby the verbosity of thoughts *is* silenced, rendering one without resistance, but certainly not without intelligence. It's one of my strategies to bring the dancer's attention *into* the lumpy matter that *is* the body' (2014).

### How long is a moment?

One objection to investing attention in 'the moment' in this way is that there may be no such thing as a moment. Time is different for a clock, a human body and a mouse body; different even for my own body when tired and when fresh and energetic. Time varies in its felt speed, form, duration and spatiality. It can spread like a blot, stand still, drag behind, or disappear. If there *is* such a thing as an experiential moment it is not the punctum of theory. The lived moment, as I will show, has duration, is always a little 'spread.' That spread may be inhabited by a number of 'voices' or forms of awareness.

'Being in the moment,' a defining goal of improvisation,<sup>21</sup> implies escaping clock time and the predictable consequences of past conditions. It connotes a state in which it feels as if experience does not shuffle forward, nudged by what is behind, but reaches into what is

---

<sup>19</sup> As will become clear, below, 'decision-making', in this context, is anything but using ideas to foresee and determine future movement sequences, shapes and patterns.

<sup>20</sup> Rosalind Crisp prefers to describe her work as 'Choreographic Improvisation.' Her dance combines active attention (that influences the course of the dance by, for instance, shifting focus from one movement or body part to another, or choosing to stay longer with a certain movement pattern) with choreographic decisions to engage her body, and parts or areas of her body, in particular ways.

<sup>21</sup> 'Free improviser' Derek Bailey considers all improvisation to be "the celebration of the moment" (Bailey, 142).

to come. In such a time, or condition, the future would not be a predetermined outcome of the past but something shaped from materials immediately arising at hand.

However, neither the moment, nor the performer, is as innocent as this. The moment takes time, and is influenced by the performer's history and the performer's intentions. The life and flow of moments becomes visible and meaningful not merely by suspending judgement and intent to embrace, or be embraced by, unmediated occurrences. It is also necessary to attend to what is already there and what the performer brings: 'all improvisation takes place in relation to the known whether the known is traditional or newly acquired' (Bailey, 152). The 'known' includes the improvising dancer's body that is not moved magically and unpredictably by the moment 'itself.' Susan Leigh Foster argues that, in improvisation: 'both the changing of the course of things and the riding of that course through its course are mindful *and* bodyful' (Foster, 2003, 7).

'The moment' is not just a temporal space that interrupts or contributes to linear causality; it is a 'place,' where time, or the coherent feel of experience, loses any sense of regular intervals and linearity. Instead, it moves, gathers, re-enters itself, or is still, like a fluid. 'Being in the moment' is a metaphor for an unhabitual sense of time and being: an intense sense of being in the ongoing present. Time does not register as having passed or having a past; it unfolds continuously, even if 'on the spot.' The actual experience may have the 'feel' of an energetic pulsing, of motion in stillness, of suspended tension like a hunter closing in; an experience of a 'still point turning', a silent 'zinging', a surging orgasmic flow, a shining, slackenings, taughenings, reformings, misshapings. These felt qualities convey a sense of time occurring, passing, emerging or disappearing, and, paradoxically, of an ongoing, or eternal, present.

These shifts in the felt motion and expanse of experience accompany any unusual, intense, or intoxicated state. But, for the performer, 'being in the moment' is an active, engaged state of attention to the contents rather than the duration of moments - noticing the shifting constituents of precognitive, conscious, sensate or proprioceptive experience. The performer pays attention to the activity of perception and to its objects. In particular, the performer notices the manner of the body's changing or staying still, its 'vitality dynamics.'<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Stern, Daniel N: *Forms of vitality: exploring dynamic experience in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy, and development*, N.Y., OUP, N.Y, 2010. For Stern, the temporal arts largely consist of these 'vitality dynamics'.

Below, is a brief account of my own attempt to get into the moment:

*I begin with a choice - to focus on somatic experience, not emotions or thoughts; my attention falls first on the expansion of the muscles and bones of my upper back and upper arms. My attention may have been prompted by proprioceptive experience but I have now chosen to enlist or stay with that site of experience (rather than the pressure from the floor that I feel, in patches of the back of my lying body). I am conscious of doing it and consciously noticing the result - discovering, and adjusting, along the way, the held-ness of my neck and gaze and, as a result, a restriction, a sort of habitual stance, of my consciousness, which I can then free a little. But I am not exactly thinking - or I am making sure that my thinking follows my experience. It is a part of my noticing-equipment. It occurs to me to remind myself to pay more attention to the distance of my body from the space around me but I try to pay this attention 'in passing' while keeping the general process experimental because if I know how and where it will go, I have made an ending. Each action is the beginning of a following that will reveal itself. I am zoomed in on my actions and tasks. I am doing a sort of phenomenology: I notice details - of tension, body parts, motion, space or details of my surroundings. I experience the be-ing of my experiencing - here a sense of 'flow', here its impermanent, infinitesimal, almost imperceptible elements (Author's diary notes).*

My attempt to enter the moment involved a range of perceptual modes - pre-reflective, reflection, conscious redirection of perception, leaps of attention (such as suddenly remembering a neglected intent), 'instantaneous' sensations or noticings and an awareness of sequences.<sup>23</sup> Everyday life lacks this heightened sense of the moment. We live, according to Daniel Stern, in an episodic 'present moment' that 'lasts between one and ten seconds, with an average duration of around three to four seconds' (Stern, 2004, 41). Stern argues that this temporal phrasing shapes the driftings of thought, and the patterns of dance (rhythms of breathing, cycles of contraction-relaxation and groupings of steps), music, poetry, gesture, kinetics and discourse. (47). It is the smallest frame that enables meaning. It is a micro-*kairos* 'a subjective parenthesis set off from *chronos*' (that

---

<sup>23</sup> This account of 'entering the moment' is limited to 'internal' mental and bodily sensations: I was working with eyes shut so as to focus on these.

is, a qualitative, opportune opening in the flow of time) (7). The present moment is 'the stuff of subjectivity during ordinary mental states' (43). Using William James' image of consciousness as comprising alternating 'flights and perchings', Stern conceives present moments as the perchings between 'inaccessible and ungraspable' flights that do not interrupt our sense of self as experiencer.

### **The performer's approach to the moment**

Whatever the case, improvising performers seek to override these sort of gaps (lacunae in awareness) with a continuous concentrated focus - perhaps overlaid with structural decision-making in the 'present moment.' To maintain awareness, performers have developed wake-up strategies that include, for Deborah Hay, a perceptual practice guided by 'impossible' questions that keep the dancer in an experiment that links movement, alignment and perception;<sup>24</sup> for Min Tanaka, a process of scanning the body; and for Rosalind Crisp a set of disruptive strategies to 'keep interested' and to subvert the stasis of the known or habitual.

### **A note on improvisation and attention in performance**

As improvisation is sometimes regarded as a special, preparatory or inferior, mode of performance, (while I consider that it exemplifies attentive processes that potentially offer an access to truth), I would like to argue, here, and against Schechner's viewpoint, that improvisation is central to all forms of performance. In this I am explicitly opposing Schechner's view that performance, indeed all adult behaviour, is 'twice-behaved [or restored] behaviour': 'Every action, no matter how small or encompassing, consists of twice-behaved behaviours.' 'There is no such thing as 'once-behaved behaviour' (2002, 23). This may be true of socially coded and habitual acts and autonomic bodily processes, but I would argue that performance is compelling precisely because it is once-only behaviour even when representing 'twice-performed' (familiar) behaviour.<sup>25</sup> Schechner's

---

<sup>24</sup> With practice, Hay's questions become second nature, but in any case, they are not deliberations. They are propositions that keep the mind open and perception available - not questions of 'what to do next?' Hay says 'I am practicing being seen perceiving: I don't have time to think.' Despite her commitment to 'being in the moment,' Hay does not regard her dancing as 'improvisation.'

<sup>25</sup> Merleau-Ponty is perhaps demonstrating the peculiarity of totally once-behaved behaviour in daily life, when he discusses how crossing the fingers around a marble gives the illusion of two

restored behaviour is 'me behaving as if I were someone else,' or 'as I am told to do,' or 'as I have learned' (2002, 28). But what performers repeat is not behaviour, but tasks; how they are implemented is an improvisation, within parameters, that takes into account the myriad contingencies of tonight's audience, atmosphere, dynamics of the performing group, personal energy and so forth.<sup>26</sup> Performance activates a site of attention to invite an active, once-only awareness to a once-only event.

---

marbles partly by the fingers being in a position that they would never get themselves into (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 205).

<sup>26</sup> Schechner acknowledges that all performances will differ from one another - due to the changing contexts and relationships involved (Schechner: 23, 24). But it is more profitable to consider these variations as new ecologies of performer and context than as modifications of a set performance.

## Rosalind Crisp's choreographic improvisation - moving and noticing

*It adds to the pleasure of life to notice things*

Barbara Pym

To watch Rosalind Crisp dance is to lose one's grip. Her dance follows the contours of attention. She leads the viewer into uncertainty, discovery and an awakened sense of being, created by acts of noticing (by the viewer) prompted by acts of noticing by the dancer. In Rosalind Crisp's dance, movements fall short, or overshoot, or emerge elsewhere in the body; patterns unravel; directions realign and tempos shift. Unforseen actions seem to alight on the body. She is continuously shaking free, making a new foray, finding a new focus of attention before attention fades and the dance 'hardens into display' (2014).

By continually re-calibrating her attention, and ours as audience, Crisp denies a complacent unity to the body and revels in its multitude of surfaces, parts, intensities and spatial relationships. Her actions seem to be less asserted for their own sake than as a means of discovering what lies nearby them. Her actions seem not to be aimed at an end point but to be a subject of her own curiosity and a frame for noticing - perhaps the increasing distance between a hip and a hand, or an impulse to jump, or perhaps an imaginary but sense-based 'world' structured by felt conditions of the body not mental pictures - for instance feeling crowded in by, or composed of, rabbit traps.<sup>27</sup>

Deborah Hay uses the mind and imagination to subvert the mind and the ego (re-imagining the body at a cellular level; proposing koans that sideline any previous dancerly expertise). Rosalind Crisp, without engaging with mind/body paradigms, directs her attention directly to the body - noticing its movements and conditions, noticing its held points and allowing or intimating their release. Her choreographic tools are designed to discover or make movement in any part of the body. (Both dancers use choreography not only as a structuring device but to prompt the dancer's own investigative attention which affects the course of the performance).

---

<sup>27</sup> An actual example of an image discovered by Crisp in the course of a performance (2014).

## Feeble bodied

One of Rosalind Crisp's most radical moves has been to valorise and enlist the body's capacity to be 'feeble.' She pursues a body deconstructed by gravitational instability - a body that *needs* and responds to attention. The dancing body cannot, of course, be completely relaxed - it must be 'held' somewhere - but the process of 'feeble-ising' the body dislodges postures, provokes proprioceptive awareness, and allows the body to initiate moves in unanticipated directions from unfamiliar points of instigation, and to respond to the dancer's decisions.<sup>28</sup> Crisp notes that making parts of the body 'feeble' is a way 'to un-hold tension so that the body can *feel* where attention is in it *now*.' Making and noticing 'febleness' in the body is a strategy that assists, and commits the dancer to, sensitivity, because, 'the less we hold, the more we feel'; it also 'leads to enormous power by facilitating access to the *use* of gravity' (2014).

## Beginning before the beginning

Rosalind Crisp's strategies begin at the 'warm up' - before any active beginning - with simply noticing the condition and movements of the body. This, in my experience, has an effect like adding water to sand: the mental and physical constraints that hold the unnoticed body begin to disintegrate, and movements suddenly become available to the senses - shifting, flowing, straining at the brink.

I first encountered this approach to warming up in a workshop Rosalind Crisp had asked a simple, and, for me, embarrassingly radical question: 'What is a warm up for?' Later she prompted us through a series of investigations as we lay in 'active rest' (on the back, soles of feet on the floor near the buttocks, knees bent): noticing the breath, gradually letting a movement 'pour' from somewhere in the body, noticing where that movement began, noticing how it aligned with the out-breath or in-breath (in my case, tending to soften and folding on the out- and harden or extend on the in-breath).

---

<sup>28</sup> Crisp has wonderfully effective, simple, *bodily* strategies for helping to release the body from inadvertent arrangements. For example, 'moving off-vertical' immediately demotes the head and eyes from their habitual navigational, controlling, hierarchical position.

Noticing the source of movements is very different from warming limbs by initiating movements that rehearse anticipated actions. This noticing and the body's response, attunes and prepares body and attention together.

On a later occasion, Rosalind Crisp proposed 'warming up' in a state of 'deep rest' - a condition in which I found myself entering into intimate conversations with the disparate parts of my body. As my attention settled somewhere, my senses would awaken there, revealing the condition and movements of the body. I would then intimate to my body how or where it might move towards rest - never 'making' it move, but perhaps preparing the way, noticing what was obstructing it, where might be an easier path, - a bit like a child clearing rubbish or digging grooves to ease the flow of a trickle of water in the earth. I had to let the body indicate to me, how it could travel, where it had loosened and where it still needed to negotiate changes in its muscular and gravitational homeostasis - in its particular constellation of weight, tension and arrangement of body parts.

