

HISTORY OF A PARTICULAR IT: A FICTIONAL NARRATIVE OF PRACTICE

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Abstract

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Throughout the duration of the research I have been concerned with finding ways to present, interrogate and speak about practice – through, in and as practice. Encompassing the practices of dancing and writing, the inquiry seeks to resist the codification, definition and traditions of formal discourse, and to unsettle the hold of the conceptual.

The research concerns the ontology and genealogy of performance - what is a work, where does *it* begin and where does *it* end?

History of a particular it isn't a search for or about something; *it* is something, something the project repeatedly attempts (and often fails) to communicate by embedding *its* outcomes within *its* own ongoing processes. The live performance works are both inseparable from and other than the physical practice from which they emerged. And similarly, the writing is reflective of and other than the performance works.

Each component of the research project is a new beginning, transforming the previous one through incorporating *its* past processes into *its* present outcomes. Each component reveals a different aspect of the project, shedding light on otherwise hidden aspects of the previous components. While each is considered complete in itself, together they chart the becoming of one artwork in the process of performing *its* evolving dissolution, *its* living and dying.

A series of interrelated, inter and independent performance works: a durational event; a neighbourhood dancing tour; a solo work performed in various locations; three happenings; and this writing make up the entirety of the project.

As the culminating live performance work, the solo evolved in relation to regular studio based dialogues with a diverse network of local Melbourne based dance artists. Containing the heart of the movement research, *it* was concerned with refining and elaborating a very *particular* movement language through a subtle yet insistent process of subversion and reinvention. Primarily informed by deep sensory work, and a process of listening, searching for something just out of reach, *it* invited *its* audience into a strange, deeply felt world of sensation.

Like the dancing, this writing tries (and usually fails) to remain elusive and slippery.

It fictionally remembers, continues and extends the live performances. Various influences by Tim Etchells, Brian Massumi, Helene Cixous, and Matthew Goulish among others, *it* also attempts to create a space where *it* might be possible to follow without understanding; a space where a style of writing, in seeking to make *its* music heard, does what *it* can to approach the experience of dance.

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Alongside these thank-you's lie thanks to Melbourne's fringe dance community, as well as the many fantastic artists, thinkers and others I encountered throughout *history* - others whose voices I hope linger and remain present in the body of writing that follows.

Declaration

I, Paul Romano, declare that the PhD exegesis entitled *history of a particular it: a fictional narrative of practice* is at least 20,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This exegesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this exegesis is my own work.

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Preface

Remember?

Or if you don't remember, imagine: you've just been led from the park, past the cemetery, through the laneway and into a cardboard performance space, given a glass of wine, and asked to listen...

It was ridiculous, but as I got older I was finding it more and more difficult to deal with what they liked to call reality, largely because I was a dreamer and just didn't quite manage to get around to it.

I sometimes wondered if all my work, years and years of work was all just digging increasingly large circles all around what I was looking for, but then everybody knew the treasure was in the search; still, I sometimes wasn't sure if I was getting closer or further away; was the building, the rubble of my world going up or coming down; I never knew. It always seemed like both - away from one thing and toward another, toward and away. It was always both.

They said it was madness when you felt too much, when you couldn't block out, censor, but I fancied that if I made myself sensitive enough to feel everything I could disappear into the earth, the sky; I'd be able to travel the universe, past the stars, beneath the sea, between worlds ...then come home and do the dishes.

I thought if only I could sensitize myself enough I'd be able to control everything, make myself perfect; I didn't realize things would just keep getting stranger and stranger.

Prologue

This is the story of an improvised choreography, or a choreographed improvisation, oxymoronic as that may be - and absurd as *it* is, what *it* does is weave a narrative of 'truth' and 'lies' to blur the stories of 'fantasy' and 'reality.' And in the blur of this space between, where neither is certain, where we're uncertain, is the most extraordinarily fertile, because *it's* here, in, or on this edge between, that not only art and our story, but also life live. French writer/philosopher, Helene Cixous not only says that without fantasy "nobody exists," but also that "a person is a creation of the phantasm... a work of art. From head to toe and from thought to voice" (Cixous 2008 p.35).

Our story is composed of fragments. According to Tim Etchells from UK theatre company Forced Entertainment, fragments are "an ideal compositional unit" (Etchells 2004 p.281), lacking beginning, ending, or place in an argument, they thwart our efforts to know where they came from and why they're being presented. The answer, or reason (for their presentation) of course, is "just because." When asked by French writer, Helene Cixous why she used 'futura bold' font for *The Rings of Lispector*, visual artist Roni Horn replied, 'just because.' Cixous called the choice "beautiful or necessary without any why ... Just because, without reason - sans raison - is the answer to why" (Cixous 2005 p.69). Sans: a without, without lack - a positive, generative without.

Among other things, our story oscillates between tweaking, or slightly exaggerating 'what really happened,' 'telling it just like it was,' and telling the most "bald faced lies" (*Lispector* 1992 p.552). It refuses however, to tell the difference, because that refusal to tell helps create the greatest ambiguity about what *it* is. So different versions of *it* lead in and out of one another and other stories, until where *it* begins and where *it* ends becomes a blur.

Forced Entertainment made a durational performance, *and on the thousandth night*, about such blurring. One performer began a story, when they felt like *it* another performer took over with another story, and so on forever - well not quite forever, but for twelve hours, which is a long time to perform telling stories. As an improviser, I like to focus on the moment, and sometimes the moment seems to expand to, or feel just like forever. This PhD research project is a moment of forever, which is why the story keeps falling in and out of and blurring with all the other stories all around *it*. *Its* question - where does *it* begin and where does *it* end - for now is a question that would be made infinitely less interesting by an answer. (And

there'll be more on questions and answers later, but for now, which there seems to be more of forever), for now, I want to briefly go back to 'truth' and 'lies.'

In *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice*, Jonas Barish points out the near universal association of theatre and performance with duplicity. Tracing the prejudice back to the origins of theatre he notes Solon calling Thespis, the first 'official' actor, a liar "because he was pretending to be someone else" (Barish 1981 p.1). But to pretend takes imagination, and as Northrop Frye says: "imagination creates reality, and ... the world we desire is more real than the world we passively accept" (Frye in Phillips 1998 p.xviii).

Cixous and Kristeva share a similar sentiment about the truth, Kristeva calling *it* "the unspoken of the spoken" (Kristeva 1986, p.35), and Cixous "the thing you must not say" (Cixous 1993, p.38). But Cixous also says, very simply, "the word exists, therefore the feeling exists" (Cixous 1993, p.36), and for choreographer Yvonne Rainer, "feelings are facts."¹ At some point in the duration of this story, everything started to seem fake. Naïve and gullible as I am, I kept looking for ways to make *it* 'real.' In a way I became so good at making *it* 'real' that even the most 'real' started to feel like a lie. So I started to play with lying, until "I was no longer able to rid myself of the habit of lying. And I told so many lies that I began to lie even to my very lies. And this - I was amazed to discover - was the same as telling the truth" (Lispector 1992 p.552). I can't help but think of this as exemplifying performance: neither and/or both 'truth' and 'lie,' but a world where everything is amplified and hyper-real, and the distinction between fantasy and reality unimportant.

What exactly the performance of *history* is, where *it* begins and ends is a bit of a blur, because the performance emerged from a practice that began before and will continue after the story. Transformation, according to the father of Performance Studies, Richard Schechner, is "performance's subject" (Schechner 1993 p.1). So *history's* re-search processes and concerns, like the work itself, tend to change form and shape. In the language of Deleuze, "endless becoming is the condition, not the limit of life" (Grosz 2005 p.42); so too is *it* the condition of performance.

1. Feelings are facts is the title of a book written by Yvonne Rainer: *Feelings are facts: a life* Yvonne Rainer (2006) MIT Press Cambridge

According to Deleuze and Guattari the refrain marks a space, where chaos becomes a rhythm, which is a becoming. The refrains and fragments that follow skate thinly across a variety of discourses from performance to philosophy, literature and the everyday. The refrain that returns is 'the work,' 'the work,' and 'the work is always changing - sliding between one thing and another as it continues'.²

To underline and help this process of change along, the story swaps and changes voices, trying to become what *it's* not, because the discovery of what we're not and what we don't know is much more interesting to me than what we are and do know. Which, in a roundabout way, seems a good place to begin, because beginnings - particularly beginnings which begin without finishing, beginnings which begin as interruptions - correspond, according to Cixous, to the experience of "not being what I believe to be" (Cixous 2008 p.31). And that's how I suggest you approach this writing and enter the story, at least for now: as something that isn't just what I say *it* is and not what you believe *it* to be, but something whose now, like a good dance and a good improvisation, needs always to be negotiated.

2. Paraphrased from *A thousand plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987 p.313)

Introduction

History of a particular it is a constantly transforming artwork conceived in and as a response to the journey of a PhD. *It* began with two guiding principles: to concentrate on the act of dancing as much as possible, and to look for ways of incorporating the documentation of the working processes into the performed outcomes. The latter idea, while prevalent in performance discourse in general, was conceived in *particular* – at least initially – in response to the work of U.K based, former Australian and New Zealand independent artist Simon Ellis' work, *Indelible*. A PhD thesis presented as a DVD-Rom with written, videoed and interactive components, *Indelible* referenced a live performance that was irrecoverably lost, yet stubbornly present in radically altered form.

The plethora of discourse surrounding issues of documentation in performance mostly springs from the two opposing poles of thought of Peggy Phelan and Phillip Auslander. Phelan says, "Performance's potency comes from ... its 'one time only' life" (Phelan 1993 p.178). She also says that when performance buys into an economy of reproduction *it* betrays *its* own ontology. Opposing this view is Phillip Auslander's refusal to prioritize or validate the live above the mediated, or the original above its reproduction. Auslander argues that performances "emulate mediated representations," and so have "become second hand recreations of themselves as refracted through mediation" (Auslander 1999 p.158). This statement of Auslander's is mostly about popular culture and commercial performance. His views are completely antithetical to the investment in liveness, which as Etchells says, is "the only thing we should care about" (Etchells 1999 p.49). But rather than zig zag back and forth between these opposing poles of thought, I want to draw on scholar-artist Sophia Lycouris' conception of documentation as being about 'otherness' as opposed to 'sameness.' In a paper discussing documentation and how it might be interpreted in light of "the complexity of the relationship between theory and practice" in performance, Lycouris said:

...what is documented and how this is documented reveal the framework within which artists understand, conceive and develop their work, documentation can be understood as both a record and a tool of making decisions about the nature of the work.
(Lycouris 2000, n.p.)

Neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio's work provides another way of thinking about the creative aspect of documentation. His research into consciousness has led him to understand there to be no discernible difference – or no difference in kind - between memory and imagination. As a consequence, he calls imagination “the memory of a possible future” (Damasio in Murphy 2009 p.144). This writing is a creative documentation of the dance processes and the performance works. I have tried to create a remembering, in Damasio's sense, so resolutely entwined with imagination as to be “the memory of a possible future.”

Creative documentation carries little or no sense of fidelity to what was. What *it* does instead, is seek what performance theorist Heidi Gilpin has suggested: to reconcile the writing about performance with *its* impossibility, in the hope that what's already disappeared might “reappear in altered, unrecognizable forms, as its own fearless undoing and unknowing of events” (Gilpin 1996 p.106). In this sense, the written component of *history*, is, as much as possible, a creative act in the present. A fictional narrative that remembers, dreams and imagines.

History's guiding principle of incorporating the creative documentation of the working processes into the performed outcomes also developed in response to a recurrent theme in much of Etchells' writings. In *Certain Fragments*, (1999) and many of his writings that follow, Etchells often speaks directly or at times alludes to the ghosts of the present affecting the memories of the past. *History* transforms and fictionalizes *its* past to create and ghost *its* present.

The idea to dance as much as possible led to an intense researching of the micro-processes of attention involved in the act of dancing. This aspect of the research was conducted through a series of dialogues with Melbourne based peers from diverse backgrounds, and one of the primary forums for these dialogues was *Movement Research Melbourne (MRM)*. *MRM* is a practical forum of exchange bringing together a diverse collective of local dance artists who use improvisation as a tool for researching performance practice.

Carlee Mellow, Siobhan Murphy, Michaela Pegum, Phoebe Robinson, Peter Fraser, Emma Strapps, Fiona Bryant and myself meet regularly to exchange ideas, practices and inquiries that are variously influenced by butoh, body weather, contemporary dance techniques, contact improvisation, and different traditions of solo improvisation developed from the practices of William Forsythe, Deborah Hay and Rosalind Crisp among others. Our meetings are a space where individual and collective histories and trainings intermingle and speak from one language to another; where we focus on how *it* is that we study movement so differently from one another, and how *it* is that we deal with and negotiate the live performance experience. Fragments of journal entries from these meetings can be found in appendix A.

RESPONSE

The idea of, if not creating, then at least speaking about the project as a response was itself a response to now defunct U.S theatre group, Goat Island's practice of 'creative montage.' In speaking about this practice, Steve Bottoms steals the distinction David Graver makes "in his book *The Aesthetics of Disturbance*, between collage and montage" (Bottoms 2007 p.62). Graver says that collage points "persistently back" (Graver in Bottoms 2007 p.62) to the source the fragments were stolen from, and so requires some prior knowledge of those sources. Montage on the other hand, "flaunts the cohesive power of its constructive procedures through its intentional incompleteness" (Graver in Bottoms 2007 p.63); the fragments become constituent parts of something completely different, participating in an entirely new structure, for which prior knowledge of their origin isn't necessary.

In this research project, response can be identified as a methodology, a principle of composition, and a mode of analysis - albeit one that carries no sense of fidelity or accuracy. What *it* does instead, is ignite a path, a process, an interest or inspiration to depart and deviate from, without any concern of return. Sometimes the connection is obvious, and other times tenuous, but either way, fidelity to an origin, source, or ideal is unimportant. When we dance in response at *MRM* for example, we try to avoid mimicry, and instead focus on what we perceive of/as the other person's movement concerns. (They might be using the torso to drive the limbs for example, or be playing with pauses, or being off centre, or moving from where *it's* not – or any one of, or any combination of a million other things).

There's an element of duration involved in this. Lin Hixson, former director of Goat Island, speaks about Bergson's idea of duration, saying:

My duration encompasses and discloses yours. Your duration encompasses and discloses mine. Duration is experience but equally it is experience enlarged and gone beyond. Your heartbeat cuts into my heartbeat and gives me the chance to arrive at a different pulse (Hixson 2008 n.p).

It often somehow happens through responding to an-other that two people's histories start to intermingle and speak in and through one body. The responder, having picked up on the interests and concerns of another, gains new awareness and new information about different ways of moving and approaching movement. This information then very quickly, almost instantly in fact mutates and becomes part of the responder's arsenal of devices, scores, strategies, interests – part of their personal *history*. *It* isn't something stagnant, but something to play with: the response becomes a powerful tool to facilitate an experiential, embodied discovery in the body of the responder – a way to somehow feel something of (what) the other (was doing), or to 'arrive at a different pulse.'

GHOSTING

The idea of response has been retroactively fitted, and the simplicity of response being to one or two people is inadequate, failing to account for broader, more ongoing concerns and everyday influences. Every time I dance I am in some way responding not only to every dancer I've ever watched attentively, but to everyone I've ever seen. *It's* the same when I write – in some way everyone I've ever read is present.

As Cixous says: "Into our speech, into my discourse, passes that of Plato about which I know nothing, or that of Victor Hugo, into which a hundred other languages overflow.

In our Western discourse resonate Western discourses in the plural" (Cixous 2008 p.13).

This simple fragment of thought underlines the many echoes *it* carries, one of which leads to Russian linguist, Mikhail Bakhtin, and in particular his concept of heteroglossia. Briefly, the term 'heteroglossia' refers to the history, (*history?*) and multiply-layered nature of language. Words are alive with layers of personal, social, ideological, political and historical overtones, all of which are in some way present in the current use of language. But at the same time as these influences and past voices are present, they're also being continually modulated and modified by a *particular* language user in a *particular* context at a *particular* time.

This modulation/modification in some small way re-invents the so-called 'general-language,' so that 'pre-existing meanings' and prejudices are kept to a minimum, and the immediacy of the present moment – the now of history/*history* - is foregrounded.³

My interest doesn't lie in setting out to articulate the plurality of danced, performed or written discourses that flow into, through and all around the few names I mention as part of *history*. What I more simply want to do, is underline the plurality surrounding them, to spare a thought for their ghosts, and do something to acknowledge the forgotten, neglected, unheard of and unknown voices they contain – the ones discourse almost can't help but ignore. For this reason, when speaking about dance and movement processes I try to mention as many local practitioners as possible; I try to speak from the ground, the everyday earth of my dance practice, which includes an ongoing series of dialogues with *the little con* (more on p.35) and *MRM* artists along with Simon Ellis, Ros Crisp and others.

Having responded to a lot of different dancing bodies, each of which has responded to a lot of other dancing bodies, the dancing body I find myself dancing with seems to be a body occupied by the pulses of others, a body whose others pulse, and that seeking, feeling, experiencing those others, feels their pulses as *its* own.

Dance theorist Andre Lepecki, speaking about Paxton's small dance of standing still and noticing the subtle movements of the body, says:

As the subject stands still, listening, sensing, smelling its own bodily vibrations, adjustments, tremors streaming through, across, within the space between core subjectivity and the surface of the body, there is nothing more than the revelation of an infinite, unlocatable space for microexploration of the multiple potential for otherwise unsensed subjectivities and corporealities one harbours (Lepecki 2000 p.346).

I understand the body to be both subtly and complexly ghosted by others - and I understand dance as the felt study of these unsensed others that populate the body.

3. Paraphrased from Holquist (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: four essays* by M.M. Bakhtin p.xix – xxi.

Cixous, speaking of this sort of ghosting, says:

The extent to which they are present, these others, in my writing, I do not myself know. It happens sometimes, having to look at my own texts, that I see unsuspected traces of myself. And probably imperceptible, this has been combined, re-worked, shifted, transported, meditated so much (Cixous 2008 p.39).

This kind of ghosting⁴ is much less simplistic than talking about my dancing falling overtly, as *it* often does, quite clearly into the mode of various peers and colleagues. *It's* much more elusive and unknowable, both more subtle and more complex, and often, as Cixous indicates, unidentifiable.

In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Cixous says influences need to be forgotten, and “pass through the blood” (Cixous 1993, p.59). Before they can be used they need to be felt, embodied: become ‘mine.’ So many histories pour into each body, so many languages to each tongue. I am everyone I’ve ever dreamed I’ve been. After years of moving, gathering, accumulating and shedding, some of the primary paths that led me here remain, and I recount them as my process, but they’re nothing more than fragments, and nothing more than the fragments that have fallen away.

I’ve written of *history* as being conceived, but conceived is the wrong word. *History* emerged from an ongoing process and practice, simply by continuing and following my nose. *It* wasn’t preconceived, but worked with carrying, transforming and fictionalizing the materiality of *its* pasts to create and ghost *its* present. At the same time, *history* underlines and underscores performance’s ephemeral nature. An ongoing performance becoming itself through disappearing, yet insisting on *its* own ghosting, *history* is acutely aware of its unlikely existence being made possible by everything that’s fallen away - *it* recognizes these fragments that have fallen, even as *it* recognizes the impossibility of giving them voice.

4. In *The Haunted Stage: Theatre as Memory Machine*, Marvin Carlson uses the term ‘ghosting’ to refer to the way in which an audience member layers memories from previous performance experiences to make sense of the present experience (Bauerlein p.6). The way I use the term ghosting is not to trigger a memory of any sort of specificity in an audience, but to somehow infuse the work with a sense of a past, that though somehow present, has been irrecoverably lost.

Jeanette Winterson said, “too far [out] to see with the human eye or to hear with the human ear, is everything that we have lost” (Winterson 2008 p.237). As *history*’s tentative claims to life are ghosted by death, so *it* is that everything not written about *it* in some ways speaks more loudly than what is. So among other things, the nature of this writing is necessarily fictitious and partial, and this fictitious and partial nature is one of the things that gives *it*⁶ *its* particularity, *its* ‘thisness.’

RE-SEARCH?

Matthew Goulish says, “we discover a performance by making it,” and “the search follows the discovery” (Goulish [and Bottoms] 2007 p.xv). In this sense, *history* - right up to and including the performances and this writing - is little or nothing other than re-search. *It* was, is, nothing but stumbling in the dark, abandoning the idea of knowing so I can rediscover and reinvent what I find when I’m not looking. Because the experience and process of discovery is worth more than the thing discovered, *history* searches and searches for ways to keep searching. As all around me people dig for gold, I dig for the hole, burying into the treasures of the earth. Digging and digging, leaving the treasure untouched for the joy of the dig, until by surprise: an underground world, the earth of work.

Research is traditionally based on a question, but there is always at least a hundred questions - and the more the better. The more questions, the more curiosity and discovery, the more interest, exploring, discovering, the more questions - in more places, more of the time. Questioning is play. Research is time spent questioning (and circling) to gain a cumulative understanding of the possibilities of play. Play proliferates, provokes, interrupts, creating possibilities, and questions.

In *Terrors and Experts*, Adam Phillips says, “answers are not a cure for questions... and... the answers, in a sense, are all questions” (Phillips 1995, p.3). Echoing Cage’s “That is a very good question. I should not want to spoil it with an answer” (Cage 1987 p.126), Phillips says “answers merely interrupt questions” (Phillips 1995, p.1).

5. I’d like to say a little something – as little a something as possible – about *it*. And in *particular*, about the distinction, or lack of one between *it* and *it*. The easiest explanation is sometimes I do, and sometimes I don’t. The distinction doesn’t always have a clear demarcation between what is the work and what is not the work, but how could *it*, when the question being asked is what is a work, where does *it* begin and where does *it* end? My hope is that *it* does something to help create and underline a sense of ambiguity not only about what *it* is, was, or may yet become; but also about the research processes, which before becoming part of the project’s duration, were more simply a product of *its* nowness.

To keep the questions rolling, *history* plays, among other things, with tangents and distractions, beginnings, endings, and a fragmented (or fragmenting of *its*) sense of continuity. These recurring principles, along with incorporating *its* processes in *its* outcome, *its* dreams in *its* realities, and *its* pasts in *its* nows, are the main causes of *history's* tendencies toward repetition. These principles are used to detour through a range of discourses and ideas. They're here in this writing, as part of a very simple effort to speak of a human complexity I see as lying at the heart of performance. They're also here, as part of my ongoing attempt in writing to work with structures that are reflective of these strategies and sensibilities that have evolved over time from my dance practice.

DANCING AND WRITING

Dancing is primary. Writing, and particularly theorizing, comes later as an act of memory and translation, which makes translating and remembering - or perhaps more accurately, translating and forgetting, important. In *Fugitive Pieces* Anne Michaels writes:

You can choose your philosophy of translation just as you choose how to live: the free adaptation that sacrifices detail to meaning, the strict crib that sacrifices meaning to exactitude. The poet moves from life to language, the translator moves from language to life; both, like the immigrant, try to identify the invisible, what's between the lines, the mysterious implications (Michaels 1997 p.109).

The writing doesn't try to mirror the dancing. *It* tries to remain *its* own beast, a parallel creative act, that like the dance – without mirroring *it* – attempts to adopt the same attitude: play, then see what happens and see how you can work *it* to make something out of *it*. Any relationship between texts and dancing in a way is coincidental, but they both come from the same bodymind and the same impulse. Brian Massumi says, "Perception and thought are two poles of the same process. They lie along a continuum" (Massumi 2002 p.91). Both the thoughts and perceptions embedded within the project's written texts and danced/performed components are aware that they're working on the same project, so a dialogue keeps this coincidence company.

The history of my dance practice is longer than the history of my writing practice. Writing only really began as a practice at the beginning of the PhD research period. However both, as practices, from the beginning were aware of several things: that they were an ongoing process; that they had in some way to relate (even if only through a 'coincidental dialogue'); and that ultimately they had to be framed to be presented – written and performed – to an audience. As practices, I endeavoured to use and approach both from as many different perspectives as possible, in the hope that a kind of many perspectived 'coincidental dialogue' might take place between them. Throughout the research period the practice of writing, like the practice of dancing, tried to take several different forms and serve several different purposes. At times writing and dancing were co-incident, while at other times, writing was more subsequent and reflective, and at still other times, in spite of the primacy of dancing, the writing was actually precedent, forming the basis for some of the project's danced components.

Irigaray's thoughts, presented in *The Way of Love*, about a way of living between two people of different sexes, provide a beautiful way of thinking about the dialogue involved in this relationship between dancing and writing - a way that allows both the dancing and writing to live. Each remains faithful to attempting to fulfill *its* own becoming; and each attempts – all the while acknowledging the impossibility of succeeding in – a saying of *itself*, from one to the other: a saying in which an unsaid, and a space of silence always remains. And *it's* in this silence that a space is created, both for a return of each to themselves and also for a return of each to the other. The silence is a space that allows each to negotiate a path, alone and together, informed by the richness, resonance, difference and divergences from the unsaid of their being together. In this case, following Irigaray, the practices aren't separate, from the beginning each is not one, but two.⁶

What I'm proposing is a dynamic relationship, where dancing and writing each inhere within, while also remaining distinct from the other. *It's* a relationship that shifts, changes, lurches - one that's alive, and so needs constantly to be negotiated.

The narrative that follows fictively recalls *history's* five components of 'response,' while trying to add extra layers of written response which manifest as a subtle yet pervasive influence from Helene Cixous, Brian Massumi and Tim Etchells among others. Taken together, these

6. Paraphrased from *The Way of Love* (Irigaray 2002, p.23)

components cast doubt on what *it* is that we call a work. The writing about these five components seeks to cast that shadow of doubt further.

The following schema provides an introductory outline of the project's dimensions, delineating a journey of production and presentation - as and through response:

1. The first component, *history of a particular it - the scored improvisation project, or box event*, presented in February 2008, was a response to John Cage's *musicircus* score.
2. The second component, *history of a particular it - the laneways project or dance miniature*, presented in March 2009, was a response conceived in opposition to *Dance Massive* - a bi-annual program "showcasing the diversity of Australian dance."
3. The third component, the solo work, presented in December 2008, November 2009 and March 2010, was a creative montage of response, with a layer of text created in response to being an 'artist-in-the-academy,' (a turn of phrase I use to indicate a deep ambivalence about what remains for me an uneasy alliance between artistic and scholarly practice).
4. Burning the set, the fourth component, which took place in March 2010, was a response to Peggy Phelan's now classic statement about performance having *its* "only life ...in the present," and being that which "becomes itself through disappearance" (Phelan 1993 p.146).
5. After the burning, the project's fifth component saw the remaining ashes scattered over the duration of an all night walk around Mt. Tarrengower, where I now live, on June 21, 2010.

Now, as we enter, and during the course of moving through the narrative, as we follow in the slipstream of *its* becoming, I'm going to try to move between speaking about, explaining and situating the project, and immersing us in *its* duration. For this reason we'll journey through a two column structure that doesn't move from left to right, but through (more discursive) thoughts on the left to more story like thoughts on the right. To keep our interest and curiosity alive, *it* won't adhere steadfastly to this distinction and at times the story and the more discursive thoughts will blur and fall in and out of each other. To add a little extra colour, both columns will periodically be broken up with some more creative texts; these will be printed in grey, and while sometimes containing a degree of discursivity, they are included primarily as examples of practice, or process based texts, variously marking pre, or semi-discursive moments.

History part one

THE BOXES

Prelude (to part 1):

At Black Mountain College in 1952, John Cage read lecture excerpts, while independent of that reading, Merce Cunningham danced, David Tudor played piano and Robert Rauschenberg, his painting hanging from the rafters, played records. At the same time others projected slides and movies independent of the rest of the goings on. Fifteen years later, in 1967 at the University of Illinois, the first *musicircus* crammed as many musicians, dancers and acrobats as they could into one space. Four years later I was born. Thirty-six years later, in October 2007, as part of the Melbourne Festival, Melbourne based experimental musicians Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphreys, staged John Cage's *musicircus* at the BMW Edge Atrium, Federation Square.

The score (paraphrased):⁷ gather as many musicians, dancers and acrobats as you can, put them all in one space, all doing their own thing at the same time, and instruct them to maintain fidelity to that thing. Then savour the beautiful unfolding chaos.

The event's a labyrinth. Without centre. A hive of multiple forms of autonomous activities related to one another only by the proximity, or coincidence of the event.