This, already, seemed like a training for 'truthful performance.' The body and purposive action were each learning to be more aware, less presumptuous, less vague or habitual - and more available to each other. Later, this body would be more available to my choices and my noticings. As a dancing 'feeble' body, it would not fall, 'splat!', to the floor. I would help it adjust - like helping someone to their feet, we would have to work together. I would set it moving in certain directions, using certain parts, with particular speeds or qualities not because I knew best what I wanted it to do, but because this how I could keep our conversation alive - this conversation of body, environment, attention that is our being, that we experience as what I have called 'being-becoming.'

## Attention

Giving attention to the body does not decide its movements; nevertheless, placing attention is an intentional act, determining what is noticed in the body, when, and for how long. By foregrounding aspects of the body, attention keeps the body awake and 'present' to the dancer (and, in my view, engenders an intimate relationship in which attention and body adjust to each other).

Rosalind Crisp has a series of attentional strategies that elicit this enlivening awareness. For example: following, with the attention, the movement of a particular body part or surface until noticing the next one. That is, focussing the attention but not fixing the attention; closely following interests aroused by the body in space. Or, another example: noticing beginnings. In my case, I found, again and again, that actions I thought I knew,



had, in fact, escaped my attention. I had 'pounced' on one movement after another - without actually experiencing where, how, in what body parts, in what sequence, in what relation to the breath and to intention, at what speed, with what tone, with which surprises the movements had burst forth.

Crisp has described this as an 'improvisational attention' - a way of staying in the present. (2014). This attention accompanies and may prompt her choreographic choices. And her choreographic choices will refresh and re-engage the attention. She has developed a whole range of choreographic tools that generate movement, bring various parts of the body into play, change the tone and dynamics of the body, create new relationships to space- and feed her curiosity.

## Choreography

But attending or 'being present', even in this highly active way that places attention here, now here, now out there, is hard to sustain without provocations from the body and is only part of Rosalind Crisp's approach to dance. Crisp does not simply entrust her dance to a 'democratic body' moving in conjunction with a freely moving attention - she instigates movements, making choreographic choices concerning body part(s), tone, speed and spatial relationships.

Crisp's choreographic tools open up fields of observation where the dancer can play with what they notice. One such tool, that I found to be highly productive, is: 'move two body surfaces away from each other.' The task is quite specific, yet completely unprescriptive: it requires no forethought about which surfaces to move, where to, by what trajectory, at what speed, when, for how long. And yet the tool activates the body in space in a highly conscious way, allowing the attention to settle on it or look round it, inside it, or suddenly shift its focus to another location, another 'tool.' In my experience, over time, one finds these tools are 'at hand' without any shuffling through the kitbag. So choreographic initiatives do not interrupt the attention but refresh it by opening a new frame on 'being-becoming.'

## Proprioceptive awareness

I see Crisp's dance as riddled with gaps for noticing. Gaps in which being can be experienced in its becoming. Novelist Barbara Pym has observed that '[i]t adds to the pleasure of life to notice things' (Pym, 158). One could also say that life *is* noticing (or

awareness); that noticing is the means by which the noticed *occurs* for us as lived experience. Usually, perhaps, we notice things or people rather than the sensations by which they are made present to us. But dancers, and others working with the body, can make the means of their noticing the object of their noticing. We can feel the moving of a movement - its transitioning bodily states - not just its trajectory. The body is suffused with a flurry of motions and densities that 'feel' the instigation and the trace of action, the intent and the evidence, that provide a sort of embodied transcription of its motion. The dancer can use moving as a way of noticing how that very movement reveals itself to us in the unfolding feel of its occurring. We feel how it feels to be moved by the movement we are making. Given attention, proprioception tracks being coursing and blooming in the body. It provides sensible access to being in its becoming - to ontological truth. Rosalind Crisp's dance makes spaces for this mode of knowing.

### Feet and hands: awareness by touch - a footnote

Merleau-Ponty, at his death, had begun to formulate a concept of the double-sidedness and reversibility of the body as subject and object, felt and feeler, means and end, as 'the flesh' (2004, 248-270/1968, 130-155). Many of the performer strategies or tools mentioned in this thesis (not least, those of Rosalind Crisp) are designed, by disruption, or by sharpened awareness, to overcome perceptual or motional continuities whereby the body disappears from awareness, or sinks into one of those binaries. However, although this is a phenomenological side-issue, I argue, in the footnote below, that bodily experience is not always 'doubled,' and that Merleau-Ponty's discussion of 'the chiasm' (in which clasped hands attempt to experience their touching and being touched, at the same time) misrepresents what is in fact an everyday instance of simultaneity, particular to the sense of touch.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Merleau-Ponty considered that we can not experience, at one and the same time, our two hands, in the act of meeting each other - that is, as both touching and being touched (1962, 93; 2004, 251). To my experience it seems that it is not only possible to experience touching and being touched, at the same time, but that this is the normal case. When we touch (rather than stroke) a flat surface it is as if the surface pressed our finger and/or our finger presses the surface. We glide our fingers across the surface to make use of the differences between a series of simultaneities. We may not be able to hold in mind, at the same time, the *acts* of doing or receiving, (there are in fact Body Weather 'exercises' in which partners move each others limbs simultaneously and attempt to sense the shifts in who leads or is led) but we feel the two as the juncture of touch (as pressure rather than sliding). It is a sort of limit case of mind-body differentiation, or not. When we touch and are touched by our intertwined hands we feel both sensations at the meeting place. But the attempt to explore the binaries of 'touching' and 'being touched' establishes (is required to establish) the issue

## Truth 'in the moment'

Watching Rosalind Crisp performing, striving to stay present with every aspect of her body, I see what I consider to be 'truthful performance.' Her strategies go to the heart of staying 'in the moment' and, incidentally, challenge the common and persistent assumptions that time is delivered to us in seamless swathes or, alternatively, as a sequence of infinitesimal particles - neither of which seems to represent our immediate experience.

The functional continuity of our experience is achieved by ignoring gaps. By a not-noticing. We are unaware of our 'flights' from awareness, gaps in time and the failure of intervallic measures of time to match our subjective experience that time shifts form like clouds. These covered-over gaps are not problems or failures in human life: they come with who or what we are. But they *are* connected with the issue of truth as aletheia, as the unconcealing of Being.

One motivation for dance and other performance is to make possibilities and expose the life within this lumpy linearity of everyday life where gaps and opacities and energetic changes and changes of perspective go unnoticed, caught up and muddled together. Dance acts as a sort of phenomenology that interrogates bodily experience in space and time. Improvisation, for instance, disrupts these everyday, common sense, sequences. It can begin simply by noticing them: 'Attention alters that which is attended' (Kaprow, 2003, 236). Attention alters its object because it changes the facets and energies that come

---

one way or the other, or flickers between one way and the other. It seems to me that the experience of standing, and sometimes of walking, is similar. We know that it is our feet that have the freedom to move relative to the floor. The floor is not, as far as we are concerned, doing the moving. So we are disinclined to credit the ground as 'doing' the touching or pressing. However, that is what is happening (an equal and opposite pressure). And that is exactly what I feel that I feel. If I am clambering over rocks at the beach I delight in my skill at making the right moves, but, when I just stand, I believe that I experience this 'double pushing' between body and ground. I believe that it is for this reason that, in my teaching, when helping students to find a so-called 'neutral' standing body, I have, intuitively, not used the commonly used image 'imagine your weight going into the ground', but, rather, 'imagine a mirror of your body extending downwards from the soles of your feet' - an image of this simultaneously felt 'double pressure' that is the experience of the standing body.

forward in awareness. This may be quite pragmatic: paying attention to the alignment of a knee for instance, to control it better. But attention can also alter its object by altering its subject, as when a dancer attends to an area of the body as it moves in time and space in order to have revealed to them what is going on. It is in this suspension of asserted presence or intention that, I believe, 'be-ing,' may be experienced, in the body, in its emerging (as what I have called 'being-becoming').

Conscious attention can drown out other aspects of our being-in-the-world including proprioceptive and other pre-reflective modes of awareness.<sup>30</sup> Crisp's strategies keep somatic awareness and conscious decision-making or action in a playful relation that serves attention and avoids closure. In Crisp's dance, movements seem to appear out of nowhere, because, as in Zeno's paradox,<sup>31</sup> even the sustained sweep of a limb dissolves into a swarm of qualities and locations ('horizons' perhaps) when each 'moment' of movement is somatically felt and consciously attended. As Crisp says, 'movements can be found by a practice of paying attention to observe what is already there, emergent, not yet named or colonised...these buds and shoots appear everywhere' (2009,104).

### Frames for being

'Being in the moment', as pursued in improvisation, connotes a state of alert awareness - a sense of being-in-the-world, of being-in-the-process-of-becoming (which is, at the same time, a passing) that is obscured by our daily functional orientation. 'Being in the moment' is an activity not an occurrence. Constant activation of attention is needed to avoid habits of behaviour and habits of perception, so that unanticipated and unplanned movement can arise. Not only does 'being in the moment' demand action, it requires decisions. Crisp's practice (and my own experience of improvisation and authentic movement noted in this thesis) suggests that accessing the danced moment, or accessing 'the moment' by

---

<sup>30</sup> Two ways that thinking obscures body awareness are: by placing itself between somatic sensation and the thought-about body, so that we see the thought rather than notice the bodily sensation; and, by narrowing the focus of awareness, so that I notice, say, my moving hand, but lose awareness of the position, movements or muscle tone of everything else.

<sup>31</sup> The Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea argued that the distance between any two points was infinitely divisible and, therefore, motion was impossible - because any point *a* was separated from any point *b* by an infinite series of interim distances, each of which required time to cross - cumulatively, an infinite amount of time.

dancing, depends on decisions that keep body and space at play in awareness.<sup>32</sup> This awareness can be kept awake, or ‘interested’ to use Crisp’s term, by initiating movement (jump starting it, nudging it along one course rather than another, bringing another part of the body into the foreground) or by actively choosing to go-along-with. Truth may always be, but it only appears, when we are alert and find ways to hold open up a frame for noticing.

---

<sup>32</sup> ‘Dancing involves decision making’ (Havilah, 2009, 103).

## Deborah Hay

Deborah Hay is a central figure in Twentieth Century dance. Along with other dancers in the Judson Church group she helped shift the focus of dance from established aesthetic patterns, technical virtuosity and self-expression, to a performative exploration of the nature and purpose of dance and the role of dancer. In 1970, she began an intense six-year period of private daily exploration, discovering an approach to dance that she has now refined for more than 40 years.

For Hay, dance is not a rehearsable act, it is a mode of perception; to dance is to engage in a perceptual practice not a bodily technique; virtuosity and expressivity obscure and prevent the revelation of something more transparent and impersonal – perhaps, in the context of my enquiry, more truthful. She devises choreographies as devices for ‘inviting being seen perceiving’ (Hay, 2011 b). Hay trusts that the dancer’s constant perception of their non-linear, multi-cellular body, and its constantly changing relationship to space, time and audience, will be sufficient to allow a dance to appear.<sup>33</sup>

What sort of body is this perceiving body? And how is it danced by perceiving? I will address these questions pragmatically, by describing the type of embodiment I have seen, or experienced personally, in Hay’s practice, and how these bodies compare with, say, the everyday body, or, at another extreme, the butoh body. I will also give an account of my own experience in applying Deborah Hay’s dance strategies to her solo *I think not* in an attempt at ‘truthful performance.’

### The body as a site of enquiry

Hay defines the dancer as ‘a site for enquiry’ (2013 b). This prioritisation of the body is common to Hay, Body Weather and Rosalind Crisp - though each views the body through a different lens: Hay allowing perception to liberate the body from ideas; Body Weather

---

<sup>33</sup> Hay discusses how she hoped that by working, for months, with just two resources - a floor pattern and a ‘question addressed to my whole body’ - that a ‘dance would emerge without me making it’ (2012 b). One of the questions that form the practice of ‘I think not’ is, similarly, ‘What if how you see when your are dancing, including what you imagine, invent, project, and can and cannot see in a prescribed area near, mid-range, and far, at any given moment, is a means by which movement arises without looking for it’ (2011 a).

feeling into the textures, dynamics and potential of the body; and Crisp provoking or delighting in the kinaesthetics of the body. In her disinterest in conforming the body to elegant or expressive accomplishments, Hay is in an evolutionary line in dance that, from the start of the twentieth century, became curious about the body itself: 'Its opaqueness. Its flaws. Its inconsistencies. Its memories. Its imprecisions. Its traumata' (Franz Cramer in Albrecht, 2006, 47). Dance aesthetics and choreography 'evolved less in terms of formal choices or apparent creative decisions than in choices (recognised or not) of body states' (Louppe, 2010, 46).

Hay believes that every dancer's body, in fact every person's body, has been 'choreographed up the Wazoo!' (Hay: 2001 b). Her central dance strategy is to undo this body of trained actions and signification. Hay 'reconfigures' the 'linear', three-dimensional physical, personal body by re-imagining it as trillions of cells;<sup>34</sup> she disperses the ego-driven body with tasks and paradoxes that encourage *play*, *non-attachment* and *acceptance*; and she conceives the social-body of performer/audience as one engaged in perception not communication/reception.

Hay regards this body as a sort of mind. 'What I call my mind is my whole body. What I call my body is fifty-three trillion cells and more at once with an indelible sense of humour and respect for the universe' (Allsopp, 1996, 61). The body is also not a body with a perceiving head: Do you believe that we have been put here on earth with all this stuff like feet and legs and hips and spine and then to carry a head around to do the act of perceiving? It doesn't make sense. So, I have been spending the last forty-five years of my life dropping the attention that keeps creeping up into my head down into my whole body' (Hay, 2011 d).