For the most part nobody's 'performing' in the classical sense. *It's* more like a world of deeply eccentric hermits concentrating on living their lives and going about their activities. When you enter *it's* easy to be overwhelmed by the chaos and indistinctness of *it* all. Or else underwhelmed by the absence of any (overt) content. There's no meaning or message, and nothing's explained, prescribed, described or defined.

There's a man in a red cape playing a black grand piano on the balcony. You approach from behind, drawn in by the strangeness of the sound – a kind of sleepy, earthy, muted melody; when you get close enough to see him you notice he is playing by rolling potatoes across the keys. After a while of watching in wonder you start to drift, and notice the two rock climbers scaling the inside of the glass wall. One of them abseils down a little and draws your eye

7. Cage didn't actually write a score for *musicircus*. Appendix B has a detailed interpretation from Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey, who staged the score as part of the Melbourne International Arts festival in 2007.

to a dancer; as you move toward the movement a naked man walks past – you follow and are lead to the bar where you buy a drink and notice the small crowd watching the lighting designer place various performers in light and darkness. Your attention moves out from where you are to the constellation of seen and unseen events within the event, back to the crowd you're part of, which is part of the event. Your attention is directed toward a woman playing a plastic trombone made of garden hoses inside a glass wall. You're intrigued by the quirkiness of her instrument and her sound and stay to watch mesmerized as the hum of the event falls into the background again.

When you get tired you move off to the bar for another drink, wander aimlessly, go outside for a breath of air, or just sit down where you are and let your head tilt back toward the ceiling where someone's making their way through an enormous spider web. ...having wandered through you've wandered in and are now merging with the event, witnessing and playing a part in the continual unfolding of a universe. Stay 'til the end and you'll have been up all night. And in the exhilaration of dawn, exhaustion dissipates and the event goes on as the early morning city comes to life. You watch, chat with other stragglers, get a coffee and continue watching, contributing, playing your part in the event - or should we now call *it* something else ... like part one?

DURATION - THE NOW OF ITS THISNESS

Because I'm an improviser, I'm not going to tell you more than I have to about where I am and am not going to go. Or at least not until I get, am going, or are about to go there. Wonderfully impossible and absurd as *it* is, I've been making *history* up as I go along - from the beginning, through *its* many transformations, and into *its* now, which carries time in an increasingly complicated way:

It seeks to be in the now while also seeking *its* as yet untapped future potentials by re-directing the habits and memories of past experience and past moments; and seeks to be in the now while also seeking to exceed or escape the duration from which *it* emerged and will dissolve, repeatedly, over time. *History* somehow senses that this seeking, or this way of being in the now *it* seeks, does something to change the trajectory of *its* duration, *its* future moments, and *its* remembering of past moments.

It also senses that this seeking is perhaps the most powerful tool we have for grounding our attention, bringing our awareness to "the imperceptible palpitation of the now as it nows, the justbeforenow pre-nowing the now, the postnow still being in the nowing, and all these infinitesimal zones of time which are the folds and the blown breaths of the instant"

(Cixous 2005 p.64-65).

THE BOXES:

In February 2008, four months after *musicircus*, *history* began as an event of dance. This was part of an ongoing search to let dance live in performance in *its* freest, wildest state, while nonetheless trying to draw attention to the journey of the individual performer. In this I was inspired by Ros Crisp's relentless approach to movement research and endless questioning of the act of dancing.

History was a response to *musicircus*: an event I hoped would create something of the simultaneous, multiple overlapping pathways of *musicircus* by including a diverse range of dancers from different backgrounds (from Butoh to Contact Improvisation to Contemporary styles). But I also hoped *it* would create a space where one dancer, each individual dancer could be seen, framed or focussed on alone, a space where side by side, but still separate, dancers could perform radically different dances without being able to see one another. I thought I might be able to come close to doing this simply by choreographing, or ordering time and space, while leaving the other elements of the performance completely open. I thought, or hoped that might do something to create a world of ever-shifting temporalities and spatialities, where each individual created and existed within their own little world within this larger, lurching world. In other words, I wanted the anarchy and chaos of *musicircus*, but I also wanted potential clarity, and respite from that chaos.

So in some ways, *it* plays with what performance writer Carol Becker describes as “the complexity and illusion of time – its simultaneous foreverness and instantaneity.” (Becker in Goat Island 2000 p.95)

I’ll return to duration repeatedly, yet obliquely in different ways, at different stages throughout the writing. But as much as feasible I’ll still try to avoid telling you more than I have to in advance, because among other things, *history*, as an artwork in transformation, is concerned with performing *its* own becoming. Writer Mirielle Calle-Gruber says, “One cannot demonstrate flux, the course of things, becoming. One is there, simply” (Calle-Gruber in Cixous 2008 p.31). And that may be true. But maybe a fragmented re-membling of the pasts that acknowledges layers of here-nowness, and that layers the already layered here-now with layers of here, past-and-still-here here-nowness, maybe that wouldn’t quite show a process of becoming, but maybe *it* would avoid speaking simply about what was, and step tentatively toward giving a sense of how *it* came, and is still coming to be.

Cage, in his directive for *musicircus* said:

You should let each thing that happens happen from its own center, whether it is music or dance. Don’t go in the direction of one thing ‘using’ another. Then they will all go together beautifully (as birds, airplanes, trucks, radios, etc. do)

(Cage in Flyn and Humphrey 2007 n.p).

Of course it’s hard to mention Cage, especially in relation to dance, without also mentioning Cunningham and their collaboration (Cunningham 1992 p.138 – 150). They usually rehearsed separately, only coming together in performance - or maybe more accurately, only bringing their different workings together, while maintaining their separateness in performance.⁸ Within *the box event* component of *history*, I wanted to exaggerate and emphasize this separateness, or this separate-togetherness by creating separate spaces for different dancers within the larger space. *It* was kind of, ok, completely ridiculous. About three hundred cardboard boxes - Visy paper company logo front and centre - dividing the space into five sections; strategic gaps, potential viewing spaces between some of the boxes – a little archway,

8. For an essay speaking about his collaboration with Cage, see Merce Cunningham’s *A collaborative process between music and dance* in Kostelanetz (eds) (1992) *Merce Cunningham: dancing in space and time* In the essay Cunningham explains the way he and Cage used rhythmic structures to provide a framework for them to work independently of one another, but to come together in performance, often by meeting at structural points.

What I'd love to be able to do of course is take you forward into the future, instead I'll stumble, moving back and forth between the project's pasts and *its* now's, the memories of *its* dreams, and the delusions and realities of *its* being here. And as we go, I'd like to extend an invitation, and ask that you allow yourself simply to follow, and perhaps listen to the 'pre-echoes' of the writing:

There are pre-echoes of the piece's material which appear early in the running order but are only explained, as it were, when they arrive in the 'original' context, much later in the show. They are memories of the future, or echoes without an origin (Hughes in Bottoms 2007 p.94).

What is a work, where does *it* begin and where does *it* end?

The question not only encompasses an aspect of duration, but also an ontological dimension - an unwillingness or inability to separate *it* from the fabric of life and living. Both are approached and addressed, most often obliquely, in the fictive recalling of events that make up the body of this thesis. *History* is many things, all of them fleeting – a large group event, a neighbourhood

some runaway brickwork, the odd window or ledge. All just set up however we felt like it, but so the audience could wander through; and so dancers or groups of dancers could be viewed individually or several at a time by peering through strategic gaps between cardboard walls.

Five spaces with twenty-five different dancers from different backgrounds alternating between spaces on different time based scores. Everybody doing their own thing - focussing on working, playing with whatever they're interested in. The overscore: when you're performing you listen to yourself, and when you're moving cardboard walls around you listen to the space. Throw in a bit of maths,⁹ and *history* begins.

Or had *it* already begun?

Before the event, driving Bec's clapped out old car down the emergency stopping lane of the freeway at 60 km an hour to my old mans work – bloody big trailer in tow - to get the boxes. When I arrive at the factory, I drive to where I've arranged to meet Dad to pick up the boxes, get out of the car to wait, start to stretch, then dance to pass the time – dance: escape. Load up the trailer - have to borrow a rope to tie the boxes down because of course I forgot one; then back to the emergency stopping lane, coughing, and spluttering back to unload the

9. See appendix C for a detailed timetable of the event and lengths of time different performers spent in different spaces.

event/intervention, a site-specific solo performance, a happening, an earthwork, a book, and 'a life.'

And now – and now, and micro-moments of now-and-now, what now is, what futures and pasts, memories and dreams *it's* composed of, and *its* role in duration is a question I continue to approach, again and again throughout not just this writing, but my practice and life. The program notes to the solo component of *history* said *it* attempted to frame a resolute focus on the now with a choreography of elements that spoke to, or even held the work's duration. But the opposite proposition – of resolutely focusing on the now without it speaking or alluding to duration, was also in play, through the constant search for the as yet untapped potentials of the now. But untapped potentials of the moment, once found, become part of *its* duration.

The way moments and micro-moments of now and now emerge from and dissolve back into duration, repeatedly, over time, leads me both in and out of the idea of transforming and fictionalizing the past to create and ghost the present. The idea is both linked to and diverges from a Bergsonian conception of time. According to Bergson, the past lives and persists in the present, which itself is the most contracted form of the past (Grosz 2005 p.104). Bergson's conception of time leads

boxes at Dancehouse, followed by endless box constructing helped by Bec, Jonathan, Peter and Ash. Thanks guys.

Liberating, well and truly beyond my control, *it* ran off, messing up 'my' plans, becoming something other. I understood: eventhood. So different from my history of choreographing pieces, painstakingly making phrases and ordering material, the event, made simply by the act of dancing, improvising, brought a community of audience and performers together – and took a step away from being what we think of as 'a piece,' and toward being an experience. *It* moved toward what Etchells describes as placing "you in a world rather than describing one to you" (Etchells 2004 p.287).

The event escapes, fragments into the night.

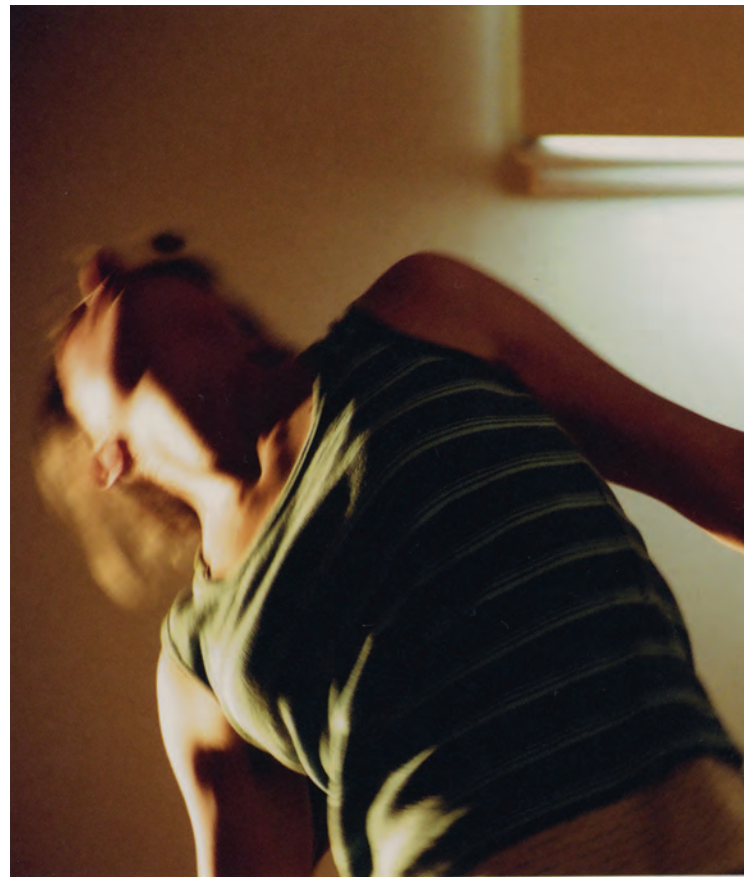
Its incredibly simple arbitrary structures – time and space - breed complexity. We can never know what *it* is, *its* diversity and simultaneous overlapping pathways and divergences remove *it* from being knowable. The memories we take and make are ghosted by the ones we missed and failed to take – imagination fills in the blanks, *it* has to, more than half the event is what we missed, what wasn't and didn't happen. A world of endless performance fragments fall in and out of each other, framing and rearranging mixing and mismatching what we see, hear, feel and smell. And remember. Or dream.

I catch glimpses of half the event, completely miss the other half, find myself enchanted,

to multiplicity, complexity, and worlds of possibilities, or more accurately, to worlds of potential, and the realm of the 'virtual.'

The 'virtual' has got nothing – or at least nothing in particular – to do with the world of cyberspace or computer technology. *It's* much more simply concerned with the possibilities, or potentials inherent within any given moment. In movement, after a pause, a performer will make a decision to follow a particular movement pathway, that pathway will then become actualised, *it* will be the 'actual' pathway that happened. But to take that pathway, an experienced dance improviser would have scanned through and at least briefly considered alternative pathways, these alternative could-have-been, or almost-but-not-quite pathways remain 'virtual.' It's not that they're not real, just that they remain, for the time being unactualised. But if the past is alive, and can be revisited in different clothes, those 'virtual' - could-have-been or almost-but-not-quite, maybe even only dreamt of pathways or possibilities can be revisited and brought to life, or made 'actual.' This is one thing fictionalizing the past, can, actually do: create the world of/from a dream. Which brings me to *history's* other title – *the memory of a dream dreaming itself anew.*

distracted, and a whole lot more; when I'm not performing I have moments where all the 'stuff,' the set disturbs me – *it's* complete fucking chaos. Audience and performers moving through and between spaces, shunting boxes around to get a better view or just because they feel like it, boxes busted and scattered flying every which way. But amidst the mayhem, the attention of the audience, navigating their way through and around the debris, making themselves part of the event is palpable, amplifying my attention in turn.



Throughout the duration of each component *history* moved back and forth between dancing/performance making and writing, moving from work to book and back to work and back to book and on. Each writing about each work was - is, or maybe still has the potential to become - a fictionalized remembering that indirectly led to another component of the work, which then brought out something that didn't happen in the previous one; each rendition, or each refrain chasing the virtual, making *it* actual. *It's* always seeking a forward, onward flight, always seeking to escape what *it* was and avoid defining and categorizing, and always following *its* materiality and *its* own ongoing processes, *its* own becoming - other.