Hay is attempting what I would characterise as a type of phenomenological epoche in which the body is able to appear as its cellular self, stripped of psychological, personal overlays. Her body becomes her teacher rather than her subject. She creates this 'epoche', by constant meditation, in the studio and throughout a performance, on open-ended propositions expressed, generally, in the form: 'What if...?' For example: 'What if where I am is what I need?' These meditative questions, or 'imagined conditions' (Hay, 2000, 54), are similar in form and purpose to zen koans, are designed 'to penetrate my conscious

---

<sup>34</sup> This is an image Hay shares with Janet Adler. Imagining the cellular composition of the body is also used in various somatic disciplines or dance practices such as Body Mind Centering and Body Weather.

and unconscious agendas within the art form we call dance' (Hay, 2001, 3). 'The manner in which these *what ifs* can thrill and annihilate the body's reasoning process, overwhelming it with self-reflection, is similar to the experience of beginner's mind in Zen' (Hay, 2000, xxv).

Goldman describes Hay's choreographies as 'scores...which performers interpret while engaging in a practice of perceptual questioning, designed to decentralise the dancer and stimulate his or her curiosity and physical responsiveness.' '[S]ome directives indicate timing and spatial patterns...while others are more abstract, emphasising the dancer's engagement rather than his or her appearance...' (Goldman, 2007, 162). Hay, herself, says her choreography includes: 'questions I ask myself when I am performing a particular movement sequence that ministers shape to a dance' and which are '1) unanswerable, 2) impossible to truly comprehend, and, at the same time, 3) poignantly immediate.' Similarly, her movement choices are mainly, '1) impossible to realize, 2) embarrassing to 'do', or, idiotic to contemplate, 3) maddeningly simple' (Hay, 2013 a).

The result, in Hay's words, is 'a sustained and steady self-regulated transcendence of the choreographed body, within the sequence of movements' (Hay, 2011 c).

Hay is the first to insist that what I have called her 'epoche' is imperfect and unsustainable. (Merleau-Ponty says much the same of the Husserlian epoche: 'the most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction'; 1962, xiv). Hay insists: 'It's impossible. No one can do it. I can't do it.' It is a rigorous experiment, or act of faith, and to keep the mind from closing up the process it is necessary to entice it playfully: 'Who knows if [the 'what if' proposition] is true! Assume it! Play it out' (Hay, 2011 b).

Hay's practice can appear conceptual, and is sometimes described as if its focus is consciousness. She goes so far as to write that '*My Body* in the title of this book [*My body, the buddhist*] refers to a prescribed set of *what ifs*...' (xxiv). Hay describes this body as a body 'formed and sustained imaginatively' by 'dance [that] has become a medium for the study and application of detachment. Actually, I prefer the term dis-attachment because it implies a more active role in letting go' (2012).

But Hay is very clear that it is a somatic practice. She says, 'there is a way, my body as teacher, feels' (Hay: 2011 b). 'I dance by directing my consciousness to the movement of every cell in my body simultaneously so that I can feel all parts of me from the inside, from the very inside out moving. I dance by feeling the movement of space simultaneously



all over my body so that it is like bringing my sensitivity to the very edges of my being from my head to my toe so that I can feel the movement of the air around me' (Cited Foster, 1986, 9,10).

Hay describes each new performance practice as 'a conscious re-invention of my mind' in response to 'a puzzlingly simple feeling of integration experienced when I am dancing' or 'an aching sense of depth and connection' - what she describes as 'a fleeting logic' (2000, 20). She may then work with this koan, for up to a year, to 'kinaesthetically gather evidence from the feedback' in the hope of recapturing the experience (2000, 55).

Hay's dance practice could be described as meditation, Zen dis-attachment, prayer, surrender of self or play. She employs an open ungrasping touch to experience a sense of wholeness and integration with life passing. 'My mind and body felt like a single experience, and not a split one...[e]verything had its own perfection. I did not have to create movement' (2001, 10).

Hay's dance is her mode of open attentiveness to the world *as a whole*. A world that is accessible despite, and by means of, the limits and gaps of our embodied awareness.<sup>35</sup> At Findhorn, Deborah Hay, speaking about how to maintain perceptual and choreographic awareness in the course of performing, said: 'Survival depends on using everything ... everything is serving me because I have gaps.' Hay at one stage experienced her practice as 'prayer' in which her trillions of cells sustained 'an active, nonlinear 'dialogue with all there is.' 'I imagine that what I see - the trees, sky, dogs, people, river running - is dialoguing with every cell in me. My noticing dialogue describes how I see rather than what I see. It attaches me to my universe' (2000, 55).

### Letting truth take care of itself

I find this in this, the possibility of truthful experience, although, Hay does not let debates about truth get in her way: 'I do not burden myself with the veracity of the exercise' (2000, 55).

Hay is a radical exemplar of Louppe's ideal that contemporary dance will 'form techniques and processes to reach in to the living body itself and... to bring into appearance all the other weak, ridiculous, mad bodies that history and the world have removed from our perception ...' (Louppe, 2010, 42). She has certainly brought new

---

<sup>35</sup> 'Thank God for the limitations of the body' (Deborah Hay: Melbourne workshop, )

bodies to contemporary performance: a playful, light body ('my body feels weightless in the presence of paradox'); a body without demonstrated mastery or desire to impress; a body willing to look stupid; a body in constantly changing relationship; a body that notices (invites being seen perceiving); an inventive body taking many shapes; a body free of self-regard.

Hay's choreographies often include metaphorical bodies, say, a monster, a gong, or a dog (the title of her 2001 Marion Chace Foundation Annual Lecture is *Woof woof woof Woof woof woof woof woof Woof WOOFWOOF Woof Woof woof woof woof WOOF WOOF woof woof woof woof*). But the less convincing these bodies are, the better, because the focus is on the body, its perceptual state, not its form or the dancer's skill. Indeed, the choreographed forms and tasks are prescribed in ways that empty them of representational meaning. For example: 'Flying, as only I am able to perceive flying; in other words, no one in the audience would describe my activity as flying' or 'strongly pumping my diaphragm so it appears as if I am crying. ...I am not crying. I am palpating my diaphragm (Hay, 2011a). There is no way the dancer can learn these tasks - they demand engagement with immediate circumstances. There is a deliberate perceptual play, and creative disjunction here, that lightens the body, loosens its logic - the antithesis, I think, to butoh's use of imaginative tasks that are aimed at bodily transformation in texture, weight, tension, energy, scale and form.

Hay's practice seldom results in an emotionally expressive body - although Hay said it could do so, provided this state was not fixed, but experienced as 'here and gone, here and gone' (Hay, 2011 b). That is, the dancer is not 'attached' to the emotion, but allows it to exist as a series of successive states, each noticed and dropped to allow the next to arise in attention.<sup>36</sup>

Rather, Hay's focus is a 'self-regulated transcendence of the choreographed body' (Hay 2011 c). Her choreographic scores provide structure and a focus for the 'streaming perceptual challenges' (Hay, 2011 b) of the performer. There is no right way to assume one of these absurd bodies; the dancer has to call into play their 53 trillion cells in relationship to space, time, audience, and things seen or imagined. The score helps sustain

---

<sup>36</sup> Hay cites Tibetan teacher Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche to explain the concept of 'here and gone': "Touch that presence of life being lived, then go [...] "Go" ... means just being in it without further analysis and without further reinforcement. Holding on to life, or trying to reassure oneself that it is so, has the sense of death rather than life' (Hay, 2000, xxiv).

an attentive discipline. I experienced this choreographic practice as a participant in the 2011 Deborah Hay Solo Performance Commissioning Project (SPCP).

### **I think not**

The 2011 SPCP solo was called *I think not*. Some 20 international dancers had each commissioned the solo and had committed to practising it daily for three months before performing their own adaptation. The choreography was the result of a year's daily practice by Deborah Hay herself.

Five 'tools' (koans, or 'what ifs') guided the implementation of the dance. They included:

*What if your choice to surrender the pattern - and it is just a pattern - of facing a single direction of fixing on a singularly coherent idea, feeling, or object when you are dancing is a way of remembering to see where you are in order to surrender where you are?*

*What if dance is how you practice relationship with your whole body at once in relationship to the space where you are dancing in relationship to each passing moment in relationship to your audience? What if the depth of this question is on the surface? (Hay, 2011 a).*

These were to be contemplated continuously in 'practice' and performance. There were also several floor patterns, such as a spiral, or a zig zag, some gestures that were both precise and indeterminate, unfamiliar sounds that were to be made as an extension of movement, some instructions on dynamics and about how to approach each element rather than what to do or exactly how to do it. There was no narrative structure, duration, meaning or general emotional tone. One note, 'I try to get as close as possible to not knowing how to perform this dance' could have applied to the whole.

The score was to be followed rigorously yet the outcome was unpredictable. Hay said: 'There is no way it looks,' and, 'I can't do this: no-one can do this.' She discussed in detail the meanings and purposes of the questions and instructions in the score. They were devices for staying engaged in continuous discovery, 'using the whole body at once as [our] teacher.' We were being urged to venture without anticipation, so that we might come across what is and what can be, through perception not conception or invention. As Deborah Hay put it, in a typically anarchic reformulation: 'Ready... *Fire!* ... Aim.'

I found the practice exciting but the adaptation process, on my own, very difficult. It is a very demanding process but my biggest difficulty stemmed from the question: 'why move at all?' For many sessions of practice I felt that my first movement was cheating; that I could perceive without being impelled to move - certainly not in a particular direction as required. The solution I found was that I was already moving in many ways (breath, micro-movements, shifting of balance - Steve Paxton's 'small dance') which created a changing relationship to space and audience that I could then follow, and that I was in any case allowed to use my imagination to change how and what I perceived. Hay's koans became opportunities to learn from my already moving body.

After a few weeks the dancer is encouraged to develop the choreography 'in a particular way' as their own. I felt that in doing this I was losing the sense of open enquiry. And yet, working this dilemma, finding a choreography that transcended the habitual score inscribed in my body, is the task. I might have recalled Hay's general advice to treat everything as 'here and gone'; I could, for instance, have re-discovered any choreographic patterns I had established 'as if' for the very first time; and to use strictures as tools of awareness: 'The secret of your perfection within the adaptation is your awareness of the material imposed upon you in the work you are performing and the hidden elements that serve you and your audience.' For example, the spiral path with which the solo begins (with audience in the round) is a means by which the performer is assisted in 'noticing their changing relationship with space, time and the audience.'

Hay's practice is a process for imaginative liberation of the body rather than a training of the body to meet imaginative demands. Her paradoxical or awakening koans free the performer from having to move in any particular way - 'there is no way it looks.' It is a practice that puts the body at the service of somatic perception - particularly spatial awareness and imagination. It does not focus on changing the body directly. The dancer brings his or her existing body to a perceptual and imaginative practice that may heighten body awareness, soften it by re-imagining it as trillions of cells and loosen the dancer's desire to grip and force it into shape.

In the next chapter I describe an alternative strategy, Body Weather, which, like Hay, treats the body as teacher, seeks to be danced by the environment not according to ideas, psychology or personal expression. But instead of using conceptual strategies to subvert conceptual regimes that dominate the body, Body Weather applies strategies of action, observation and imagination to learn directly from the body.

## Body Weather

*Now I am a frog far away from the shadow of an idea*

Tatsumi Hijikata

*Hands no longer grasping or letting go, but walking into the darkness of the body and plucking at it*

Tatsumi Hijikata

*The body does not know physics*

Min Tanaka

Body Weather is a process of enquiry that has guided my approach to performance and provided me with a touchstone for truth in performance. It was developed, in the 1970s, by Min Tanaka, a key figure in the history of dance, and of butoh.<sup>37</sup>

Body Weather is an attitude of open investigation rather than a prescribed system of training and performance. It takes an ecological view of the body as constantly changing, and interdependent with its environment, like the weather. Body Weather uses observation, 'hands on' research (moving one's own body or having others move one's body), and imagination, to awaken detailed embodied awareness: awareness *of* the body and *with* the body. In my experience this awareness, at times, is an experience of what I call 'truth' - not something captured as knowledge or fact, but a noticed being-becoming, at the site of the body in its world.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Tanaka coined the term 'Body Weather' in 1977 (Marshall, 2006, 61). Its values and concepts guided Tanaka's Body Weather Farm, at Hakushu, that integrated farming, training and dance. Although Tanaka, himself, now dissociates himself from 'Body Weather', the practice remains a powerful and insightful influence on physical performance and arts practices that investigate a relation of body and environment. Seminal practitioners teach in Australia, Denmark, France, Holland, Spain, USA. (See: <http://bodyweather.net/> Accessed 23 November, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> My 'Body Weather' experience has extended over 20 years and includes studying and working with dancer-choreographer Tess de Quincey (De Quincey Co), who introduced me to Body Weather and has guided my practice, Stuart Lynch, Frank van de Ven, Oguri, and Min Tanaka, at a residential dancing/farming workshop at his 'Body Weather Farm.'

In this chapter I consider Body Weather as a mode of enquiry concerning the body in and as an environment; its conception of the self as dispersed; and, its training of the body and awareness. I discuss how Body Weather is a strategy of awareness that can be applied outside performance. And, finally, I focus on the use of the 'image' in Body Weather - as a felt meeting point of proprioceptive, sensate and imaginative awareness.

### A phenomenology of the body

Body Weather can be seen as a process of phenomenological research into the life of the body. (Tanaka underlined this experimental, research focus, by calling his Body Weather Farm a 'laboratory'; Marshall, 2006, 61). Body Weather, to use Husserl's term, 'brackets' Self (the psychological, self-expressive performer) so that processes and conditions of the body can show themselves directly. This does not mean that the performer will ignore presentational issues - how the body will appear from audience perspective - but the root of the performance will be a body shaped by a living response to its real or imagined environment. When I asked Tanaka, after an intense Melbourne solo performance, in which his body seemed to be engaged in a continuous struggle with tremendous forces, whether he had been improvising to a particular theme, he said 'No, I am just living my life out there.'<sup>39</sup>

Experimentally, Body Weather deconstructs the body to reveal it as a decentred (or 'omnicentral') and multidimensional entity. It develops the capacity to engage with isolated parts of the body and to feel their shifts and trajectories in effort, speed, density, extension, form and time. The body and its relationship to the physical world, and space, is experienced actively, as a zone of transformation, not an aesthetic arrangement. 'We embody THE BODY that belongs to nobody' (Tanaka, cited, Snow, 2003, 52. Emphasis in Tanaka's original).

Strategies by which Body Weather releases the desires and competencies of the body include: 'excessive' energetic and/or conceptual input that overloads established holding patterns; taking the body beyond its normal range in space, energy or speed; changing the scale and orientation of postures and movements; using images (that is, imagined physical conditions of or around the body) to change the body; becoming a beginner in learning about the body by hands-on investigation - allowing others to physically manipulate and move one's own body and doing the same to theirs.

---

<sup>39</sup> At the 2001 Australian International Workshop Festival.

## The body that is no-body

The sense of 'I' can stand in the way of the experience we seek, like a noise scattering a hunter's prey. Body Weather addresses this problem directly by distinguishing the body's desires and capacities from 'yours.' Min Tanaka teaches that '*You* are embarrassed. Your body is not embarrassed!' (Tanaka, 2007). 'People take a position which is always inside of the body. It's like one is always expressing, 'I am here, I am in the centre.' But I thought, 'Why don't we feel the centre lying in the dream, or somewhere else?' It's like the weather: centres are always moving' (Marshall, 2006, 61).

Tanaka describes Body Weather as a notion of omn centrality and contingency. 'I is not the centre. The centre is everywhere. ... 'I am' does not always come first. It can be, it is a viable notion. But it may drift around and be identified with someone else or some other thing. This is true about human relations, meteorological phenomena, the sun, animals, and almost everything around us. A weather-like contingent and ever changing relationship' (Kim Jiae, 2006, n.pag.).

For Tanaka, the idea of making performance from an inner, independent self is incomprehensible or reprehensible. 'Oppose your desire! ...Why give precedence to the expression of an inside that society and history has made?' 'When I perform I am not there.' Tanaka recalls being mystified, as a young dancer, by what his Western modern dance teachers meant when they asked him to express his inner self (Tanaka, 2007). This does not imply a disregard for feeling, but a different idea of where it comes from: 'I decided never to dance without feeling' [but] 'the feeling was outside my body, and I thought I might be able to get the feeling into my body [...] I thought the dance had to come from outside and meet inside. In the same way, Tanaka's film acting is perhaps the antithesis of method acting - based not on an 'individual nostalgia' but on 'finding the body' (2007). 'One may define Hijikata as the manifestation of the kind of emotion one cannot possess exclusively ...the genealogy of the body never rested on individual nostalgia. Love clenches the teeth and makes the buttocks tremble' (Tanaka, 1986, 154). The body itself 'seeks depth.' It is not, itself, embarrassed, inattentive, lazy or envious. It has not modified itself as a 'social body' (Tanaka regards consumerism, for instance, as 'a sort of body') and, released from our preconceptions, the body may surprise us, because, 'the body does not know physics' (2007).

Tatsumi Hijikata, whom Tanaka regards as his teacher, had a similar scorn for the personal self as the detritus of society and history. He was fascinated by the radical openness of the suffering body stripped of psychology and the desire for self-expression.

He starved himself to achieve such a body: 'While a lack is yet a lack, one can still call any lack in his or her body a self-sufficiency.' Hijikata envied a lame dog that he saw being stoned and beaten mercilessly by children: 'Why? Because it is the dog which derives the most benefit here. It is the dog that tempts the children and, without considering its own situation, exposes itself completely.' 'I want to become and be a body with its eyes just open wide, a body tensed to the snapping point in response to the majestic landscape around it' (Kurihara, 2000, 59).

### Body as ecology

In Body Weather, the body is mobile, changing and interdependent with its environment. The body's experience is always new and unique, never fixed or inevitable. 'Every movement is a kind of miracle. Even holding a tree can be many things' (Tanaka, 2007). Always fresh and changing, '[t]he body does not exist unless one is astonished with its ingenuous state' (Tanaka, 1986, 153).

Body Weather practice reflects a desire to be taught and astonished by the body. It trains the placement of attention and somatic (sensory, proprioceptive) awareness, and it trains the body's capacity to 'meet' (as Tess de Quincey puts it) the imagination.<sup>40</sup> The body is not experienced as a stand-alone, material object: it has its own internal dialogues and it intertwines with its environment, as Ingold would say, in a 'meshwork' (Ingold, 2011).<sup>41</sup> Nor is there a 'neutral' body. For instance, the body has, always, multiple speeds: 'The speed of thought, of nerves, of blood circulation, of muscular tissues, of the spirit; the chaotic coexistence of various speeds' (Tanaka, 1986, 154). Body Weather practice makes this ebb and flow of the body evident. Participants, every now and again, check their 'Body Weather' - for example, their heat, weight, energy - and notice any changes. And, from day to day, participants notice difference aspects, or changes that have occurred, within the 'same' investigative 'exercises' - changes in timing, breath, dynamics, alignment, awareness of 'group body', state of the mind and so on.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Tess de Quincey, who performed with Min Tanaka's Mai Juku group for several years, introduced Body Weather to Australia in 1989. She is Artistic Director, De Quincey Co, which bases its performance practice in Body Weather.

<sup>41</sup> Tim Ingold: '[T]he organism (animal or human) should be understood not as a bounded entity surrounded by an environment but as an unbounded entanglement of lines in fluid space'.



## Training as investigation

Below, I outline core elements and structure of Body Weather derived from various practitioners. My aim is to demonstrate how Body Weather destabilises any persistent way of experiencing or looking at bodily experience while developing physical and attentive capacities to experience and perceive the body, and via the body, more subtly. The 'how' includes movement, stretching and releasing the body, perceptual investigations, collaborating imaginatively with a newly receptive (or newly noticed) body - as well as shifts in the 'scale' of experience (for instance, slowing the body, imagining the body at different scales, and exploring extreme sensory or energetic conditions - such as exhaustion).

### Mind/body... muscle/bone... individual/group

One of the core Body Weather practices, called 'MB' (mind/body: muscle/bone), develops bodily ability (muscular, aerobic, range of movement). But what distinguishes it as an *investigative* training is its focus on *noticing* bodily, temporal and spatial conditions.<sup>43</sup> The MB is physically and energetically precise, individually, and as a 'group body.' Participants travel, from one end of the training floor to the other, gradually working through and warming up the body, part by part - but, equally, warming up the attention. The movements are often maintained for just one or two lengths of the space, and then replaced by a new variation, or a new task. The sequence starts very slowly and quietly - stretching and releasing each area of the body in turn from head to toe, toe to head, while at the same time demanding that the participant focus on their relation to space, the different sense of timing in the different movements, and the energy or timing that is present in the group as a whole. This section then moves into high energy kicks, turns and jumps - followed by series of 'extensions' that stretch the body forward, diagonally, upwards, downwards, sideways - into space, away from the axis of the body. (For example, moving forward in a deep, wide squat position with the arms extended horizontally to the sides and leading the torso to stretch sideways, following each arm, in

---

<sup>42</sup> Body Weather dancer, choreographer and teacher Frank van de Ven emphasises this investigative priority of Body Weather practice by avoiding the word 'exercises' as such - because this implies learning a right way to accomplish a predetermined task or skill.

<sup>43</sup> I am describing exercises derived from the practice of Min Tanaka and his dancer-students Tess de Quincey and Frank Van de Ven. This is not the current practice of Tanaka although the underpinning values are his.

turn, as far as possible - extending the upper chest. Later, this step is developed as a series of diagonal extensions, reaching towards each corner of the space, in turn, while travelling forwards). Finally there is a cool down section that might include making a snakelike ripple up and down the length of the body; walking a line while twisting the torso to the side (when the right leg leads, the torso makes a quarter rotation to the right until it faces sideways to the direction of walking), walking forward while making circles with isolated parts of the body (one and a half circles frontwards, then one and a half backwards) with the plane of the face; with a point on the sternum, with the pelvis circling forward and backwards or sideways in horizontal figures of eight.

The entire sequence can be completed in 40 minutes or be extended over two or three hours. Throughout, there are very demanding movement patterns requiring complex physical coordination. For instance, there may be various, simultaneous combinations of separate movements of the feet, arms, hands and head, along with other, precise, changes - of speed, effort or tempo. A sequence might be replicated, but moving backwards. There is a focus on efficiency, core strength and a relaxed body that allows the lower limbs to move freely, with minimum muscular strain, under the pelvis; on a capacity to initiate movement from different points all over and in the body; on an ability to precisely read different body speeds and energies; on a sense of the body's energy extending between bodies and to the furthest reaches of the training site.

The MB therefore sharpens the body's capacity to reach beyond its holding patterns to follow its own inclinations: 'There is no cannot for the body' (Tanaka, 2007). The dancer develops a new history of their body that has travelled to new places, filled in some dark regions on the map, experienced new states - new gearings of body and mind (as when the body moves very slowly, at, say, a few millimetres a second, while the mind seemingly moves very fast catching each detail of change). The MB also develops a 'group body' - an intuition and peripheral awareness of the placement and energy of the group as a whole. This energy supports each participant and it is another example of how outer factors may extend the awareness of the individual and help to break patterns.

### Stretching, lifting, extending, exploring

This individual-group movement section is followed by paired 'Manipulations' that take advantage of the body's warmed and relaxed state to further extend the body with the help of a partnering body - another participant, who, in a sensitive dialogue (that is, with an awareness of the differences between their body and the body of the person they are assisting) presses, extends and moves the manipulated body. There is commonly a series

of seven 'manipulations' (each a small sequence that encourages the body to lengthen in a particular direction). The manipulations are like yoga positions extended by the manipulator/partner's pressing, guiding or lifting parts of the body. The manipulator attunes themselves to the body condition of the other person by copying the pattern of their breath, feeling the weight of their limbs or at other times gently shaking the body to test its tension or alignment. All the positions are done while the manipulated person sits, lies, kneels or squats on the ground.

### Perception, sensation, space, time

A third type of Body Weather practice is 'groundwork' which explores, primarily, perception and relation, including relationship to space, isolation of body parts, sense of body-time, and accessing and changing the body via images. Often the body is treated as something outside one's own 'will' or knowledge - willingly subjecting one's personal voice to the voice of the body. Body parts are moved, experimentally, to discover their capacities and nature, from 'outside' by means of a partner, or by means of the imagination (see the discussion of image work below). For instance, a participant might 'release' their head into the hands of a partner who assumes control of its movements - treating it, sensitively, as an unfamiliar object, capable of who knows what range of movements? Other activities - like following a partner's finger with one's nose, or blindfold games - are used to amplify the senses.

Other perceptual investigations include *Bisoku* (slow movement: for instance moving at 1mm a second), which sharpens body awareness, awareness of time or speed, and the relationship between them; *Wind* - feeling the gentle pressure of someone's hand on some point of the body and allowing that point of the body to continue moving away from the pressure and following the precise direction of that pressure - as far as possible (without adjusting for comfort, and without following the normal rotations or trajectories of the body); *Airsock* - imagining one's body expanded and with the relative weightlessness of a Michelin man balloon, oozing gently to the ground as its air leaked from tiny hole, and rising again as if gradually re-filled from the same point.

Groundwork is often, literally, groundwork - investigating the body's relationships with the environment: negotiating a waterfall for instance, or being buried in the earth.

## Site as a place of being

Body Weather provides, I argue, strategies for truthful performance - for performance informed by a somatic experience of truth (being-becoming) - but not necessarily theatrical performance. The gateway to this experience may be a particular site to which the body opens itself. Tanaka says: 'I do not dance in a place. I dance the place' (Goldberg, 1998, cited Marshall, 2006, 56); he has abandoned theatres to perform sites such as subways, country roads or rice-fields, for whoever is there. Frank Van de Ven (Bodyweather Amsterdam) leads residential workshops that explore the relationship of body and landscape. Tess de Quincey, makes bodily investigations natural and built sites - with a particular love of desert locations - and is arguably Australia's pre-eminent explorer of site-specific performance. For de Quincey, the space of a site 'matters', space is not a dimensional arrangement of objects, it swarms with molecules, density, temperature, energy and memory. De Quincey told me 'You can't just swing your arm through space - well, you *can*, but space *is* something!' (2012).<sup>44</sup>

## Images and the body

'Images', in butoh and Body Weather, are imagined states intended to be engendered in the performer's body as sensate realities - not visual representations or inventions. Hijikata invented a strategy of casting dozens of such images, simultaneously, against the unified structure of his body. This 'omnicentral' imagery (different images placed, simultaneously, in different parts of the body, thereby generating a body vibrating in multiple conditions) created transformations that invite an empathetic transformation in the viewer.<sup>45</sup> Body Weather, generally, makes less use of 'omnicentral' images than of a trained 'omnicentral' sensate awareness distributed around the body that prepares the body to be moved by its environment.