Deleuze and Guattari say becoming is molecular (or minoritarian); *it's* directional, but doesn't have an endpoint, *it* doesn't become, but continues becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1987 p.272). So we might say that becoming, like performance – which as Phelan says, “becomes itself through disappearing” - is ephemeral. Among other things, *history* seeks to embody this sort of performative self-erasure.

Through presenting the always disappearing, incomplete and ongoing work, (and/or practice, and/or life) in this way I hope to do a little something to undo,

Through the chaos, anyone who's attentive can disappear into witnessing the at times intense clarity of the micro-worlds of the individual performers. And that alone is enough – it has no specific content, doesn't describe, define or have any preferred reading. If an audience person then chooses to zoom her attention back out to the chaos of the broader event world, or switch her focus to another micro-world, one of the things she might see is herself in the midst and as part of an almost endlessly permutating universe of fragments – an interconnected-separate-togetherness.

O.k, Dave, set the clock. Go. ...

Find myself in Window space 1 when the open score's scheduled; no other dancers there, I could do with a break but I go on, taking time at the beginning to settle and ready myself... waiting, settling. I finally begin - slowly, subtly. And am amazed to discover the dance I've been looking for for the last two years, the dance that's been buried beneath all this PhD research, beneath all this practice, all this crazy dancing...

Sophie comes and takes over.

I leave the space and stumble onto Phoebe and Jonathan in the middle of a duet, each playing a slightly different game, each of their slightly different games overlapping, intertwining and dancing around each other's slightly different game. Each of their slightly different games is made from multiple games to come out of years

upset or unsettle the academic, logocentric tendency to categorize things into “little cages of meaning,” which Cixous says are “assigned, as you know, to keep us from getting mixed up with one another.”

(Cixous in Shurmer-Smith 2001 p.158)

Attempting to avoid the categorization of discourse, in turn helps blur the boundaries between things I don't see as separate, like 'fantasy' and 'reality,' and 'life' and 'art,' and that blurring of boundaries, or an intense interconnectedness is in turn of course, a feature of (*history's*) becoming – *its* performative self-erasure.



of practice and working their own languages - rules, logics and senses; there's familiarity and uncertainty. They're talking and responding in different languages and catching bits of familiarity and replying with a strangeness that's not quite right but not quite wrong, so they keep going speaking in one language and responding in another, colliding into each others logics and senses, trying to figure each other out, and their falling and coinciding and jamming and bouncing off each other and succeeding and failing and scrambling and re-gathering themselves all at once, and all the while there's this weird dialogue – strangeness and familiarity – and *it's* just beautiful, no, *it's* absolutely gorgeous.

It's a time based event, but I have no idea about the chronology of my seeings.

Stretching over two hours with so many dancers and over eighty audience members, the smell, sweat and proximity engulf the space. After 58 minutes, four of the spaces quieten as one dancer solo's. Two minutes later an eight minute wave of syncopated one minute scores in all five spaces kicks in, and the silence of the solo is replaced by the chaos of one dancer being replaced by another every twelve seconds... There's two more solo's over the course of the event - the last one in the final two minutes.



I remember seeing Janette do this fantastically weird little dance with her fingers in front of her face, lying on her belly in one space, enchanting someone through a hole in the wall of boxes in another space – her time was up, but she had no idea because she couldn't see the clock, or Sarah entering the space behind her, sliding along the floor into her slipstream. Bec and Tim seemed to be everywhere, hoodies falling over their faces, throwing themselves at each other. Joey scurrying between spaces with Ash slung over his shoulder.

Then Ollie, she's already had a good long dance - 30 or 40 minutes - she must be getting tired and running out of material. She starts running up and down the space trying to get herself going, *it* sets something up and she's going like a bloody wind-up bullet, bouncing off the walls, kicking boxes, jumping up and down, huffing and puffing and turning red; she's working and *it's* bloody great. One of the audience members moves a couple of boxes and slips through the gap he made into the next space. And Ollie, humour flying out of every limb, boots the boxes he moved without missing a beat. Brilliant.

At the same time as Ollie's dancing, 'the boys'¹⁰

10. 'The boys' are the brainchild of Contact Improviser, composer, founder of *proximity* magazine, regular performer at the now defunct *conundrum* with the C.I ensemble *state of flux*, and Doctor (MD), David Corbet. 'the boys' is simply a bunch of blokes experienced in the practice of C.I who get together occasionally to perform - they've variously appeared at the Melbourne Festival (2003), the Dance Card (2002) and *Conundrum* - a now defunct evening of improvisation held at Cecil St. studio.

are on. They go nuts – as expected, literally climbing the rafters, crashing through walls. When they stop the spaces grow quiet. I find a finish to what I'm doing against the wall where Peter's soloing. I sit in a chair right on the threshold, there's only two levels of box-bricks left and gaps everywhere; I remove a couple of boxes directly in front of me, erasing the separation between our space and his, most of the other walls have either collapsed or been taken down.

AND A FINISH

Here he is, Peter Fraser, a 61 year-old Butoh dancer, wobbling around, moving everything, and the rest of the spaces – audience, boxes, debris - all press into him. He looks up - having felt the weight of the moment, sees us and grins this grin that's kind of part ghoul, part devil, part self-conscious performer uncertain of whether the jokes on him or us, part maniacal glee, part embarrassment and part a million other things - realizing that whether he knew it or not he was dancing for over two hours' worth of dancing from over twenty different dancers. He picks up a box and for a flash you think he might just bury himself in it and hide, but he just keeps hovering on his knees amidst the cardboard rubble, waving this box around. And as he finishes, this man and this box somehow take on an unbelievable gravity.

They stayed. Almost everyone stayed and we're all applauding each other and I don't think anybody knows who's applauding or thanking who - audience and performers have simply become a group of people who shared an experience.

THE NEXT DAY

I borrow a tow ball from the neighbour again, trot off to the petrol station to hire a trailer again, and walk up and down the bloody stairs a million times again - and amidst all the walking up and down (easy swing of the arms, through the feet, heel to sit bones, tailbone to skull). Strangely I think of Min Tanaka, whose Body Weather practice has been referred to as less a training and more a philosophy, or way of being.¹¹ So we align in passing, briefly with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of a minor writing, (or a little dance), acknowledging and embodying the fact that not just dance, but also all the work surrounding - work which we carry out to support *it* is important, needs to be embraced, to feed and become part of *it*. When this happens, as *it* does on Min Tanaka's farm in Yakushu, Japan, where daily life, farm work, training and performance all ceaselessly merge in and out of

11. For a detailed scholarly analysis of this, see Body Weather practitioner and academic Peter Snow's doctoral thesis, *Imaging the in-between: training becomes performance in Body Weather practice in Australia* (2002), especially p.70 – 72. See also Viala, J and Masson-Sekine, N (1988) *Butoh: shades of darkness*, especially p.158, for a situating of the historical context from which Tanaka emerged, and an understanding of the trajectory of development of his practice.



one another, *it* isn't just a blurring of 'life' and 'art,' but (an investment in) art becoming, (or in a sense, taking over) life. Not part of life, but life – which is what Deleuze and Guatarri are talking about when they speak of an artist's complete political and personal investment: an investment that goes to the core of an artist's being. *It's* an investment that's impossible to live, and impossible to not live.

What is a work, and where does all the work surrounding *it* begin and end?

At home, there are two mountains of boxes the size of a queen-sized bed piled up to the window. When I go to bed I dream I'm being lifted by a growing, flying mountain of cardboard that keeps rising, swallowing me into *its* layers, but *its* layers never stop, so I just kept sinking.



When I wake I'm in the forest, scratching, clawing at the ground, digging myself into the earth and the dirt, bones and blood leaking into the soil, like the smatterings of blood I left on a couple of the boxes that cut my finger in the endless process of moving and re-moving them.

THOUGHTS FOR A NEW BEGINNING

I remember (again) Etchells' comment - "the work is a document of the processes leading to it, a body that bares traces of its past" (Etchells 1999 p.75), think of John Cage, and think *it*'d be great to write the score¹² – or at least the basic version of *it* – and send *it* out into the world, to be picked up, added to and expanded, coloured, flavoured and textured by other dancers, other bodies, other spaces... bits of 'de-territorialised' Cage and Etchells, with a bit of me and Melbourne dancers thrown in ...I like the thought of *history of a particular it - the scored improvisation project* being continually elaborated, obscured by *its* self, *its* past and *its* development.

This indeterminacy is this *particular its* nature.

12. The score, or the timetabling of the score was written. A remembering of the event – on which the current story is based – was published in *proximity* magazine, where the offer of taking the score was made. A couple of weeks later I received an email from a contact improviser in Switzerland (whose name I have lost and forgotten) who did pick up the score and use *it*. I heard nothing more about *it*.



And this writing is a remembering ghosted with imaginings that still somehow seems a part of *it*. Not so much of what was – that's already lost, buried beneath a mountain of cardboard along with everything I most needed and wanted to say. But a (small) part of what's now becoming - like the other performers in the other spaces, *it* sometimes re-appears in different clothes, in a different time and space, sometimes seeming to pick up where *it* left off, sometimes seeming to reference back, and sometimes seeming to reference back and move forward at once. That's because the different performers speaking different voices in the different spaces, sometimes referencing back and sometimes beginning again was part of what made the event. The other part of what made the event is what we didn't see, what wasn't and didn't happen. So *it* lingers, searching for a way to allow imaginings of what might have been to become part of what *it's* now becoming.

History

part two

LANEWAYS OR
DANCE MINIATURE

THOUGHTS FOR A NEW BEGINNING

Between the *box and laneways* events, my solo practice continues quietly – being informed, overturned and disturbed through a series of dialogues with a diverse range of Melbourne based dance artists working with improvisation. The primary forums these dialogues take place through are *the little con* and *Movement Research Melbourne (MRM)*. Within these dialogues, my primary focus is on exploring the micro-processes of attention involved in dance and performance, and I find myself viewing these dialogues not just as an important part of my practice, but as the ground from which ‘my work’ emerges.

In some obscure way, as a result of these dialogues, the thought of embracing the world of work surrounding ‘the work’ leads to the converse thought: that ‘the work’ should also become part of, and in some way respond to the world *it’s* surrounded by.

Alongside this I’m beginning to view the work as an ongoing experiment; and writing about the work as part of the practice. This instantly leads to the thought that if the work is an experiment, then the writing about *it* should also be an experiment, a creative documentation that does what *it* can to bring more into the frame of the work.

LANEWAYS OR DANCE MINIATURE

Among other things, the laneways component of *history* attempts to do something to reclaim the margins, to give voice to the small and unofficial.

It takes on the pseudonym of *dance miniature*.

Its blurb written as a pisstake in response, appropriating the overblown marketing language of the equally stupidly named, highly publicized and well funded Dance Massive.

The writing that follows – an experimental writing that creatively documents the experiment of the event - was edited together from texts written by some of the performers involved in the event: Shaun McLeod, Dianne Reid, Fiona Bryant, Peter Fraser, Tony Osborne, Hellen Skye, Grace Walpole, Ann-maree Ellis and Joey Lehrer. The ‘I’ variously moves and shifts between being all these people whose words, sentences and responses ‘I’ shamelessly appropriated and twisted into a semi-fictional narrative they were really involved in.

Twilight and toes tinkle over the streets of Fitzroy. A heightening, or a loss of the mundane? Taking in the breeze through my pores, noticing the duet between the wind and the low railing woosh of the Nicholson Street tram streaking metal and light, I’m surrounded by non-stop performance fragments, one giving way to another. Passing through the thin membrane of audience I’m swallowed by the lane.

Riding my bike round and round the streets in search of performance spaces, thinking about the logistics of walking and moving audiences and performers, coordinating times and destinations, looking at front yards, door knocking: 'Hello, I'm your slightly dyslexic friendly neighbourhood experimental artist, and I was wondering if we could dance in your front yard?' I think about the small and unofficial, the forgotten and downtrodden, the edges of things, and the margins. A nod goes out to Trisha Brown's 1971 *roof piece*, in New York, where twelve dancers on roofs in a ten block area copied an initial dancers improvised gestures (Brown 2002 p.312). Another thought goes to Butoh¹³ and Bodyweather practitioners, doing illegal outdoor performances (in postwar Japan after Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno's infamous 1959 performance, where their buggering of a live chicken led to their being banned [Snow 2002 p.281]). But what I think of most is a tradition, or a culture that local dance artist Alice Cummins says "has no name, remains nomadic for its own survival," and that "leans back into a past and forward into a future. The times it finds itself amongst almost irrelevant" (Cummins 2008 p.67).

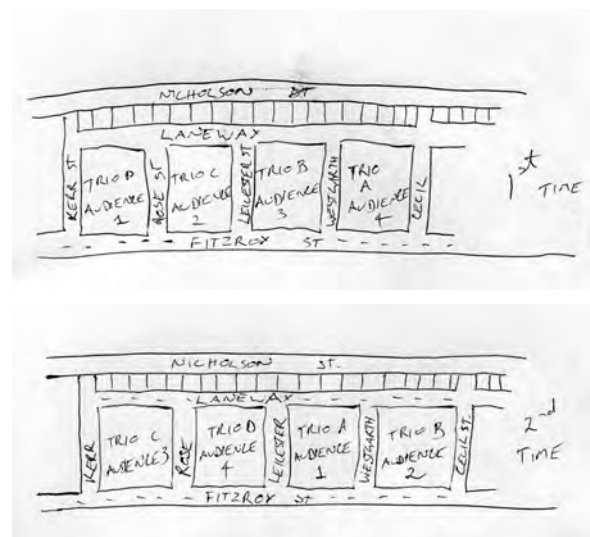
Passersby and audience, audience and performers - are we the same group?

Four blocks and four groups of audience with four trios (A,B,C and D) of performers. One trio of performers¹⁴ and one group of audience for each block; and two different blocks for each trio of performers and each group of audience. Each audience group begins with one trio of performers, then changes to a different trio of performers, as both audience and performers change to different blocks. And it's all happening at once.

Four blocks, four trios, four audience tours.

Each audience does two tours with two different trios on two different blocks. Each trio does two different blocks with two different audiences.

Each blocks tour culminates in a laneway that spans all four blocks, before changing, and beginning again.



13. Butoh exists, says dance scholar Sondra Horton Fraleigh, "in the cultural cracks" (Fraleigh 1999 p.2). So might I add, does the dance and art I'm most interested in.