---

<sup>44</sup> This recalls Hijikata's idea that moving a few inches forward in space can be experienced as passing through thousands of different curtains each having a different substance or quality (Tanaka, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> An astounding example of such transformation is at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vetSYKychwI> Accessed 12/11/2103

This environment may be imagined (the body of an animal for instance) or actual (a place or site). The body may also be conceived as the site of an internal environment, or the starting place of an external environment. Tess de Quincey sometimes teaches imagining the body as a swarm of dots - focusing on them individually, and then in small shifting clusters - which helps the body become soft and fluid like a cloud, by using the cloud's own logic <sup>46</sup> - not a vague idea or feeling we might have about clouds.

The body is carefully and specifically re-imagined by a process of empathy, imagination and what John Martin, decades ago, called "feeling through' with a sensitive body' (1933, 59). The performer uses an iterative process (as if trying on different aspects and versions to see what fits) to find sensate and dynamic equivalences, in the body, to the substance, motion and space of the perceived site or imagined being. Placing the body at the consequence of something 'outside' its postural boundaries.

Such images, it seems to me, exploit and reveal what is at play in somatic awareness in general. That is, the strange capacity of consciousness to access proprioception in its mysterious work of guiding the body - of giving felt 'weight' and 'tone' to the purposeful moving geometries of the body, to its felt inner and outer placements in space. Images provide a 'form' - almost a Platonic form - that invites a type of awareness to occur in the body, in *Leib*. In my experience, there is no initial, complete, visual picture in the imagination. This may simply reflect my limited personal capacity to visualize; many, if not most, dancers can produce detailed pictures in the imagination and 'see' themselves from outside. Nevertheless, having discussed with others their process of *embodying* images, it appears, like mine, to be a process of layering. Building up the body cumulatively, perhaps, in the case of an animal image, feeling an aspect of posture such as the grip on a branch, or the environment, or the food in the belly, or the gaze, the shifting weight, or the desire of the creature.

---

<sup>46</sup> 'The cloud's own logic' is, of course, exemplifies a 'body weather' approach. In 1803, the amateur meteorologist Luke Howard, married rigorous observation and mutability when he proposed what has become a standard classification of cloud types (as, for example, cirrus, cumulus, stratus). This enraged those, like landscape painter Caspar David Friedrich who saw this as a denial of the infinite, and divinely shaped, formations of clouds. Howard, though deeply religious, argued, in his 'Essay on the modifications of clouds' that clouds were transformed by 'general causes which affect all the variations of the atmosphere; they are commonly as good visible indicators of the operation of these causes, as is the countenance of the state of a person's mind or body' (Howard: 1865, 1).

The image is a general idea, a sort of ideal proposition, that is fleshed out by the imagination and the senses together in an iterative process that determines the form and quality of the body. The image slips the grasp of thinking and planning and designing not because thought and decision-making are not involved, (they are), but because there is no predetermined way in which the body must conform to the image. It is not a matter of making a shape, or copying an external appearance, rather the body and imagination wrestle something into shape and density together. 'Thinking about', 'bringing attention to', 'feeling out' an area of the body is an imaginative act that invites a sensate transformation in that part of the body. Movement always has an opaque or mysterious component. This is true of a mundane action like closing my hand, which seems to happen by my just deciding to do it, and remains true in more creative activities like, somehow, effecting a partnership between imagination and body so that it 'becomes animal.' This partnership is catalytic: moving my body awakens sensations of movement, weight, speed, direction, structure that give me a more detailed self-awareness (kinaesthetic awareness) with which to play imaginatively.

Images understood in this way are ways of opening zones of enquiry: maps that indicate a topography that we must create - by zooming in, adding new information, shifting to a different viewpoint, changing scale, adding solidity. Body Weather provides a training in this precise embodied investigation. For me, this is a type of truth seeking - tuning in to the language of the body's processes of being - feeling the life that runs through the world lifting and transforming the body.

Tanaka has given a fascinating account of image work that seems worth quoting extensively. It conveys Tanaka's commitment to continuous investigation (something that is at the heart of Body Weather) and his quest for a 'primitive' body, one image of which is the foetus. In a speech relayed by a translator, he said:

*To be in some kind of foetus position can sometimes become quite a clichéd or an easy position, and he still has big doubts about whether it is 'true,' whether it is really coming from his own body or whether it's more like an adult body pretending to be like a child. So there's often a big gap between those two, but he might be able to find something else. Not necessarily that actual position, but to still get the same feeling and context out of it.*

*These days we have a social understanding about psychology and about our unconscious. So we know more about our unconscious. But at the same time, when we 'learn' about our unconscious, it's not the 'real' unconscious. It's still*

*imitating, or mimicking aspects of the unconscious. So he still has to learn more about that primitive state.*

*He's very influenced by Surrealism and Dadaism and their work in this respect. But he feels... they're not reliable any more. So he really wants to find out what is the natural, unconscious feeling—not that which comes from education.*

*... If you think about the primitive body as a form, the body is getting a program about what sort of structures one finds in the bones and what's the structure of the muscles themselves. That's an ongoing question about how to interpret or become aware of that.*

*...[W]hen he was thinking about what it's like to be a baby, he thought of two things. One is the moving baby. The other is a baby as an individual thing. If you think about an actual baby, it's ages away from his actual memory. It's very hard to copy that again from what he felt so long ago, which is so far from his current experience. He'd like to capture that image of a baby as liquid. So you focus more on what it's like to move in that liquid way—which he can still remember, because he still has a body which can do some of those things. So he tries to mix himself and those ways of moving in that body in a liquid way, then he can create something of what it's like to be a baby. So it's more about the baby as a liquid. Otherwise that era is ages away in his history.*

*So when you're thinking about the primitive body or primitive dance, he has to explore what's in him as well as what's not in him—and body memory. So you think about not only liquid, but also air and changing dimensions*  
(Marshall, 2006, 62-63).

Body Weather is an embodied process of investigation of the body in its environment. It displaces the personal with the immanent - inviting new energies, qualities and relationships with the environment to reform the body. To do this, it invents, explores, experiments and trains the responsive and enactive capacities of the body. It shifts the dimensions of perception - so that the body can sense microscopic jostlings, geological compression, galactic expansion or other biological, zoological or imaginative transformations.

Body Weather, as a detailed investigation of embodiment, is also a strategy for presence that is not based on pressing one's personality into service, but allowing a personal

absence that allows new energy and states of being to fill and form the body. I experience this process as a means of opening awareness to the activity of being - to ontological truth, understood as being-becoming.



## CONCLUSIONS

*Is not to see always to see from somewhere?*

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

What I have been calling truth in my bodily experience is an awareness of 'being' caught in the act (being-becoming). I experience this as a continuous, successive presencing. It is achieved by continuously renewed attention.

I have learnt that experience, even of 'truth', is always of something from a point of view. It appears by directing attention *here*, by making a rent in the fabric *here*. I had been mistaken in thinking that ontological truth would appear of its own accord in a neutral body. If for no other reason than that the body's neutrality was an actively prepared, selected and maintained state. I was never going to be a tabula rasa for new, pure experience. I did not exist independently, waiting to make a truth agreement with the outside world. I existed, facing both directions, at the edge, the touching-place, of an inside-outside world. My modes of awareness perhaps *are* the touching of these worlds. As Gallagher and Zahavi put it in explaining Heidegger, we do not exist in the world 'like water in a glass, but ecstatically by means of a fundamental form of self-transcendence' (Gallagher, 2012, 139). Or, as Ingold puts it, expressing the interplay of body/self/world, we exist as a meshwork (Ingold, 2011).

Similarly, my frustration at the 'gappiness' of my body, at the impossibility of having a complete awareness of it at any one time, was a desire for a particular *idea* of wholeness; a wholeness that somehow embraced all, yet escaped each, of the shifting processes that constitute my body in its shifting places - inside, on the surface, out there in the world.

Nevertheless, in noticing 'gaps' I was directing my attention. I was making a gap in the known, opening a new vantage point. My noticing *nurtures* certain facets of the body and environment in their rise to awareness. I experience this noticing as a form of imagination. By directing this imaginative attention to an 'empty' area of the body that part of the body becomes living matter and joins or replaces other areas of the body within my somatic awareness (as felt, living body, *Leib*). My performing attention is a creative act. I watch, listen, feel, make decisions and adjustments, but I do not 'make' truth in the sense of inventing it. Truth is not simply being. Truth is attended-being. I use tools

to clear away the arteriosclerosis of habits and certainties. I make a gap (the task of truthful performance), and things (being or beings) well up in it, conditional upon our attention.

I have traced strategies for making this gap, drawn from Min Tanaka's sensing-body investigations; the perceptual koans of choreographer/dancer Deborah Hay; and the choreographic improvisational tools of dancer Rosalind Crisp. Each of these strategies is a means of research or staying awake. As well as helping the performer to create gaps each strategy refines the capacity to notice what is emerging in these gaps. Each presumes open-ended investigation when creating a performance, and when actually performing the work. In each, the body becomes both a means and object of perception.

I came to value each incomplete experience of my body not as a reduction of my body - like an apple with a bite taken out of it - but as one passing instance of an ontological spread that extends far beyond and into my body. I learnt to experience the 'being' that underlies my existing in this spread by placing some parameters, a frame, and seeing what occurs within this framed gap. In this gap, my proprioceptive awareness explores omniscient space while my other modes of awareness leap 'ecstatically' into the space of the world. I notice what is happening, I make choices that influence what is happening, but I have 'bracketed', momentarily freed myself from, my usual background experience of a body-world, body-mind binary in which, not only does the world radiate around my body, but it withdraws back into 'me.'<sup>47</sup>

My conclusion is not unlike Merleau-Ponty's view of 'reflection' which 'does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from the fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical' (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, 70).

Similarly, making gaps within the trajectories of actions, in the completion (or initiation) of conscious goals, loosens the threads of knowing that knit our experience according to a pattern. In the hiatus, if we don't panic and fill it in, we can feel the background pulse of life. We can absent our intentions, and allow to move forward, towards the place of our attention, the living presence - transforming time, space and body - of being-becoming.

---

<sup>47</sup> Drew Leder: 'As subject, I do not inhabit a private theatre of consciousness but am ecstatically intertwined, one body with the world' (1990, 158).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adler, Janet, *Offering from the conscious body: the discipline of Authentic Movement*, Rochester, Vermont, Inner Traditions, 2002
- Albrecht, Cornelia and Franz Anton Cramer (eds), *Tanz [Aus] Bildung: Reviewing Bodies of Knowledge*, Munich, Epodium, 2006.
- Allsopp, Ric and Scott deLahunta (eds), *The connected body? an interdisciplinary approach to the body and performance*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam School of the Arts, 1996.
- Bailey, Derek, *Musical improvisation: its nature and practice in music*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1980.
- Carman, Taylor, 'The body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty' in *Philosophical Topics*, 27 (2) Fall, 1999.
- Chodorow, Joan, 'The body as symbol: dance/movement in analysis', 2003. The Jung Page. [http://www.cjungpage.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=88&Itemid=40](http://www.cjungpage.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=88&Itemid=40)  
Accessed 23/10/2013. Also, Pallaro, 1999, 279-300.
- Crisp, Rosalind, Workshop, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, November 2012.
- Crisp, Rosalind, Personal conversation, March 2014.
- De Quincey, Tess, Personal conversation. November 2012.
- De Quincey, Tess, Workshop, Dancehouse, Melbourne, August 2013.
- De Zoete, Beryl and Walter Spies, *Dance and drama in Bali*, OUP, Kuala Lumpur, 1973 (originally published 1938).
- Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 2: the time-image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari, *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, (1986).
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari, *What is philosophy?* N.Y., Columbia University Press, 1994.
- DeNatale, Bob, 'Butoh and Western art', Flesh and Blood Mystery Theater website, <http://home.earthlink.net/~bdenatale/butohandwest.html>: Accessed 12/11/2012.
- Dibia, I. Wayan and Rucina Ballinger, *Balinese dance, drama and music: a guide to the performing arts of Bali*, Singapore, Periplus, 2004.
- Eagleton, Terry, Review: 'Body work' by Peter Brooks' in *London Review of Books*, (15) 10, 27 May 1993, 7-8.
- Foster, Susan Leigh, *Choreography and narrative: ballet's staging of story and desire*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1996.

Foster, Susan Leigh, 'Improvisation in dance and mind' in *Taken by surprise: a dance improvisation reader*, ed. Ann Cooper Albright and David Gere, Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 2003.

Foster, Susan Leigh, *Reading dancing: bodies and subjects in contemporary American dance*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986.

Fraleigh, Sondra Horton, *Dancing identity: metaphysics in motion*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.

Furukawa, Anzu, Workshop, Adelaide, 1995.

Gallagher, Shaun, *How the body shapes the mind*, Oxford, OUP, 2005.

Gallagher, Shaun and Dan Zahavi, *The phenomenological mind*, 2nd ed., Routledge, London, 2012.

Goetschel, Antoine F, *Radio National Law Report*, 30 April 2013, and, *The animal voice: securing interests through law*, Voiceless animal law lecture series: University of Tasmania, 29 April 2013. <http://www.events.utas.edu.au/2013/april/voiceless-animal-law-lecture-series> (Accessed 01/05/2014).

Goldman, Danielle, 'Deborah Hay: interview', in *TDR: The Drama Review*, (51) 2, Summer 2007, 158-168.

Goodall, Jane, *Stage presence: the actor as Mesmerist*, N.Y., Routledge, 2008.

Hallward, Peter, *Out of this world: Deleuze and the philosophy of creation*, London, Verso, 2006.

Havilah, Lisa, Emma Saunders and Susan Gibb, *What I think about when I think about dancing*, Campbelltown, Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2009.

Hay, Deborah, *My body, the buddhist*, Middletown, Conn, Wesleyan University Press, 2000.

Hay, Deborah, 'Woof woof woof Woof woof woof woof woof Woof WOOFWOOF Woof Woof woof woof woof WOOF WOOF woof woof woof woof', 'Marion Chace Foundation Annual Lecture, in *American Journal of Dance Therapy* (23) 1, Spring-Summer 2001.

Hay, Deborah, *I think not*, unpublished choreographic score, Solo Performance Commissioning Project, 2011(a).

Hay, Deborah. Advice to dancers at Solo Performance Commissioning Project (SPCP), Findhorn, 2011(b).

Hay, Deborah. Emailed advice to dancers contemplating the SPCP, 2011(c).

Hay, Deborah, *Choreographic dialogue* (3), March 2011 (d), Dance Collection Danse website <http://www.dcd.ca/houseandhay2.html> Accessed 27 May 2014.

Hay, Deborah. Deborah Hay Dance Company website, <http://www.deborahhay.com> Accessed 10 October 2012 (a).

Hay, Deborah Hay, 'What if...? Excerpts from A Lecture on the Performance of 'Beauty,' <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLbGprgCoOo&feature=plcp> Accessed 10 October 2012 (b).

- Hay, Deborah, 'How do I recognise my choreography?'  
[http://deborahhay.com/Notes\\_how\\_do\\_I.html](http://deborahhay.com/Notes_how_do_I.html) Accessed 29 October 2013 (a).
- Hay, Deborah, <http://deborahhay.com/mission.html> Accessed 20 November 2013 (b).
- Hijikata, Tatsumi, 'Wind Daruma' in *TDR: The Drama Review*, Spring 2000, 71-79.
- Hoffman, Ethan and Holborn, Mark (eds.), *Butoh: Dance of the dark soul*, N.Y., Aperture, 1987.
- Howard, Luke, *Essay on the modifications of clouds*, London, John Churchill and Sons, 1865  
 Available as an Open Library digital reprint at:  
<https://archive.org/details/essayonmodifica00howagoog> Accessed 15 February 2014.
- Ingold, Tim, *Being alive: essays on movement, knowledge and description*, London, Routledge, 2011.
- Kaprow, Allan, *Essays on the blurring of art and life*, ed. Jeff Kelley, Berkeley, University of California, expanded edition, 2003.
- Kim, Jiae, 'Min Tanaka's Butoh', trans Kazue Kobata, in *Theme* (7) Fall, 2006.  
[www.thememagazine.com/stories/min-tanaka/](http://www.thememagazine.com/stories/min-tanaka/) Accessed 22 May 2011.
- Leder, Drew, *The absent body*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Louppe, Laurence, *Poetics of contemporary dance*, trans Sally Gardner, Alton, Hampshire, Dance Books, 2010.
- Marshall, Jonathan, 'Dancing the elemental body: Butoh and Body Weather: interviews with Tanaka Min and Yumi Umiuare', *Performance Paradigm* (2) March 2006, 54 -73.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: basic writings*, ed. Thomas Baldwin, Routledge, London, 2004.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception* N.Y., Humanities Press, 1962.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *The visible and the invisible*: trans, Alphonso Lingis, Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1968.
- Nanako, Kurihara, 'Hijikata Tatsumi: the words of butoh' in *TDR: The Drama Review*, 44 (1) Spring 2000.
- Neisser, Ulric (ed), *The perceived self: ecological and interpersonal sources of self-knowledge*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Noe, Alva, *Action in perception*, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 2004.
- Ohno, Kazuo, 'Kazuo Ohno Doesn't Commute', interview with Richard Schechner, *The Drama Review*, 30 (2) 1986, 163-69.
- Ohno, Kazuo and Ohno, Yoshito, *Kazuo Ohno's world from without and within*. Trans. John Barrett, Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2004.
- Pallaro, Patrizia (ed.), *Authentic movement: essays by Mary Starks Whitehouse, Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow*, London, Jessica Kingsley, 1999.
- Polanyi, Michael, *The Tacit Dimension*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Schechner, Richard, *Performance studies: an introduction*, N.Y., Routledge, 2002.

Snow, Peter, 'P4: performance making in Alice' in *About Performance* (5) 2003 (Special edition devoted to Tess De Quincey's three-year 'Triple Alice' (bodyweather) project).

Stern, Daniel N, *The present moment in psychotherapy and everyday life*, N.Y., W.W.Norton, 2004.

Tanaka, Min. My notes of comments made by Tanaka, *For the body and the environment*, Workshop, Body Weather Farm, Hakushu, July-August, 2007.

Tanaka, Min, 'From 'I am an avant-garde who crawls the earth: homage to Tatsumi Hijikata'' (excerpt from notes to a performance) in *The Drama Review*, 30 (2), Summer 1986, 153-155.

### **'Lizard' performance: video links**

Lizard - a box of gaps, performed Monash University Drama Theatre, 15 March 2013.

| <http://vimeo.com/64445296> 43:51min (password: [MA](#))

Lizard - a box of gaps, shop window performance, High Street, Northcote, 6 March, 2013.

<http://vimeo.com/63068347> 5:13 min (publicly accessible)

## APPENDICES

1 A phenomenological account of authentic movement

2 Performance investigation: Lizard - a box of gaps

This is an analysis of the performance developed as part of this research thesis

3 Script text (animal lecture) and Program notes

## A phenomenological account of authentic movement

*I lie, face up on the cold floor, and shut my eyes; my mind and body are juggling sensations and awareness like a dog circling and scuffing before coming to rest. My bodily 'comfort' occupies a sort of transparent cocoon, extending into the mind and into space beyond the body, while 'discomfort' is a small dark stain, dense in the darkness, at a specific place and of a defined size.*

*I'm thinking about how to start. I have to think fast because I have a witness watching who may perceive anything I do as my attempt at an authentic move. From 'neutral'? That is, lying still; that is, only moving as breath, pulse, other fluids, digestion, mind, nerves, cells; flat on my back like a welcoming scarecrow - palms up and gently, naturally, open: except that they, like my shoulder blades, always feel too scrunched up; should the feet 'fall ' outwards - which nevertheless feels like a sort of holding. And are my feet even? And, for that matter, given my scoliosis and the distorted postural proprioception that comes with it - always interpreting crooked as straight - are my legs in line with my spine? I take a peek like a bound prisoner trying to see his toes.*

*I am thinking in my head - which is where my conscious seems to sit - in a soft darkness inside a cup of bone with a pressure on the back of the skull and a cavity between forehead and chin (I become aware I'm holding my jaw: I remember the Japanese theorist I read who said our faces are always 'held' otherwise we'd be jaw gaping and dribbling) and there is the especially 'thoughtful' feeling of the eyes being held shut - a bit like having an eye cushion resting on them - and a sort of silent humming ongoingness - a sense of running the battery of the mind continually. I have a very limited sense of outer space; it feels shorter than the distance between my feet and my head or whatever other conscious areas I can feel. Bits of body come to (uncomfortable) awareness. I want to correct them. I remember from yesterday's Yoga how to access the sides of the back BELOW the shoulder blades and this helps flatten the upper back. I feel pleased. I remember too that placing my fist under my sacrum and moving it downwards and away from the spine helps the sacrum rest flatter on the ground. I do it and improve it further by bringing the soles of my feet close to the buttocks, lengthening the whole spine, downwards towards my feet and upwards towards beyond my head, then extend my legs out long and flat on the*



*floor again. I have to just cope with thinking my Witness will find that a deliberate movement. I'm editing it out of the sequence. I am ready to start. I listen to see what the other mover is doing. Having done all this work - I have a new thought - a bit like being about to leave the house and suddenly wondering if I have got the keys. It dawns on me that my mind is rabbiting on like a race-caller. I need to empty my head. I try putting my consciousness elsewhere - feeling my going-on, my here-ness, as awareness, or sensation, not as thought. I take my attention to my feet that I feel as a tiny zigzag-graph-shaped form, like dark mountains or like an Arancini sitting on its base on the floor. I 'visit' my lower back, my awareness spills over to the buttocks and my shoulder blades, some area of the arms, and the hands and the back of the head. I can put my consciousness there - well I feel a sort tone or pressure or weight there, but the thinking stays in the head. It's a bit rabbit/duck. Consciousness always seems to want to comment on its awareness. I can almost sink into just body-part feeling - like a sandbag - and lose the heightened thinking type of awareness. All these 'I's! No wonder there's a problem - all this reflecting; every response tagged as 'mine.'<sup>48</sup> OK, I will just wait for the body. No, my experience feels muddled.*

*I remember to focus on breath, the traditional meditative technique for escaping conscious thought. It works. I shift to a quieter pace with a less fragmented sense of body. My body awareness becomes a process rather than an experience of sounding out areas of the body that stood out a little out from*

---

<sup>48</sup> This 'problem' of consciousness reverting to being its own object is what makes for a 'mind/body' split. This is central to this thesis in that without 'getting out of one's own way' the experience of somatic truth is unattainable or unsustainable. It is possible to notice-oneself-noticing (Deborah Hay further distances herself from self-reflexivity by projecting the observer outside herself: 'inviting being seen perceiving') and this requires a trained attention. Rosalind Crisp has developed strategies for sustaining (or continually re-starting) this attention. Min Tanaka, and Body Weather, focuses on the body, not the 'I' of experience. The emotion that interests Tanaka is made possible by the body, and is in that sense, common to all bodies: '[T]he genealogy of the body never rested on individual nostalgia ... My actual work is to awaken emotions of the body sleeping in the depth of history. It is not necessary to accentuate the presence of the dancer' (Tanaka, 1986, 154). Authentic movement uses Jung's concept of 'active imagination' where 'consciousness looks on, participating but not directing' (Whitehouse, 1979, in Pallaro, 1999, 83); it also places the task of observing (the Witness) outside the mover until the mover is able to integrate that role without it blocking inner impulses, or images, that are moving the body.

*the general absence and darkness. My body begins to move. Then I blank out again.*

*I decide my concept of 'neutral' is both artificial (stationary, on my back, on a hard cold wooden floor under a very high ceiling that I can't see) and one of the most passive, least 'evocative', and least self-interesting positions possible. I decide a sprawled accidental shape is better because it is arranged inconsequentially with a more open potential than when it is organised like a model of the human form. This feels better! The body soon starts a sequence of gravity informed shifts - saggings, hangings morphing into fallings or spreadings, twitchings of the fingers and toes developing into larger movements or turnings of hand or forearm and so forth.*

*The events seem automatic but they are eased towards birth, nurtured to growth; my conscious attention is directed to a point of the body that takes the hint, or perhaps a body part attracted my attention by its desire to move and then continues its movement with my conscious encouragement of the following through. The movements enlarge and I'm watching and noticing and I know that eventually I want to rise to standing. From time to time I hear the other mover moving about but I am content to stay with these large movements that use the folds of the knees, hips, elbows, wrists (my neck is caught up in my thinking) as they rotate, lift or lower the body in unplanned trajectories.*

*After slopping about like this for a while I take the opportunity when it structurally occurs, to stand, and, after a while I find myself muttering in an unknown language of no meaning (but for me, a habitual language with a vaguely Slavic sound) and happily allowing this more holistic creaturely creature to do its thing. I no longer feel like a being of parts - a few glowing points of sensate awareness, like sparsely placed party lights. I have accepted my body as whole. I remember and use it with confidence even though I am scarcely better aware of it in its entirety than before. From then on, I engage in a very genuine improvisation - until, towards the end, my activity descended into a series of ideas of what to do (such as: lean with head on wall and see what happens; my legs are going spasmodic let's see what happens if I just keep in this position), genuine experiments, but not a flow of the body. These were, rather, ideas that arose somehow and which I then 'walked up to' and carried out - but without a sense of necessity or completion - with a hint of insincerely making up things.*

## Performance investigation: Lizard - a box of gaps

*Lizard* was an experiment by performance-making. I developed the performance in tandem with my written thesis, learning as I went along. I aimed to experience a range of 'conflicting' performance modes - modes that would not normally coincide. I hoped this would help to clarify my concept of 'truth' in performance: what it was, how and when it occurred, did it apply in performance modes with which I was less familiar, were there other forms of truth there?

I learned that what I experienced as truth was sensed as a 'being-becoming.' It was not just a feeling state, the pleasurable pulse of being-alive, but an active noticing of self and world making themselves, and passing; making themselves in passing; making themselves as passing. 'Here and gone' as Deborah Hay says. The noticing needs to be constantly refreshed, using all the modes of awareness of the body, staying alert to changing inner and outer circumstances and events that comprise the intermeshed life of the body in the world.

I learned, also, that I had an individual preference about *how* I achieved that turning towards. For example, 'feeling through' the sensate implications and possibilities of a particular bodily form: how, for instance, a lizard body might feel and move. And I learned that I was doubly mistaken in assuming that similar acts of embodied attention were absent from, say, naturalistic theatre acting, and that similar acts were the only way to access ontological truth in performance.