14. Tony Osborne, Fiona Bryant, Peter Fraser, Jane McKernan, Dominique Miller, Hellen Skye, Jonathan Sinatra, Shaun McLeod, Dianne Reid, Ann-maree Ellis and Joseph Lehrer (a duet), Grace Walpole and Paul Romano.

I wonder how many elided, forgotten, overlooked and unofficial histories ghost our own – and where they are, the fallen, small dreamers with little lives that vanished without a trace? Does something of their trail linger, as Alice says, in the air with “the mutterings of madmen and geniuses and artists of all kinds” (ibid). I can’t help but think these small and unofficial histories, the ones outside discourse, are more real and more permanent in a way than the ones we recount; and that they’re the ones we should be most interested in, if not in remembering, then inventing.

So in some way the question, ‘what is a work, where does *it* begin and where does *it* end,’ echoes another: how many lives, and how many pasts of how many (forgotten) others intersect with our own?

In his novel, *The Great World*, Australian writer David Malouf, writes:

Even the least event had lines, all tangled, going back into the past, and beyond that into the unknown past, and other lines leading out, also tangled, into the future. Every moment was dense with causes, possibilities, consequences; too many, even in the simplest case, to grasp. Every moment was dense too with lives, all crossing and interconnecting or

Audience miss half the event, performers miss another half; half the event or more was what wasn’t and didn’t happen, so we finished with an imaginary finale – that amidst the informality of the evening, the open mingling of audience and performers, and the confusion of explaining the workings of the score, I forgot to implement. *It’s improvised* we always say. We don’t just make *it* up as we go along, but also forget our carefully well-laid plans. The part we didn’t miss, beginning and ending at Cecil St. where the pretend finale that didn’t happen saw cushions lay out either side of two intersecting pathways down the centre of the studio – the four trios dancing in separate corners with audience seated along the crossroads between them.

How amazing *it* would have been if the cushions were boxes. Remember the boxes?

As the box event is raging in the up and downstairs spaces at Dancehouse, other box events are happening in all the Melbourne dance venues and this is synchronized with Sydney events moving between the Drill Hall, Sydney Dance Company studios and the Opera House. There’s also events happening in Berlin, Switzerland and the New Dance school in Amsterdam. Between all the box events in all the cities people have offered up their front yards and as audience members move between one location and another, they walk past houses with performers taking audiences on neighbourhood

exerting pressure on one another,
and not just human lives either;
the narrowest patch of earth ...was
crowded with little centres of activity,
visible or invisible, that made up a
web so intricate that your mind, if you
went into it, was immediately stuck –
fierce cannibalistic occasions without
number, each one of which could
deafen you if you had ears to hear
what was going on there. And beyond
that were what you could not even
call lives or existences: they were
mere processes – the slow burning
of gases for example in the veins of
leaves – that were invisibly and forever
changing the state of things; heat,
sunlight, electric charges to which
everything alive enough responded
and held itself erect, hairs and fibres
that were very nearly invisible but
subtly vibrating, nerve ends touched
and stroked. This was how he saw
things unless he deliberately held
back and shut himself off
(Malouf 1991 p.296).

tours. The buses, trains and trams are also full of
dancers duetting in the aisles and for a day the
whole world knows the universe is dancing.

Andrew Morrish¹⁵ is performing for a boeing
full of people between the Amsterdam and
Melbourne events - playing at such an intensity
he starts to stutter and fall into strange tangents,
causing the plane to veer off course, which like
the stuttering, tangents, falling off and tripping
over become more material to generate more
play; and as this is happening the play starts
folding in on itself, and he starts folding the
play back in, and the play and him are folding,
layering and multiplying, turning dough into
noodles, stretching the atmosphere of the space
and shifting the direction of the plane in about a
million different directions, sometimes all
at once.

Disembarking he leads his audience along the
laneway to Paul, who tells them to follow him
and ignore the Ann-maree chanters led by a
crazed floral mesdame from the '70s - who's
curling up in the dog's bed, galavanting in the
geraniums and balancing a cumquat in her
eyeball. They pass an old chap stumbling around
the bins out the back of a car park, he seems
pretty harmless, singing to himself, but he's
had a skinful and could be a pissing, growling,

15. This description/review was written after watching
Andrew perform an improvisation at the Victorian College
of the Arts in 2008

Once I've begun with a connection, I can't help but find myself thinking, or feeling, like John Cage, that "each and every thing in all of time and space is related to each and every other thing in all of time and space" (Cage in Bottoms 2007 p.135). This seems to me to speak very simply of a complexity that always seems to lie just beneath the surface of things, a complexity that is always, unavoidably present, even within simplicity. This complexity, I can't help but feel, is too often pushed out into the margins, dismissed as a tangent, forgotten or overlooked.

So wondering how to give some sort of voice to small time dreamers and things that have disappeared, I cycle back past Cecil St. studio - thinking of its largely unofficial history:¹⁶

CECIL ST. STUDIO

Established in 1996 by Martin Hughes and Fiona Cook,¹⁷ Cecil St. Studio was set up primarily as a work space, with evenings of performance improvisation to support improvisation and body work practices that were in their infancy and on the margins in

drunken madman. They were glad to get the gate closed at Rose St. last night.

A mad, meandering homeless group continue moving randomly between house fronts - how many cowering Fitzroy residents peeked nervously between the blinds, hovering by the phone, unable to differentiate between art intervention and home invasion?

As we're about to begin, I remember we should send trio D and their audience, who have the furthest to travel, off first. I yell out just in time, reminding everyone that it's improvised, following up with an old gag - none of the performers know what they're doing. The smooth efficiency of our preparations (not), the informality, the anticipation and implication of the audience means the mundane and the performative are already well and truly mixed.

In trio B, the second last to leave the studio, Peter's first, he enters rattling the letterbox, the first of many textures in a very zen yard. He quickly finds his way onto the stones, standing against the wall, open - a series of expressions giving way, falling into each other quickly and naturally: smiling, slightly anxious, aggressive, uncertain. The stones churn, not quite crunching

16. Cecil St. never had any funding for its running and survived on the efforts of Martin and Fiona as well as the various groups and audiences who used it.

17. Personal communication, but for an interview, see 'cecil street studio: an interview,' by Josef Lehrer in *proximity* vol. 10, edition 3, p.4 - 10 December 2007).

Australia at that time. Martin Hughes, one of Australia's first contact improvisers, was joined by Wendy Smith, then Australia's only Skinner Releasing technique teacher, Llewelyn Wishart, one of Australia's first BMC practitioners, and Janice Florence, an artist in a wheelchair. Out of little more than a simple desire to work, the four of them gave birth to *State of Flux* – a contact improvisation ensemble that over the next decade played a fundamental role in creating a CI community in Melbourne and Australia through their teaching and performing.¹⁸

Cecil St. eventually came to be known as the 'home of Melbourne's improvisation community.'¹⁹ It remains as a working, community based studio with regular evenings of performance improvisation, and it remains on the margins. *Conundrum*, a now defunct monthly evening of shamelessly amateur²⁰ performance improvisation ran for a decade and provided a forum for a huge number of dance artists to perform, and in some way develop their practices.

beneath his feet and his weight falls into the wall as his body begins shaking, trembling lightly all over, head to toe, one foot hovering slightly away from the ground. He makes his way to the side wall, leaning forward over the rubbish bins, one leg comes off the ground and I find myself enchanted by the map of the world on the sole of his shoe. Burying himself behind the bins finishes the last and begins the next thing, quietly punctuating the end of melancholy and beginning of play. By the time he crosses the veranda to lift the doormat we're moving the audience on to our next destination. A street party unlike any other and instant rapport with 'neighbours' I've never met in a street I've never lived - everything I need to know inscribed upon my sweating palm. I get on my horse, close the gate of reality and step into a five minute dance I will call 'the departure.' So lovely this particular tenant provided me with superb hip-swaying music and just a smatter of light with which I might entice my growing farewell party. Increasingly lulled by what is fast becoming a humorous illustration of this slightly familiar soundtrack, I am glad to be arrested by the scream of my lover, who passing by her window is alarmed by my 'departure.'

18. See *proximity*, vol.8 edition 3, Dec 2005 p.4 – 11 – *proximity*, a magazine dedicated largely to contact improvisation was set up by David Corbet, who also became a member of *state of flux*.

19. *The little con* website/common knowledge (www.thelittlecon.net.au)

20. I use the term 'amateur' endearingly and loosely. Many of the artists involved in both *conundrum* and *the little con* were or are in fact 'professionals' – (if one can be a professional improviser).

THE LITTLE CON

The little con, was initiated in October 2005, six months before *Conundrum* finished.²¹ And while *the little con* continues to have a much more specific dance focus than *Conundrum* had (*Conundrum* had two regular groups, one of which was *state of flux*, the other of which was an improvisation theatre group, *five square metres*, whereas all of *the little con* regulars are dancers), *it* similarly continues to provide a forum for dance improvisation and to provide practitioners with performance opportunities. *The little con* focuses primarily on the raw, live performance experience. Lighting, sound, set and the elements that generally frame dance, theatre and performance are minimal or non-existent. What remains, and is subsequently foregrounded, is the state of the live performer and the audience-performer relationship. In an essay, also published in *proximity*, Shaun McLeod said that a *Conundrum* audience came to witness, among other things, “a grappling with the infinity of possibilities as mediated by the skills, temperament, mood, and physicality of this performer” (McLeod 2004 p.13). The witnessing of this grappling creates a tensile relationship, he says,

She, always practically inclined, suggests more light may help, something I initially dart but eventually warm to, aware the bush I have found is no place for one destined for great adventure. I bend over backwards, knowing only too well no offering will fill this woman’s heart, and conclude with my eyes fixed upon the gaze of a young boy - shushing his father into silence - whose future I am certain depends upon this very moment.

In trio C, Jane missed the pre-event walking tour,²² so we send her in first - prancing, flicking limbs, she’s light-fast-sharp-clear and relaxed all at once. She darts out and back into view.

In the 2 short minutes before I have to leave I see a danced articulation of a quirky abstract sense of humour with an exquisite receptivity to site. I didn’t want to leave, but someone came home. She just walked through looking mildly apologetic, returning home to what was a drive, but is now a theatre. Her housemates all popped their heads out to see the audience and she’s not sure what to do with the invisible apple offered her as she disappears back behind her front door.

A large found bunch of twigs, chatter of drunken boys and park parrots - security light interrupting the night air. Red tracksuit pants nimbly

21. I know this because I initiated *the little con*.

22. And Jane really did miss the pre-event walking tour and really did perform first; but most of the writings are combined fragments from performers who didn’t see one another during the course of the event.

where the audience is “complicit in a kind of undressing... in which the choreographic process is rendered almost completely naked” (McLeod 2004 p.13).

The little con likewise focuses on this, the live performance experience at its simplest – the performer stripped naked, working in front of the audience.

In the same article, speaking about the ‘grass-roots’ nature of Cecil St., Shaun also noted the “sheltered poverty” in which most practitioners sustain their practices. I’d briefly like to talk about this “sheltered poverty,” which I think of as the folly of art, through a brief history of *the little con*.

I founded *the little con* in October 2005, after making the trio, *the long little little little long way (TLW)* in August of that year. *TLW* combined and redistributed the movement vocabulary from my previous two solo works – *Birdtalk* (2004) and *the smallest score* (February 2005) – between the bodies of three dancers. *It* was an exercise in choreographic structure, and marked a limit: *it* was as far as I could go into organizing work, visually and structurally, (which is to

frolicking amongst the roller-door, bricks and sand - water without a cause. A gibbering duet meeting briefly on a harmonic wave; skipping without the skipping rope, the yippy-yappy concrete-lot back-alley dance - a taxi parked, the driver watching from 20 centrimetres away throughout as the furious exploration of exotic spaces continues beneath a deep-set arch.

Which thread to follow?

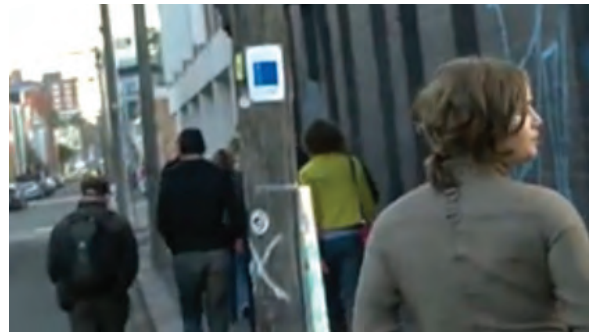
A solitary figure in the distance under a single sinister streetlight - a bottle top along galvanized iron running into a dead end. Confrontation. Fear and memories in a dark car park. Grace dances under the security beam shedding false moonlight on her lying rolling body. The stars come out. Diminishing light and a garden of shadows. Quietness and mystery of the night.

It’s all happening at once - navigating the pathways into the concluding trios in the long alley-way context, knowing someone out in the road was probably reading us all in a strange collective synchronicity before the procession of laneways led back to the studio for the imaginary finale.²³

23. The imaginary finale that wasn’t really did happen, remember: “Imagination creates reality.” More than half the event was what we missed, what we dreamed... “the world we desire is more real than the world we passively accept” (Frye in Phillips 1998 p.xviii).

say recognizably, codifiably), to force an audiences attention without losing what I feel of as *its* 'essence.' To go further, I had to re-discover, re-connect with and reinvigorate the roots of my dance practice. Stripped of tricks, recognizable choreographic steps and structures, or dancerly shapes, something else begins to emerge: the moment to moment, micro-moment to micro-moment decision making processes - the palpable nature of attention and listening; the state of the performer, and through the live body a powerful means of glimpsing something of our human complexity. *History* coupled an abstract, deeply somatic way of working with a poetics to invite you as close, as deep and as far as possible into a strange, deeply felt world of sensation.

In a way, *history*, and all the work I've made since *TLW*, has – sometimes literally, and sometimes more obscurely – had *its* genesis, and often also significant parts of *its* subsequent development at *the little con*. The regular artists involved in *the little con* are Shaun McLeod, Dianne Reid, Grace Walpole, Anne-maree Ellis and myself. Joey Lehrer, the current editor of *proximity*, was also involved until 2010. *The little con* survives and at times thrives because of the different energies and intentions the regular artists bring to the event, and the events



around the event. In 2008, I pushed for the idea of 'special events' or active curations that allowed each of the regular artists the opportunity to effectively 'choreograph' an evening of improvisation.