### The performance

*Lizard* began as homage to a large goanna confined in a tiny glass case in a pet shop. As performance, *Lizard* used empathy for an animal body as a way to explore what I consider to be somatic truth, in performance. It also explored feeling and meaning in 'character acting'; everyday actions on stage; replicated expressive gestures; social dance; improvising within spatial rules; the body as an object; the body as an object - with musical accompaniment; a heartfelt argument for animal rights, in the performative mode of a lecture; dramatic clowning to elicit sympathy for animal rights by destroying a stuffed rabbit; trying to embody a body that lacked bodily awareness; and, representing by an abstract action, a film actress who conveyed isolation in an African jungle roadside, by

simply rotating her standing body in a circle. Lizard also included a five-minute video of a 'live-art' performance, as human-lizard, in a box in a shop window.

This miscellany of experiences was exciting, contradictory and chastening. I was confronted by what I didn't know in various domains of performance experience. However, I felt confirmed in my feeling that an ontological truth is accessible, in performing, in gaps that the performer opens in the 'normal' spread of experience of body, self and world. The title, *Lizard - a box of gaps* reflects this view of performance as a site riddled with gaps that break open the apparent continuity of experience and allow the living of its moments, to be seen and felt.

#### Reader (prior to performance)



An old man sits reading, at the edge of the performance space. The audience pass by on the way to their seats. The House lights dim. The sitting figure is lit up as an actor-character in theatrical space. This was simply a way of setting the scene for playing with themes of reality, fakery, truth, and falsity. Here, I was playing with the continuum between man, self, actor, and character.



A clichéd 'character actor' - like an 'old retainer' in a Chekhov play - ageing, theatrically arthritic, theatrically coughing, wanders the stage, simulating unfamiliarity with a simulated space. He asks, in the direction of the supposedly 'absent' audience, 'Is anyone there?' In an absurd sequence, he first covers himself and the floor with blood (tomato sauce), then calls 'Bang!!' and falls dead.

In this section, I was acting out my dislike of representational theatre in which I feel I am watching an argument dressed up in costumes. But my dislike ran foul of my pleasure. I found that the exterior, rehearsed form I had prepared was just the outer shell of attention and improvisation. The generalised, character-type, had a specific existence in relation to a specific audience - 'he' entered the stage with this evening's particular variant of speed, energy and posture which I then had to notice and sustain. This was one area of attention and improvised response; another was trying to gauge the energy of the audience's interest and to time my performing accordingly. Despite this experience of attention, in the moment, I cannot quite assimilate this to the somatic, ontological truth that I am focusing on. My noticing was always directed at securing an effect I wanted to sustain or create for the audience - my experiential 'experiment' was compromised by my commitment to a particular result.

## Improvisation



The dead man rises in an improvised dance whose parameters are 'the body is pulled simultaneously skyward and to the ground.' 'In parameters lies freedom' (De Quincey, 2013); consciously introduced parameters are a means of framing experience and attention to create a gap in (for) awareness; that is, a gap in a previous pattern of awareness that enables being to make itself visible to a newly focused awareness.

## Cleaning



The resurrected man, becomes matter-of-fact, fetches a bucket and mop and mundanely cleans the tomato sauce from the floor. This was one of a few versions of placing a quotidian task, or a quotidian person, or a quotidian body, in an open space so that people might look at it with curiosity. Allan Kaprow's art, or anti-art, practice is based on such an idea, that 'ordinary events are inherently compelling once you pay attention to them' (Kaprow, 2003, 236). I was also testing my own prejudice against performance based on pretence that what is happening here, on stage, is something else happening somewhere else (a domestic dispute in someone's office). I wanted to compare pretending

(Coleridge's 'willing suspension of disbelief'), abstract actions, and functional actions, as means to truth in performance. I was trying to work with reality not realism.

I was mistaken. The audience had various responses. For some people, my floor mopping seemed to be a development of narrative and character; for others its main effect was a visual graphic -the mop tracing shiny paths that faded into interesting calligraphic shapes as they dried; for my mother, it was me, cleaning. Fake and real was not an issue.

And fake and real had overlapped. My matter-of-fact sitting, as the audience entered, had not been a pure, simple act. I had shaped the quality of my body and its actions by recalling my father's way of sitting. My everyday mopping up was even further removed from 'natural' action. To get to 'natural' I had tried to simplify my action by imagining myself as a stage hand, and, I was also engaged in an additional 'action' - pondering how to deal with having accidentally, and lavishly, spilt tomato sauce all over my trousers. So 'just mopping' was in fact a very nervous performance, or, the quotidian act of a very nervous performer. Truth in performance was not as 'clear and distinct' as I had assumed.

## Pacino



A crouched, miniature miming of gestures made by Al Pacino in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (screenplay by David Mamet). The gestures are alpha male indicators of aggression, mock invitation, outrage and contempt. I was interested in the way these culturally coded body movements are not mere signs, but are filled with the presence of the feelings they indicate. The blood, flesh, chemicals, and muscular state that suffuse a truly angry man suffuse his communicative gestures and can be recreated, in reverse, by deeply entering the gestures. This, again, is a Body Weather approach to performance. Min Tanaka, who is a celebrated actor as well as a dancer, explains his approach as first 'finding the body' (2007).<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Tanaka received the Japanese Academy, Best Supporting Actor's Award, 2002, for his role in the film 'Twilight Samurai.

I was also fascinated by Pacino's focused bodily energy and movement. Pacino makes no move, with any part of his body, that would dissipate his power. Every gesture conveys power or aggression like a current. No gesture is released casually into space; each radiates his accusations, contempt, and anger from the still core of his body. I chose to make a minimal version of this gesturing, replicating it at a compressed, tiny, scale with the spoken words removed. It seemed that the somatic power in expressive gesture is present even at such a miniature scale. I would like to further explore the relation of coded and felt somatics in gesture.<sup>50</sup>

### Becoming lizard



Seated at a table; the man's arm raises as if beckoning a waiter; first that raised arm, then the rest of the body, becomes that of a lizard that climbs onto the table, waves its arms, in turn, in the strange circular patterns of dragon lizards under threat, descends towards the audience, then rises on 'rear' legs and scatters away.

I was trying to do more than shape-shifting. I was trying to put my body at the effect of an accumulating series of somatic experiments. This is a Body Weather strategy, observing nature and applying the observation or imagined observation to the body.

I asked myself what sort of lizard this would be. I found myself drawn, not only to goannas, but to two kinds of dragon lizards: the Frill Neck which expands its neck flaps in a ferocious and very Baroque display, like a ragged umbrella unfurled around its head, and

---

<sup>50</sup> I have an intense, unforgettable memory of Min Tanaka, wearing a kimono or gown, pointing out towards the forest, in a night performance at Hakshu, with an expression of utter rage that seemed to run, and keep running, through his gesture and his body like lightning.



the Bearded Dragon which ever so slightly cocks its head and makes peculiar rotating motions of its arm, like a clock running down, possibly to indicate submission. How big or small, heavy or slender? What is its physical, spatial environment (confined in a case, free in a desert)? I investigated physical states of lizards - at rest, angry, threatening, scuttling, moving almost undetectably, alert, sleepy. Was their vision stereoscopic? I watched to see whether they turn their head, or torso, or tilt an eye socket to change their view? Where are the lungs? Do lizards *have* lungs? I watched to see whether lizards breathed faster, or especially slowly, when stressed? I looked at how their legs moved: the sequence; whether the feet were splayed, turned forward or to the sides; how this related to mechanics of the joints and muscles of the limbs and the raising and lowering of the body. I used information from books, videos, observing lizards at the zoo and pet shops. I tried to 'feel' their movement and bodily states in my body. I tried to imagine what the lizard was feeling energetically. Was its immobility as I watched it, for instance, slothful, or, on the contrary, a state of frozen panic? I found the outer form of the lizard by using muscular and proprioceptive and energetic sensations as a sort of physical imagination, feeling what sort of body state creates that form. This newly forming body then provided proprioceptive and sensory information about *other* unfoldings of that new body in its environment.

For me, this state of active, attentive somatic journey into an unfamiliar embodiment is an experience of an ontological event. This event, regenerated in each performance, is an experience of the being, experienced in the process of becoming, that I identify as truth.

### Lizard threat dances



This was a series of attack-retreat gestures drawn from frill-neck lizards, 'bovver boy' posturing and the Baris Tunggal. The Baris is a Balinese warrior dance of extreme courage, ferocity and terror, in which the dancer moves with (to my eye) lizard-like movements:<sup>51</sup> wide-legged stepping, frozen stillness, a wide staring gaze, sudden dashes, and a majestic, threatening, 'inflation' of the body which expands and rises to outface a threat - assisted by a costume that enlarges the chest with layers of coloured stoles hanging from shoulder to knee, and with a magnificent headdress that throbs with shells mounted on tiny springs. 'The Baris dancer himself is the most splendid figure of the Balinese stage' (De Zoete, 1973, 166).

Becoming animal, becoming bovver boy, entering the impersonal Baris dancer - the common denominator, here, was a signifying body - a body whose energy is constrained or elaborated as gesture. These gesturings had quite different foundations. The animal's threat engorges its body; the bovver boy's expressive gestures are partly socially coded but they, also, 'engorge the body,' taking form and trajectory from the unseen structures and processes of the 'absent' body'; the Baris dancer makes challenging gestures, and yet, they are not really 'his.' '[P]ersonal temperament has been translated into another medium [that the Balinese call 'the other thought']. Something stands between it and the spectator, the dancer's body strangely modified and rarefied' (De Zoete, 1973, 24).<sup>52</sup>

Although they differed, each of these ways of performing - animal, personal, impersonal - were initiated in the same way, by, as Min Tanaka puts it, 'finding the body.' From outside or inside. In the case of the Baris, the form, movements and tensions of the body are prescribed in such detail that one is lowered into the depths of that body and its gestures. But in every case, the process of 'finding the body' involves a mystery. The performer must quieten their familiar body, which knows how to do and what to do, and allow the 'absent body' to shape and move the body.

---

<sup>51</sup> The dance certainly has non-human association: 'The Baris dance has an undeniable fighting bird quality. The love dance of a turkey-cock reminds one irresistibly of a Baris dance and the Balinese themselves exclaimed 'Ayam baris!' when they first saw the ruffled feathers of a turkey-cock' (De Zoete, 1973, 168).

<sup>52</sup> The dancer thus transformed is said to have 'taksu', 'an energy, a sort of spiritual charisma.' Dancers pray for taksu but its attainment is assisted by energy, inner voice (or conviction) and (clear) thought (Dibia, 2004, 11).

## T Shirt



A middle-aged man walks silently up close to the audience, slowly raises his black T-shirt to shoulder level, hiding the head - close enough to the audience to see breath, bones under the skin - turns to one side and back again then lowers the shirt. This was not an everyday action, it was contrived for an audience to watch, but it *was* a simple uninflected action. I wanted to provide a site, a body, a duration in which people could find their own meaning - noticing what was occurring before them: visible breath, skin, sweat, pulsing veins, vulnerability, muscles succumbing to age, tiny shifts of posture and other individual or generic characteristics of the body. Or, finding associations: for me, resonances of vulnerable bodies - black-shirted victims of Camp S-21 in Kampuchea where at least 14,000 people were murdered;<sup>53</sup> the martyred St Sebastian; the plain, ageing body.

I repeated the sequence immediately, adding 'sensitive' music with the assumption that this would change the meaning of what was seen - maybe even retrospectively. This section of Lizard did not prove any theory of truth. But it expresses my perspective on truth in performance. My own associations (with Camp S-21) modified the body placed before the audience, but *that* body was simply made available as a site of attention. I value such practices (they are common in 'live art') although I confess I don't always find them interesting. The aim is to create a space where something can be perceived outside a context where it is known and placed - permitting something familiar to be seen making its appearance as unfamiliar. I see this as an opportunity to perceive truth.

---

<sup>53</sup> The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum preserves 114 prisoner photographs taken by the Camp's photographer, Nhem Ein. <http://www.tuolsleng.com/history.php> Accessed 30/04/14.



In my dance practice I prefer to work a little aside from the music, using it, if at all, less as a collaborator (amplifying or standing in for the feelings generated by my performance) than a provocateur - a partner with whom one can have a stimulating conversation, even an argument. The key dancers and choreographers referenced in this thesis also tend to have an unconventional relationship with music - Deborah Hay sometimes performs song in performance, treated as bodily movement; Rosalind Crisp tends to avoid music; and Body Weather performers often choose music that works in opposition to their movement rather than duplicating the meaning of the movement.

And yet, at any moment, thousands, possibly millions of people, across the planet, are delighting in following the impulse to dance to music. We enjoy tracing the lift and sweep of music with our limbs; letting our body surge with its energy; feeling our everyday body move with elegance and artistry. How did these aspects of dance, that I was avoiding, relate to my investigation? I found out by dancing a few measures of a Minuet - a dance that William Hogarth considered to be the most perfect of all, amplifying the natural rising and falling undulations of the graceful walking body, but which also served the 'immense hierarchical web' of etiquette that directed each body to its place at the French Court (Foster, 1996, 24,23).<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Curiously, Susan Leigh Foster (1986: 236) has, in another context, aligned Deborah Hay's dancers' bodies with late Renaissance Baroque dance (characterised as 'metaphoric') in her semiotic grid distinguishing four modes of 'reading' the body, based on Barthes' categories of literary trope.

Baroque dance links bodily technique (elongation, verticality, risings and fallings of the heel of the foot, soft diagonal forward sweeps of the inner leg), complex curvilinear floor patterns, and social communication. The elegant gesturing, the suspensions and surges of self-assurance, the light, elongated and contained way the body is held, and the shiny costumes with their lace cuffs, are also strangely evocative of the posturings and articulations of lizard bodies. It is an exquisitely measured and florid dance - both excessive and contained.

After dancing the minuet, I attempted to re-assert a wilder, argumentative energy over this tidy, precise, dance form, using fast, violent, arrhythmic movements with hints of Baris and lizard-like articulations. By scrawling individual movement like graffiti over the social minuet form in this way, I was, in effect, re-enacting a twentieth century rebellion against valorising an ideal body over the actual body. For Louppe, this return to the body, and individuality, separates contemporary dance from the history of dance (2010, 40).

I enjoyed dancing with music, and trying to achieve a Baroque eroticised, ideal, social body, but I missed the sense of open enquiry I associate with the quest for ontological truth. And yet, I had experienced, in Balinese dance, that highly refined, prescribed and aesthetic dance patterns need not lead away from truth - in fact the opposite. Balinese dance has a deeply ontological focus; its socially developed, and extremely precise and codified dance forms, allow another way of knowing, what they call the 'other thought' to emerge.

## Lecture



I 'performed' a lecture on animal welfare, expressing anger and a view on how to reach agreement on animal rights - based on (knowable) human dignity and respect, rather

than imputed animal suffering.<sup>55</sup> As introduction, in a black clowning mode, I violently thrashed a soft toy rabbit's head on the edge of the table: I hoped, by this behaviour, to elicit disgust at the abuse of even a toy animal, and thus to hint at the sufficiency of an ethic of respect rather than an ethic grounded in pity or empathy for imputed suffering.

I had wanted to act out, in my lecture, some of the ingredients of conferences I had known: the mix of objectivity and emotion, conviction and careerism, respect and cruelty, fear and hard-won or easy confidence. But I lost my way among my own contradictions. Constructing a lecture, already a performance, *as* a performance was infinitely complex. For instance, a personal talk, to an audience, can perhaps only be 'as if' personal. And a *performed* lecture is perhaps not a lecture but a piece of acting, or movement.

I was unable to settle on how to perform this. In editing the text for a more succinct presentation it became less like an academic paper. I used a mix of rhetoric, acting, clowning and dance to make an argument using researched information, poetry, personal narrative, abstract movement, animal mimicry and shock effects. But I was not confident in asking people, who had not come to hear about animal rights, to listen to my opinions on animal rights. So I was unable to decide the direction and construction of this section. It lacked clear boundaries, and therefore, access to truth. Without boundaries experience is muddled and blurry and lacks purchase for making a 'gap' in which the new, or newly noticed, can appear. Without structure and boundaries even the new and unexpected arrives on the scene like more of the same.



### Lizard in box

I performed as a suited 'lizard' in a white box not much longer than my body, in a shop window at night. This was an exploration of human/animal shape-shifting and of my attention to (confined) space and to audience-as-potential-threat. I showed this 5 minute performance on a TV screen during my theatre performance - and watched it, myself,

---

<sup>55</sup> I subsequently became aware of a recent change in the Swiss constitution that bases animal welfare on 'the dignity of living beings' rather than on 'rights' or determinations about the suffering of animals (Goetschel, 2013, n.pag.). Goetschel is the former Animal Advocate, Canton of Zurich.

seated on the stage: making a layering of person, performer, video element in the performance, and the original, shopfront performance as human-reptile. (See image on title page of this thesis)

#### 4 ways of leaving a chair



In random sequence, I used the following strategies for leaving a chair:

A score. This was using a mode of Deborah Hay: setting a trajectory, a gesture and a theme, that was to be actioned according to how I perceived my varying relationship to time, space, the audience and my own imagination;

Disorienting my awareness of my limbs; not knowing arms from legs;

Using what might be called 'semiotic drifting' whereby the attempt to beckon was continually diverted into other gestures such as showering, embracing or sifting. This was inspired by Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the difference between 'beckoning,' as a relationship, and the mere arm movement involved; and,

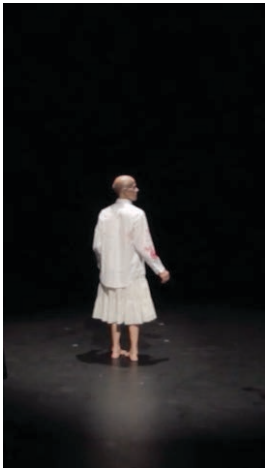
Trying to stand as if I were a very old, decrepit dog.

These were each strategies for creating a gap in the normal relationship of action, habit and meaning. They reflected my increasing feel for how the reflective awareness that can articulate meanings as language and thought is also articulate in our body sensations and movements. Gallagher says 'It may be ... that certain aspects of what we call the mind just are in fact nothing other than what we tend to call expression, that is...('internal speech'), gesture, and expressive movement' (2005, footnote, 121).

The four ways of leaving a chair ensured failure - to achieve a mental goal and a physical task (to stand) or to sustain a meaning (to beckon) - or uncertainty (a score open to the 'now'). But I found in each of them, a reassurance that failure and incompleteness can be strategies for renewing attention, and therefore for discovery. Failure and incompleteness, losing the plot, introduce spaces in the known where the unknown can appear and being can be noticed.



## Turning



In the film *White Material*, Isabelle Huppert is an isolated, undefended, French plantation owner in the midst of an anti-colonial rebellion. In one terrifying scene, she stands alone, on an empty road, turning slowly, scanning the surrounding jungle from which she is possibly being watched. Although the danger is crucial, there is something exquisite and powerful in the 'choreography' of the simple turning of the vertical body, in its simple dress, in a vast space. (The turning sequence can be seen at 1.35 to 1.38 in the film trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3nh5zcGUsE> Accessed 27 May, 2014.) What would be the performative effect of translating this action to 'abstract' space?

I placed my gaze at a far, abstract distance, and turned in place using the same foot pattern as Huppert. But I betrayed my experiment. I had marked the white dress with blood, referencing the blood spilled at the beginning of *Lizard*. So, after creating an abstract space for something new to transpire, I had coloured it in with a plethora of associations and meanings. This was theatrical spectacle, not truth.

## Script text: Animal lecture

I would like to say something about animals - who can whine, stiffen, tremble, exude, lose vitality, slow down, walk endlessly in circles, hug, fuck, sing, leap, express delight, pull out their own flesh - but fail to say anything.

This performance isn't *about* animals, but they influenced it. Especially a large goanna confined to a small glass tank in a pet shop. I wanted to address that. The pet shop closed, and I changed my tack. But I would still like to try to contribute, in words, to a better animal space.

J.M. Coetzee argues that the evil of treating human beings like *cattle*, as in the Holocaust, is the evil of treating humans *in the way we treat* cattle - as industrial units. John Berger says that before industrialisation and capitalism 'animals constituted the first circle of what surrounded man.' He says they were messengers who were both like and unlike us but are now 'absolutely marginal.'

How do we get our ideas about how to treat animals? Through their eyes?

The eyes of animals appeal to us. Levinas says that when we meet another's gaze, it immediately implicates us in a responsibility towards the other. But he was unsure whether a snake had a gaze. Berger says animals and humans watch each other across a 'narrow abyss of non-comprehension.' I have stared into the eyes of an Orangutan and felt that abyss: a sense of familiarity but also of our gazes passing by each other.

So how can we know animals better? Do we use empathy and imagination, and risking being sentimental, or, plod along with science? It's confusing either way.

For example, the Gorilla who recently seemed to be just like us - showing a human-like concern for a fallen (and stunned) child, turned out to have been trained to cuddle dolls as part of a breeding program; the gorillas from whom she was supposedly protecting the child were uninterested and, in any case, kept at bay by keepers with fire hoses. On the other hand, those goldfish that we were told were mindless machines that forgot one side of the bowl by the time they hit the other turn out to be a species, selected for memory experiments and able to retain learning for up to 12 years.

So how should we treat these fellow creatures? Can we know whether those crowded fish in restaurant displays are miserable?

I have come to believe that we can be guided by what separates us from animals, as well as what we share.

Animals senses and perceptions are so extensively different to ours that their interpenetrate but do not coincide with our own. We cannot know their worlds - the ultraviolet spectrum, the eyes that see one-dimensional gridded patterns, the subtle, pervasive, erotic smells, the faster pulse, the slower pulse, the feathers, the different weight, the desire to leap at moving things, the fear, the soft feet, the cloven hooves, the lack of arms, the height above earth, the noise of grass, the dependence on sunlight, the wool, the scales, the surrounding water, the long tail, the capacity, and desire, to wait years to drop on a warm blooded host.

I like trying to shift my senses into these areas - feeling what I take to be empathy and, certainly, finding a richer body life - but it may not be the animal's life. And animals seem not to share, in large degree, the conceptual capacities that enable us to make a society largely focussed on intellectual and ethical values and a created culture.

It is in this human culture that I feel I can find how to treat animals - without knowing, for sure, what a particular animal might feel or think. It seems to me that it is enough to know that we are treating an animal with what *we take to be* disrespect. When we do this, we know, for sure, that we are ignoring our bodily bond with the animal world, and we know, for sure, that we are demeaning what *we take to be* our human values.

This is D H Lawrence's approach in his poem 'Snake.' He does not sentimentalise the animal. It is in its own hot, sunny, stony, volcanic domain. He knows there is no recognition when he is included in the snakes view. But when it turns away it is as if it becomes so 'other' that Lawrence throws a stone to break the spell of his awe. The snake slips into a repulsive hole and Lawrence realises he has missed his 'chance with one of the lords of life.'

I have left Snake, and information about some Orangutan projects on the chairs. I hope you will read Snake and maybe give support to one of the Orangutan projects or a similar cause.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> This text was amended in performance.

## Program notes

### **Lizard - a box of gaps**

**Peter Fraser**

### **MA Performance**

### **The Drama Theatre, Monash University, Clayton**

In my MA, *Now and again: strategies for truthful performance*, I have been investigating the question of 'truth' in performance and how some strategies enable it. My main performance experience is in physical theatre, including site-specific outdoor projects, and, to a degree, in improvisation for devising and performance. Initially, my experience led me to privilege the body over psychology, and to favour a body formed by experience (by attention to its inner and outer worlds) rather than shaped to achieve a particular 'look.' That bias remains, but I am now less inclined to dismiss other forms of performance such as ballet, with its ideal, semiotic body, or the naturalistic theatre that has seemed, to me, to use bodies to represent ideas. I no longer assume that the boundaries between performance modes are so clear.

The strategies influencing my MA are drawn from dance or physical theatre practices that focus on the body or the body in its environment, and support solo and improvisational work. The main strategies I have used are Body Weather, created by Min Tanaka and introduced to Australia, and to me, by Tess de Quincey, and the practices of Deborah Hay and Rosalind Crisp. I have worked with de Quincey, Hay and Crisp during the development of this MA.

My MA performance, *Lizard - a box of gaps*, is performed live and as video. An initial impetus had been a desire to rectify in some way the confinement, in a pet shop, of a large goanna in a small glass case. By the time I got my act together, the shop had closed down, but empathic traces of lizard remain, as bodily transformation or what has been called shape-shifting; and, also, senses of captivity, or closed and open space, within and outside the body. *Lizard - a box of gaps* attempts to access a range of approaches to, and strategies for, performing, and engaging audience, or at least inviting them to notice. The performance addresses representation; character; pedestrian action; engaging with the natural environment or with a theatre space; improvisation - juggling pattern and unpredictability; social dance designed to convey grace and status; phenomenological movement investigations; and human-animal shape-shifting and empathy. *Lizard* dances its way through these various performance tools, techniques and values that seem to me to highlight diverse and conflicting modes, intentions and values in theatre. It is intended to make different approaches rub against each other to raise questions of what is authenticity or truth in performance; how is it affected by re-enactment; to what extent and how what is happening for the performer meets the audience; the role of technique, tools and

structure, and whether they compete with instinct or feeling; how we value presence and absence in the performer; and how truth and artifice can share the same site.

*Lizard - a box of gaps* is connected with a written thesis that considers definitions of truth - employing a Heideggerian ontological sense of truth as the unconcealing of being (which is simultaneously being concealed). The thesis analyses the performance or embodied research strategies of Deborah Hay, Body Weather (Min Tanaka/Tess de Quincey/Frank van de Ven) and Rosalind Crisp; parameters of improvised performance; the meaning of authenticity in movement; and my own sense of gaps in my experience of reality that turn out not to be just emptinesses, but opportunities for perceiving being. This latter aspect of the thesis owes much to the work of Drew Leder, especially his book 'The Absent Body.'

This performance includes video material filmed by Iolanthe Iezzi (window) and Frank van de Ven (nature) and edited by Iolanthe Iezzi. There is some copyright material in the incidental music/sound accompanying the performance. I wish to thank Dr Stuart Grant for his generous provocation and good advice, Frank van de Ven for performance mentoring, Professor Peter Snow, Michael Jewell, Travis Hodgson, David Sheehy, Iolanthe Iezzi, Linda Luke, Tom Matthiesson, Lesley Borland, Dale Gorfinkel, Jenny Dick, Julia White and Sarah Poole.