It was at the little con that both the *boxes* and the *laneways* component of *history* first took place. Shaun Mcleod pushed for a website – which Joey built and Grace designed. Ann-maree has been in charge of building an electronic database and sending emails. And Dianne Reid has video documented most performances and now maintains the website.

All of this happens, unpaid of course, in our 'spare time.'

So when I ask how many elided, forgotten, overlooked and unofficial histories ghost our own, in some way I'm trying to acknowledge the many dancers and artists on the ground. Those who have toiled for too long in run down halls, spacious – or cramped - living rooms or parks with little or no recognition; and I'm trying to acknowledge the wildfires of practice and experience many of these artists have set – wildfires that make situating and tracing a history of

improvisation outside the official, and so also this writing, an absurdity.²⁴

“History,” says dance scholar Susan Foster, “keeps track almost exclusively of the known,” focusing its attention on actions that leave a “permanent residue documenting their effects” (Foster 2003 p.4).

And particularly of course, on traces that can be translated into written discourse.

However improvisation, according to Foster, “is that which eludes history” (Foster 2003 p.4), which it does, in part, to keep its freedom, to remain, as Alice said, “nomadic for its own survival” (Cummins 2008 p.67).

...wanted to start with shhh... ..listen...

...then have pages of space, an eternity of white ...was frightened of straining to hear the quiet, and only hearing the straining, not the space between worlds needing silence to say themselves...

beneath the breeze carrying silence, spreading its blanket and covering the sounds of everything we know to reveal layers and layers of silence heaped one upon the other, silently conversing... a coating so dense one can hear oneself listening, can hear, feel words and worlds re-inventing themselves; can hear everything in dialogue - and listening - with everything else... can even hear the listenings listening to themselves, and silent dialogues traveling beneath clouds of silence peeling itself apart, slowly, layer by layer, listening to dialogues intersecting with silences, to silent dialogues and other silences beneath even those turning dialogues into listenings...

I want: to hear the sounds of thought slipping between layers of silence.

24. In 2004 at *precipice*, an improvisation festival at what was ‘the choreographic centre,’ then artistic director, Mark Gordon attempted to get a history of Australian improvisation from Peter Trotman, an improviser with twenty-five years experience. While he traced some developments he’d been involved in, he continually noted what he called ‘wildfires’ that escaped any kind of mapping, and he noted how the wildfires seemed to be more prevalent than any straight forward lineage or history.

History part three

THREE EVENTS –
BOXES, LANEWAYS, AND
A SOLO IN FOUR PARTS

INTENSITY AND INVESTMENT

Andrew Quick talks about watching two Forced Entertainment performers trying to outcry one another until one wins and continues on, transformed by the game. He describes *it* as a “situation that resonates with raw emotional power,” saying: “I witness this helpless and inexplicable state of sorrow unburdened by explanation and I’m forced to deal only with the immediacy and materiality of its happening” (Quick 2004 p.152).

Performance needs this. What Min Tanaka calls the temperature changing. Forget the tricks, clever structuring or technical pyrotechnics. Strip everything else away - and this, transformation, *its* raw power is what performance - with *its* age old ties to the shamanic traditions²⁵ - strains towards: the immediacy and materiality of an intensity that will go to the end of the flames. And then some. Witnessing this kind of intensity in performance forces me to thought of a different order, moving toward what Etchells might describe as “beyond rhetoric into events” (Etchells in Helmer 2004 p.53).

As a performer, one can’t generate this intensity without investment. And, as Etchells says, “Investment is the bottom line

SOLO

The solo component of *history* contained the heart of the movement research and was performed in four different movement sections. Here I trace the pre *history* of these four sections beginning with section four.

SECTION FOUR

At a showing of *crevice*, a work by Melbourne-London based dance artist Simon Ellis, I was led inside a structure, a small space around three metres square. The tiny space engulfed by the enormous studio, faintly lit by the exit signs from the greater space - a barely perceptible glow outlining the other audience members. As I watched, or got ready to watch *crevice*, *it* struck me that in my own work, one of the things I was most interested in was creating an environment where ‘listening’ and paying attention became palpable, or audible in a way. As we waited for the performance, I had an overwhelming desire to dance and breathe in the darkness, to move between, with the audience, to have them move with me ...to try and breathe something of each other’s presence through the pores of our skin. During the showing I couldn’t stop thinking about a dance you could breathe... a dance of breath and sound, of feeling the space, feeling my way into the space was beginning to be born.

25. For a discussion of performances relationship to shamanic traditions see Schechner (1993) p. 262, Schechner calls experimental theatre practitioners ‘parashaman.’

– without it nothing matters” (Etchells 1999 p.48). Investment and intensity go together. When a performer’s invested, Etchells says something “real and therefore risked” happens, “something seems to slip across from the private world to the public one – and the performers are ‘left open’ or ‘left exposed’” (Etchells 1999 p.48). And intensity, says philosopher of affect Brian Massumi, is “associated with non-linear processes: resonation and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future. It is a state of suspense ... a hole in time, as we conceive of it and narrativize it” (Massumi 2002 p. 26).

In this ‘real,’ risked and exposed intensity of the live performer, something seems to happen. *It’s* as though for a moment, in a moment suspended by the performers’ intensity, I glimpse something of our utterly incomprehensible human complexity. When I see this in performance - and Etchells is right when he says “it’s all too rare” (Etchells 1999 p.49) – I too am suspended in a “hole in time,” along with the performer. Without doubt that this is as ‘real’ as it gets; I’m reduced to silence - as I was when I saw Peter Fraser’s Tarkovsky’s Horse. He advanced toward me from the back of the space, repeatedly laughing and falling to the floor. As he slowly got closer,

Alongside this, I was spending more time dancing outside in the landscape, making this a regular part of my practice, picking up and developing imagery from nature – skin like bark, limbs like branches, breath like wind. I started collecting twigs, leaves, bark and stones, wondering how to bring something of the landscapes and terrains I was encountering in to the work. I read – well, looked at the pictures more than read - Andreas Franzke’s book on Spanish (abstract expressionist) painter Antoni Tapies at the same time I was reading Goat Island’s *small acts of repair*. The simple, beautiful etchings and textures in some of Tapies’ work almost reminded me of my encounters with some of the landscapes I was dancing in. In *small acts of repair*, I read the line “Artifice gives us another way of looking, another way of connecting to and working with both the fake and the real” (Jeffrey in Goulish +Bottoms 2007 p.46). In response to Tapies’ work and Goat Island’s thoughts about artifice, I threw away the twigs I’d been collecting and peeled away the outer surfaces of cardboard on the boxes – and began to see strange shapes in the cardboard etchings.

SECTION THREE

A year into developing *history*, the delirious play and experimentation from *the little con* and *MRM* dialogues gave way to actively constructing and structuring the solo component of the work. I spent most of the year searching for structures -

his falling got harder. Louder. More brutal. The laughter became an inhuman scream. Everything, every cell in him played *it* to the death – to the end of the fire. And then some.

The performance I love most always leaves me with a taste of silence - something of which I can't speak and can't touch. Obscure though *it* might sound, I try to listen to the mystery of silence good performance leaves me with. Through *its* enfleshed visceral presentness, live performance can reveal the unknowable and mysterious without speaking *it*. That's why I watch *it*. And that's why I make *it*.



listening, following, detouring into choreography to clarify what *it* was and wasn't. But *it* was also fear that drove me to start choreographing – of not being able to listen to and/or through so much information, so much time, so much *history*. Recognizing the fear I threw away the choreography that *history* wasn't, and almost instantly, 'crone,' the third section revealed itself. Almost immediately, and almost from nowhere another two sections appeared, but remained tentative.

SECTION ONE

As the first section of work is beginning to take form I go to watch Deborah Hay's *If I sing to you*, which among other things – everything is always among other things - was like witnessing something I'd been approaching in my own practice from a very different perspective.

The dancers seemed to be discovering and negotiating their discovery of the present, attending intensely, as though they were discovering being alive for the first time and trying to figure out what to do with the information, while being completely present and completely attuned to one another. Almost otherworldly in their heightened ordinariness, *it* was like I could see them sensing, their internal processes becoming tangible, transparent.

Alongside this I'd been learning from one of my most influential teachers – my osteopath, Bruce Duncan. He treats me with cranio-sacral work, following the flow of cerebro-spinal and

WORK

Dreaming, in the Australian Aboriginal sense of the word, where the earth both creates and is created by dreams, can be another way of thinking about a vision - or the absence of one. In *small acts of repair*, Bryan Saner from Goat Island says the company were trying to follow a vision “that no one sees or has ever had” (Saner 2007 p.169). Following, or even having a vision, or a dream can begin, simply by working.

If you're working towards understanding, and if through working, making, you're learning how and what you're making - how to make and how to learn from what you're making - and how to make it possible to continue - making, learning, understanding - elaborating a work and a language that is continuing to layer, reveal and understand itself; and if you're able to keep working to keep the work ahead of your own dawning understandings of *it* - then a life's work will have begun, again.

That's an enormous ongoing process.

It's akin to what Cixous calls becoming intelligent of one's “non-intelligence,” which she says, “would be the greatest effort of life” (Cixous 1990, p.58); *it's* also akin to Bergsonian intuition.

other fluids. While the central nervous system is generally thought to be the home of cerebro-spinal fluid, *its* affects can be felt and followed all over everywhere in every cell.²⁶

While I find *it* impossible to separate or accord any more significance to one rather than another of the many different movement educations I've experienced, this one stood out a little during my candidature, so I'm going to take a brief detour through a purely personal, experiential *history* of discovering the fluids.

Fluid flow is an incredibly subtle movement that can be attuned to. What I've found is that following the flow of Cerebro-spinal fluid (CFS) from head to tail leads to an awareness of the pulsing of the body's membranes, and the ways in which the fluid systems of the body feed in and out of each other - the flow of blood, the movement of thought. *It's* drawn my attention to the patterning of movement within and through the body: even when a movement seems simple, straight or direct, following the flow of fluid increases awareness of the micro pathways and undulations *it* often passes through, particularly if, like me, one isn't too well aligned. The energy of the swirling patterning of movement also moves and travels just beyond the body - the space around the body, kind of like an oversized astronaut suit, tangibly affects and is affected by the body's movement when you focus on

26. Bruce Duncan - personal communication

In no way devoid or lacking of intelligence, what intuition does, says theatre scholar Steve Bottoms (paraphrasing Bergson), is allow “intelligence and instinct to inform each other creatively” (Bottoms 2007 p.56). To access and increase this ‘intelligence of non-intelligence,’ or this intuition, is a practice. *It’s* not a vision or a dream that comes from any kind of special clarity, but one that comes from work. Bryan Saner from Goat Island, speaking about the company following a dream, or a vision, says:

We attain clarity for a brief instant and then lose it again for long hours and days and weeks before it returns to give us the inspiration to keep working. But these points of inspiration are not what keep us going. That takes vigilance. We repeat with our bodies the actions over and over again: back out to the streets, back into the office, back onto the stage, back over to rehearsal, back to work. Often the revelations happen when we have forgotten the vision altogether. All we remember is that we have work to do. The work precedes the vision; creates the vision. The most profound guideline for our work is simply to follow what is in front of us. And as simple as that sounds, it is a humbling experience for me to realize that I

following the remarkable subtleties of the fluids. But there’s more. Cranio-sacral fluid flow can also be thought of as being between mind and body (Green in Upledger 1983 p.xii). My feeling, and *it* is just a feeling, a physiological one – that I think of (or feel) as a fact of the body – is that attention is a movement, that moves, and is moved, physiologically, via the cerebro-spinal fluids. Dance artist Trevor Patrick said, “any performance is affected by the largely invisible play of energy through the mind and body.” Speaking in relation to Eastern traditions, he says this energy “has variously been referred to as prana – life force, chi – mindfulness, and many other terms” (Patrick 1998 p.31).

Following fluid flow is a fantastically concrete physiological tool for attuning to the ‘invisible play of energy through the mind and body’ - or sidestepping the not so great Cartesian split and following Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen - through



often cannot see what is in front of me until long after it has passed (Saner 2007 p.169).

In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Cixous concludes by saying simply, “We must work. The earth of writing. To the point of becoming the earth” (Cixous 1993, p.156). The earth of work. And as the earth in the Australian Aboriginal dreaming is both created by and creates dreams, so does work. And the earth of the work that dreams is kept alive by tears.



the bodymind.

Section one of the solo continues to develop in response to Deborah Hay’s *if I sing to you*, and in response to my osteopath, Bruce Duncan, *it* becomes smaller, finer, more subtle and more detailed.

As I’m working towards a showing, Michaela comes in for a dance and a chat. During the run I discover the glue for the first section. The second section flops, and section four, the breathings, continues evolving.

Two days later Peter comes in and we go through *it* again: a dance and a chat followed by a run. Meanwhile the *mad worlds*²⁷ text is being edited together, and though still veering wildly, section two is getting closer; the first section’s solidified, the third and fourth developing and looking after themselves, but Peter confirms my suspicion, that at the end of the fourth section I can go to the end of the fire. Get burned. And continue on. Pure intensity becomes the score.

THREE EVENTS - SOLO, BOXES AND LANEWAYS

As the solo’s developing, I’m also organising timetables and dealing with logistics to recreate *the box event* and *laneways dancing tour* as a way of leading audiences into the solo work –

27. See appendix D for a copy of the *mad worlds* performance text

in the laneway.

So after Peter leaves from the run through, I ride out to Simmo's place to pick up his ute, then go home to sneak in some emailing, and make amendments to the timetable for the *box event* where performers have fallen sick, or just pulled out. When I finish, I move the 'tongue and groove chipboard' flooring - that was cheaper to buy than tarquette was to hire - out from under a futon pretending to be a couch I can't afford and move *it* onto the ute to go and set up the solo work. As I'm moving the flooring - shoulder blades down the back, ribs circling back and front - I think about amending the program notes to read 'choreography, conception, direction, dramaturgy, administration, production, set design and construction, lighting design, text, performance and probably a few other things



THOUGHTS FOR A NEW BEGINNING - OR THE TRUTH IS THE SUBTILES ARE A LIE

A simplification for the convenience of the narrative, for making *it* fit and pretending the journey was reasonable, clear, clean and straightforward. *It* wasn't. Not only have I made things up, but I've changed the chronologies of what 'really happened.' Most of what I've included under the headings 'thoughts for a new beginning,' is for the benefit of the story. The thoughts and dialogues under these headings, for the most part were disturbing me on an ongoing basis, or came to me at some unidentifiable point in time, or had been brewing since the beginning, or I only became aware of them much later, in hindsight. And all these have been labelled, too neatly, too simply, and too linearly, as 'thoughts for a new beginning.'



I've forgotten by Paul Romano with unpaid help from friends and colleagues.' But before I get anywhere with that thought the phone rings, three times in quick succession, and I have to talk about council permits, pacifying neighbours, and writing a PhD on top of set building and preparing for the performance. When I finally get the floor onto the ute I grab a bite to eat as I drive to put up the set and think about the absurdity and impossibility of making art, especially small scale fringe art like this that is being seen by tiny, tiny audiences. Arriving in the laneway I'm greeted by some stencil art: 'art is dead.' I immediately frame *it* with some boxes.

This whole endeavour is maybe doing nothing more than playing a very small part to help keep a small fringe community alive. A small folly that grew to a grand scale and took over my life. There's so little necessary in *it*. But at the same time, what's necessary is the endless, laborious, complicated circular processes we have to go through to find what's necessary.

We race to get the set up in time for the performance, literally finish with about five minutes to spare and fly off to meet the audience. After leaving the box event, the audience follow a neighbourhood dancing tour of front yards, before travelling up an alleyway and zig-zagging over cobblestones and forgotten back corners - round the bend and into a world of make believe that can't help but believe. A cardboard castle of

I don't want to dwell on trying to clarify or unpick 'what really happened,' on explaining how it happened, or how I'm changing things. Instead I want to underline a simple determination to keep working, keep playing the game, and to making it work - no matter how much gaffer tape and bits of string are needed to hold it together. Very early on in 'Certain Fragments,' Etchells speaks about "a pragmatism and fluidity that comes from the making process in which an endless making-do is one's only hope" (Etchells 1999 p.23). As an improviser, a performer and maker, often holding it together by the skin of my arse, the question of what is or isn't 'real' – as I said in the prologue - isn't as important as the much simpler question of whether or not *it* works. Because in the world of performance, everything is amplified and hyper-real. To be invested, in the performance, the practice, and everything necessary to sustaining them both, *it* has to be.

So we find ourselves in a world which is knowingly uncertain if *it's* fake or pretend; a world that's more interested in work - the workings of work within work and in how to keep the work and the workings of work within work working (Peter Piper) - than in some elusive 'truth.'



dreams held together with gaffer tape and bits of string – a cardboard step, paper drapes and gardens, a battery powered CD player and a couple of torches for light.

...As I wait outside the performance space, the audience sit inside listening to the *mad worlds* text rattle on about the absurdities of a universal reality, of other realities, of dreams and delusions and the worlds we share, think we know, create and try to escape. And while outside continuing my preparation, sensitising, attuning to my body's subtle flows of movement, pushing the energy into, through big breath filled pathways, shaking things up, going into little preparatory dances, I think of Bryan Saner's 5 seconds:

5 seconds. There is a short pause that happens after we walk single file out of the dressing room and before we set foot

THINKING OR FEELING FOR A NEW (UNCODED) CODE

Language is code. Playing in language is talking worded code. And code can move. Thinking through feeling, playing to find and feel the movement of language and languages of movement moves moving codes making them move. Rhyme or reason aren't needed. Rambling-scrambling-spittering-spattering confusing the codes of 'normopathy' (Oury) to make mutating escaping disepileptixially lurching stumbling codes kills killing codification; stops the spread of codified code that codifies the imagination, defining dreams and desire, deciding and confining everything to/by the code - codified code: slowly kills.

More code, less freedom: less code, more freedom. Break the code, mismatch, confuse, de-code-unicode don't accept the code and pedal a small boat across wide open skies, following the moving, tactile, changing nature of feeling-thinking-traveling-through-every-cell; noticing, following and playing with it's movement – the moving imagination of thought feeling itself thinking, *its* felt sensations seeping through silent spaces between words and worlds.

onto the performance space. Preceding this there has been a 30-minute warm up and stretching. Preceding that there has been an hour or two of setting props. Preceding that was two years of making and rehearsing a performance work. Preceding that was a lifetime of maybe 30 years of dreaming and studying and thought and experimentation. Preceding that was the centuries of developing the performing arts as we know them. Preceding that are the millennia of human evolution. Sometimes I can see the whole scheme of events during this 5-second pause. I am stretched out and flattened and dematerialized and sent back and sent forward and rematerialized and comprehend some great and simple truth ... and step onto the stage and begin the performance (Saner in Goulsh and Bottoms 2007 p.167).

Stepping into the doorway, facing out into the night, my back to the audience, the side surface of an arm falling beside a box, its back surface into the space. My surfaces, the pores of my skin, a full body attention become acutely aware of travelling in two directions, of being in two worlds as my eyes gently, slowly roam the sky-scape, reaching past changing atmospheres and return, falling down the side of the building opposite the performance space, along the ground, and down through layers of sediment, into the earth. I turn, entering the space and begin

I heard the story of Ernesto from Matthew Goulish, who also wrote that late in his life, Marconi, the inventor of the telegraph believed that sound never disappeared, but continued, getting quieter and quieter (Goulish 2000 p.33). Movement, thought like, thought as movement, releases waves of slowly dissipating energy that travel, intersecting and connecting with other dissipating waves that are slowly changing, transforming in movement. Matthew heard the author of the story, Marguerite Duras, hear Ernesto; Ernesto, unable to read, read the book without knowing how: listened to and heard *it*.

I did too.

There are indecipherable codes that make perfect sense, languages that bend our ears in different directions at once, and sometimes the strangest foreign tongue makes more sense than our own.

The languages I love the most aren't the ones I readily understand, but the ones that force me to work, listen for their logics, that somehow allow a certain energy beneath the form to be glimpsed; ones that muddle and break rules and codes, not replacing one code with another to make a new code, but finding and working a muddled uncoded-code til *it* cracks, opens up, spits itself out in new directions, loses *its* voice, finds others and returns multiplied; the strange uncoded

- discovering myself, discovering the world.

... ..

The soft tissues inside my skull move, one hemisphere of my brain drops as far as it can and the surfaces of my face slide and distort then press out until my face shakes and my eyes travel in different directions. *It* keeps going until *it* plays itself out, and I begin the journey back; *it* takes a few moments of just stopping, waiting, kind of resting my way out of this strange dementia. I give *it* a moment or two before reminding myself this is a 'choreography,' rushing, accelerating in a controlled way, returning to the breathings, dancing through the residue and finding an ending, a way to leave you in the space.

I walk out of this tiny room, enclosed with its etched cardboard walls and wait at the edge of the greater space.

A few minutes later a wall slides away to reveal me standing at the edge of the performance space, facing the night. After a couple of deep breaths I walk through the sand, leaving a trail of footprints disappearing through the laneway and into the night.

Where does *it* begin and where does *it* end?

That night after the performance I stay in the laneway, my mattress having been atop a bed of boxes so long *it's* hard to separate – at home dreaming inside a cardboard castle of delusions - I'm woken by rain at 4:30 in the morning and

code starts generating more of itself, keeps mutating and making and mutating and making; then starts trying to lose-confuse, undo-escape and throw itself away - new code-old code, mutating-back-to-front-inside-out-up-down-uncoded-code trying not to be code but not just non-code either; flitting between and layering fragments of fragmented half thoughts revealed by flitting between *its* many building, accumulating, stolen logics and senses to caress the kiss of a touch creating a disastrous way of speaking in circles, and circles and circles circling within the circles, all saying the same thing, differently - my many ears searching, listening, listening to their listenings too and their failure to hear, to say what I hoped and intended, only to return and say *it* anew, failing again as other ears hear and seek the paradoxes, absurdities, ambiguities and impossible possibilities of multiple tongues speaking the speechless forms of speech.

A SORT OF THOUGHT - THINKING A THOUGHT OF FEELING:

Thought, thinking and feeling are inextricably entwined, creating and created by the languages and mediums expressing them. Endlessly moving between many overlapping, intertwining-colliding modes of feeling and thinking to sidestep language and create strange, bizarre polymorphic singing tongues that reinvent the familiar

start frantically ripping out the set, racing to save the floorboards, the etched boxes. I lose most of the paper and the set gets soaked, so I bring the boxes home and spread them out across the lawn like garden mulch, trying to hold the moisture of this unseasonable rain, and protect the earth from the harsh summer sun.

There's three performances left but no set to perform them in.

Devastated I stare at a dry bit of box - a thin fold with a line.

That night I borrow a big umbrella from the next door neighbour and go to the park that was the meeting point for the performance.

I tell the audience *history* has been replaced with *contingency* - 'because of the weather.'

It's a stupid performance, that like this writing, I explain as I go, telling the audience to imagine what was, but no longer is. Part story telling lament, part fiction, *it* falls into this story as I tell you about telling them about the walk past the cemetery to the laneway, the kingdom of cardboard, the wackiness of the *mad worlds* text and the opening stillness. I half-talk, half show them the first tiny section of work, ending by surprise with a solitary note of song.

I tell them about running a strip of gaffer tape, like some primary school kid's attempt at a costume down each arm, and leap into the rain to perform a ridiculously dysfunctional melodramatic opera of burbles and snorts, high-pitched whining and maniacal laughter cut through with spasms, cries, hiccups and other

leads “us into a ritual of the possible occurrence of learning” (Goulish and Bottoms 2007 p.54). And “the frightening possibility that learning only takes place in the presence of the unlearnable” (Goulish 2000 p.52); that ‘the unthinkable’ is the only thing worth thinking (Cixous), and the ‘unthought’ where thinking and learning begins.

But thinking the unthought depends on unthinking the already thought; thought is unthinking, unthinking thought: unlearn, unknow, undo - unfeel the already felt to find the not-yet, where ‘true thought thinks itself’ (Cixous 2005 p.71).

An unfunded, unsupported independent artist, I’ve always worked with what I could, which is what I had. Movement. It’s free. So take your time, trip over yourself and go into it. Inside. It’s micro moments. It’s de-tail-s. and late. er. it’s ron-gurr (grrrrr) geeky-gawky-awkwardness.

Do it in, as, through and with the movement, which is always plural, even when it’s singular. Follow the writing-trying to do it in-through-as-and-with-itself, only don’t expect it to stop or not try to get to where it’s not and do what it can’t; that’s what doing it in-through-as-and-with-itself’s about: becoming itself by getting beneath, going beyond and becoming something other:

sounds, finishing with a sad song in a faltering falsetto - gaffer taped wings hanging uselessly by my sides. I tell them about stripping the gaffer tape away and replacing it with a plain black top as darkness falls, about sliding the wall side on to lengthen and narrow the space - shadows against paper.

Head tilts back towards the sky

Time falls

Down

Into the earth, and a stillness that runs in search of dreams (I’ll never know)

(dying) ... a memory of forever yet to arrive

My body transforms – afterwards everyone will say this section of work looks nothing like me, but the truth is this section is the most me, stripped bare, old, gnarled and shaken.



a non-thing-thing, like play, discovery, change and transformation, everywhere, part of everything, yet nothing in particular, it exists without really being anything, but its very real, almost invisible activity tinkers away endlessly at the most microscopic level, rebuilding logic, language, code and sense, changing and reinventing the inextricably entwined processes of language and thought, changing the way we think, and the ways we think through with and in languages.

And an undone, mixed up mismatched language doesn't exist outside but because of the confusion of a deliriously intoxicating muddled broken tongue. This kind of thought might be called a materially constructed 'operative reason' that 'wrecks,' wreaks havoc, comes into being with and is inseparable from the language creating and created by it.

Translating this sort of thinking into instrumental reason would need a further bending of the language in a different direction that can accommodate complexity - confusion, chaos, multiplicity and becoming.

Different modes of thought think in, through, with, and utilize different languages in different ways. Changing your mode of thought and thinking isn't as simple as flicking a switch. If crossing thought modalities were that simple, the thought

THE SOMEWHAT INACCURATELY TITLED THOUGHTS FOR A NEW BEGINNING

At home the next day a disgruntled real estate agent appears for a house inspection - to make sure we're 'maintaining' the landlords property. She says we have to get rid of most of the boxes, so we burn them and watch the memories fade and turn to ash. As we're watching mesmerized by the movement of the coals, I remember reading about Allen Kaprow's *Trading Dirt*: He dug a bucketful of dirt, put it in his truck and waited to swap *it* with bucketfuls of other peoples dirt. His first trade was a bucket of dirt beneath where his zen meditation teacher sat – “heavy duty Buddhist dirt” with the “vibes of her ass” (Kelley 2004 p.212). The next trade swapped the “heavy duty Buddhist dirt” for a bucketful of Hyden, a dead dog, who was in turn swapped for some clay and pumpkin seeds. The swapping continued for three years until Kaprow moved house, and the last bucket he'd swapped for was returned to his garden. To facilitate all these trades he told stories, not as a remembering, but as the “expression of what one is doing as one is doing it” (Kelley 2004 p.214). A story, like this story, tries not so much to explain, as to embody – not so much to say, but more simply to do.

I decide to collect the ashes, then invite people who have seen the work to help scatter them, to plant a seed and watch *it* grow. And to make

and thinking processes would also be that simple. Different sensory thought modalities don't just have different logics, but different metaphysics. Moving between, or across thresholds of - tactile, visual, aural, worded and unworded – worlds with their different structures, understandings, spoken and unspoken agendas and histories and so on is what philosopher Felix Guattari would call changing 'universes of reference.'

Conceptual, or instrumental thinking uses language as a tool to talk through concepts; material or operative thinking uses the words, the material substance of language to speak. Moving from the unworded to the worded, I want to keep it material, operative. Writing, I want to dance.



sure this story diverges, as stories do, into other stories like “a doorway that leads to every other one” (Etchells 2004 p.285).

The few boxes that don't get burnt mould themselves to the earth and return to being veined, gnarled, twisted rippled homes to small creatures of the ground. Grass, leaves, bird-nests and weeds find their way in, taking root in their decay and a strange new tree grows from the earth of my dreams, disappearing, falling back to the earth. So I plant a verse and watch *it* sprout out of the ground and into a tree, then step, tentatively on paper leaves, wondering if there's a way of making not just the thought processes and work surrounding, but also the dreams and delusions, the things that didn't quite happen a part of the work.

A way of imprinting the earth on paper dreams.

...a couple of days after the showing I go to see my osteopath, Bruce Duncan and tell him about the breathings section; he spends quite a long time cradling my head, doing cranio-sacral work, and we feel wave after wave of release inside my skull ripple through the rest of my body.

THE INCREASINGLY INACCURATELY TITLED THOUGHTS FOR A NEW BEGINNING

Sometime later I get an email from Simon in response to *history*: ‘Seeing you, standing at the entrance, looking outwards towards the



night ... was beautiful. Simple. Complex in its possibilities of what had been (the speaking) and what was to come (moving).’

Simon’s email triggers an exchange about dance and framings. We share an interest in dance improvisation within specific choreographic and/or dramaturgical framings, though we differ quite a bit on how tight we like the framings to be and how much we like to allow them to define the dance. He tends, I think toward communicating the concepts as clearly as possible. I tend toward forgetting the conceptual concerns and focussing on the dancing. In spite of or because of that difference we value each other’s feedback.

CHOREOGRAPHIC FRAMINGS – A DRAMATURGY OF PROCESS

I think the best framings emerge, over time from the improvisations, and the more time - the more laborious, circular, endless, drifting and roaming - the more dancing - the better. The more layered movement logics and sensibilities become, the more complete and complex their reality becomes. And the more complete and complex their reality becomes, the more time you need to see the full depth of their nuance and complexity. The more time spent inhabiting the chaos before recognizable, graspable form, the more diverse and particularly defined the movement language becomes. And the more difficult the process of establishing and defining the framings is.

THIS LURCHING, DANCING BODY – MOVING TOWARD MY UNDERSTANDING OF IT

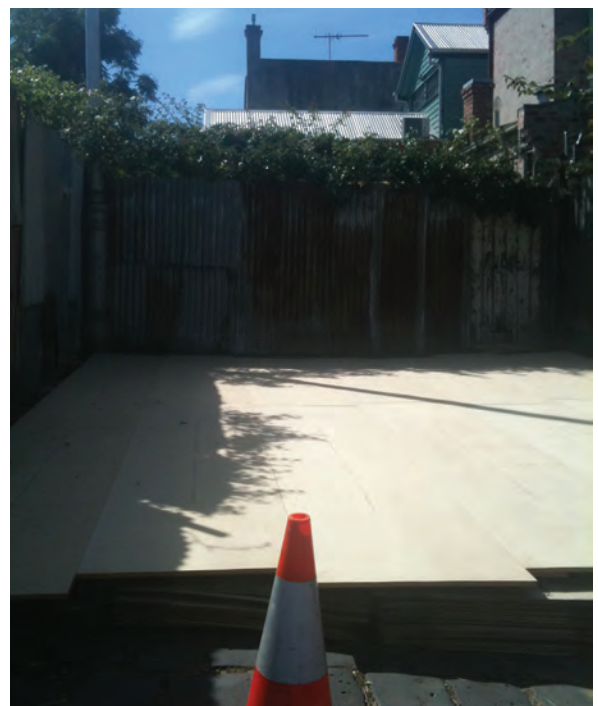
Cultural theorist Rosi Braidotti says:

The body is a sensor, an integrated site of information networks. It is also a messenger carrying thousands of communication systems: cardiovascular, respiratory, visual, acoustic, tactile, olfactory, hormonal, psychic, emotional, erotic. Co-ordinated by an inimitable circuit of information transmission, the body is a living recording system, capable of storing and then retrieving the necessary information and processing it at such speed that can react ‘instinctively.’ ...the body is not only multi-functional but also in some ways multilingual: it speaks through temperature, motion, speed, emotions, excitement that affect cardiac rhythm and the like (Braidotti 2002 p.230).

The search for new movement vocabularies and languages is, among other things, an ongoing exploration of the body’s self referential, “multi-functional,” “multilingual” connectivity and information transport systems. *It’s* a work my thinking, feeling, sensing, imagining, questioning and mysteriously concrete physiological and ephemeral bodies think we’ve barely begun.

Somewhere, I forget where, Billy Forsythe said, “choreography is not about dancing, it’s about organization” (Forsythe). I view framing the work as a choreography. *Its* task is to somehow make the multiple lines of movement inquiry into a meaningful experience: to turn the dance, without killing *it*, into an event – that places “you in a world” (Etchells 2004 p.287). Once the framings are established, for me the question is how to allow the improvisations within them to both maintain fidelity to those framings, and also remain as free as possible, or in some way even try to escape those framings. In a sense, I’m asking audiences to watch both an improvisation and a ‘choreography.’

The choreography is a framework - a frame in which to work. *It* both contains and allows the work(ing processes) to continue, by attempting to frame or highlight the incredibly fertile region



And as my bodies dance, duck, dive, play, feel, fall and tumble every which way, the I's who write, trying to describe what the I's dancing feel, or think, trying to explain and escape both at once, think the more bodies dancing and speaking with more languages and different voices the better.

Embodiment begins with feeling, physiologically - the facts of the body. The more you sensitise the body, the more *it* feels, and the more sensitive *it* becomes. You then use that feeling to figure out how to move, and to follow movement. The feeling of understanding and following movement then generates a greater depth and breadth of feeling - a deeper felt understanding of the body. There's no magic answers to impossible questions, only a listening attentiveness to where *it* is, to what *it's* doing – the facts of the body.

The information highways, transport and communication systems of the body that movement travels through and with the assistance of is intense. Directing attention to those information systems, and to how and where in the body *it's* traveling - and listening to the feedback, is dancing. The millions of discoveries I make doing this along the way aren't just beautiful - they're what *it* is. But they're also just steps - simple building blocks of knowledge within *it*. And my dancing uses this plethora of information

where exploration and performance meet. I think about this, in part, in relation to what theorist/performer Cathy Turner describes as, “a dramaturgy of process.” It's a dramaturgy, she says, “that makes us aware of the mechanisms of communication and the artificial construction of imaginary (real) worlds, even while we are moved and engaged by them” (Turner and Behrndt in Turner 2009 n.p.). *History's* choreography frames *its* performer as consumed by his own fictions, “both author and prisoner” of the performance. Turner describes this as “a dramaturgy that draws attention to its own process ...a kind of self-referential dramaturgy” (Turner 2009 n.p.). Within this process, there's a sense of what Etchells calls “deferred authorship” - which gives me an immense freedom, because *it's* not at all about me. But, as Turner says, I'm not just ‘author,’ I'm also ‘prisoner.’ And at the same time that *it* isn't about me, ‘I am fully in *it*.’

The American monk, Thomas Merton, says “we are most truly ourselves when we lose ourselves” (Merton 1973 p.352) – which is why *it's* so fascinating I think, to watch someone explore the ‘I-don't-know.’ It often seems the case that a performer who is lost, is not only completely present, but at least for the duration of their lostness, also found. That statement, like the statement about being fully in *it* while *it* not being about me, is not a contradiction; *it's* a paradox, which Massumi says, “abolishes

and bodily complexity as a way of becoming attentive to the moment, whose question is so beautifully simple: where are we now - and where to next?

This simplicity, not so much within a form as a modality, a particular tactile way, is what I explore. Then I try to detail the complexity within this simplicity – infinitely micro and macroscopically complex complexity within this simplicity of course. This, and where and how *it* leads, as well as where and what *it* leads me through as I'm moving - and always only just moving - is what I call dancing..

This is the simplest explanation of the (importance of the) micro-process of attention involved in dancing that I can offer.

As I noted in the introduction, I wanted to dance, so I just kept dancing and kept trying to find new ways to do *it*. So I'd dance, then reflect on what I did, and think about what I didn't do. Then I'd dance again, doing whatever I didn't do the time before. Then I'd reflect and think about what I didn't do again. Then I'd dance again trying to do whatever I didn't do the second time. I'd do this for weeks, and months at a time, always trying to get to where I wasn't and do what I couldn't. It was fun – looking for 'where *it* wasn't.'

contradiction" (Massumi 1992 p.21).

In various interviews, as well as on his Improvisational Technologies CD Rom, Billy Forsythe has spoken about improvisation being about defeating choreography, and getting back to what is fundamentally dancing – to being danced around. I don't improvise, or make work, to make what we usually think of as 'pieces,' but I do improvise, I do make work and I do improvise to make work.

This takes time. And like this writing isn't going anywhere quickly.

What's the exploration searching for?

Simply to be searching, to be lost and immersed in the search.

In the email exchange I mentioned a little while ago, Simon spoke of wanting to be in the dance as though for the first time because of the amplification of his attention. There's also a searching not knowing innocence to the first time that's incredibly fragile. Cixous says "As long as we are seeking we are innocent" (Cixous in Goulish 2004 p.261). I take her to mean our seeking begins when we leave what we know behind, or at the edge of the known and the unknown. This is something so fragile, it's such an incredibly precious space to see someone in, *it's* like they're completely exposed, sometimes very simply, sometimes infinitely complexly.

Then I'd try to do everything at once, while still trying to get to where I wasn't and do what I couldn't. *It* was still fun. Then I'd try to compress all these months of work into the space of a few minutes. Then I'd try to work with a singular focus, but still somehow do everything and get to where I wasn't and do what I couldn't within *it*. In the end, after having breathed endlessly in and out of the specificity of each of the solo's movement terrains, this is all I did in a different way in each of the four major terrains that made up the solo component of *history*.

During the process I just kept picking my dancing apart and putting *it* back together. I did this in a million different ways, by playing with everything I could think of, everything I could name and most of the things I couldn't, both alone and in dialogue with other dancers. In the process of directing my attention all round and through the bodymind, I trained *it* to be as mobile and multi-dimensional as possible. The squillions of micro processes I played with, like the histories and trainings that provided me with the knowledge of where and how to explore and direct my attention, all seem either equally important or unimportant. I struggle to place more emphasis on any one rather than on any of the others, because in one way or another they all seem equally present. And this overlapping and coinciding of many pasts, many histories, is one of

Cixous speaks about seeing this or watching *it* in another:

What is beautiful in the relation to the other, what moves us, what overwhelms us the most – that is love – is when we glimpse a part of what is secret to him or her, what is hidden that the other does not see; as if there were a window by which we see a certain heart beating
(Cixous 1997 p.17).

Years ago, during a workshop I watched Australian improviser Andrew Morrish make Neil Thomas, an experienced theatre practitioner and improviser, do an exercise he was unfamiliar with; and *it* was fascinating, infinitely more engaging than his 'performance,' because through the exercise, I witnessed the search, and within *it*, the moment of discovery.

CHOREOGRAPHIC FRAMINGS - PERFORMING TERRAINS

So how to allow the framings that emerge so very, very slowly, to not so much define, but somehow contain, or cradle movement terrains that live and breathe? Framings are 'choreography' - overarching, big picture stuff, whereas terrains are about the nitty gritty of what's going on inside the movement and the moment - the minutiae without which the framings become meaningless.

'Choreographed,' or structured improvisations hold a fascinating paradox, because you want

the things that makes a person and their dancing/performing so incredibly, beautifully, mind-bogglingly complex.

Trying to describe or explain the at times profound nature of these processes away from the floor and on the page seems an exercise in futility, because everything I know I know through the felt reality of my body, which is a gloriously big bloody mess with an enormous capacity for pleasure: A double s curved scoliosis snakes from C1 to L5, which is sacralised. Along the way, L5 and L4 are partially fused, the disc between L1 and T12 collapsed, and arthritic growths are trying to compensate for this crookedness of my spine and central nervous system that permeates every cell of my being. My body's inability to be right is *its* primary means of developing awareness. Compensating to manage my serious alignment issues, and the journey to become aware and attuned to these compensations and how they affect and are affected by one another and the rest of the bodymind has led me to explore the increasingly dense, subtle and complex interconnectedness of my body – through its many different systems and layers.

to find a very particular, very specific terrain, but at the same time you improvise because you want to not know, because you want to be alive to the moment and you want to foreground the immediacy, the never-before-and-never-again-ness of the experience, because you want to listen to how the score, the material and the composition are emerging this-time-as-thought-*it's-the-first-time*. There's also the terrain, remember, very particular, very specific, and not so much holding, but allowing the terrain, and the never-before-and-never-again-ness to sit together in an at times precarious, tentative and fragile balance is extraordinarily difficult because *it* needs both a solid, incredibly strong and easy, fluid grasp.

The balancing act is another paradox, because *it's* only after an inordinate amount of time and work that you figure out how to work within the structure/terrain as though it were an open improvisation. You figure out how to bring all the play and investigation from the endless breaking down of movement processes into the specificity of these very defined improvisations.

A short, simple dance that focuses on some of the micro processes of attention involved in an exploration of the body's connectivity might go like this (try *it* if you like):

In movement, feel a connection from hand to hand. Let *it* morph and change shape. Notice the other connections all around *it*. Bring your attention back to the hand - then stop. Begin again - one hand to the pelvis, one to the head. Stop again. Re-direct, reassess, begin again - shoulder to sternum into contents of torso, outside surface of the neck to bones of mid-spine. Stop, where are you now – reassess, redirect – and where to next?

To keep the dance going over time, I'd look for new connections - not just between joints like hip sockets and shoulders, but meridian lines, blood flows, thought patterns, thought-fluid connections, breath-bone, skin-bone, elbow-ear, knuckle-eye connections; pores of the skin between surfaces; organs-bones, viscera-skin. I'd look for multiple elastic dancing connections flowing through and around the body, connections that multiply through being activated and brought to life, and that multiply again through traversing different systems from lymph to bone to skin - then again by connecting the body to the environment and feeling the wind blow through the ribs, a stone fall through

my oesophagus, textures dripping from my skin, branches poking through my guts. Each movement changing the way the bodymind feels and responds, each movement changing the connections and systems being focused on. Add isolations, changing speeds, efforts, levels and re-directing movement to different body parts, in different directions, different rhythms, different lengths of pauses, noticing where your attention isn't and an endless labyrinth of play.

That's dancing: infinite awareness seeking to become infinitely more aware.

And that searching awareness includes the gap/s (in attention).





A SMALL GAP

It's in, and because of the gap that *history* (perhaps naively) seeks to escape the past by using the resources the past provides to transform itself. This is the creative force of Bergsonian memory,²⁸ and *it's* nowhere as potent as in the gap – where based on past experience, intelligence can tweak instinct to guide intuition. The Gap, or the space “between action and reaction, stimulus and response,” is as valuable for me as an improviser as *it* is for Deleuze, who thought of *it* as “a plane of becoming for pure potentiality,” a space where Bergsonian memory could circumvent habit (O’Sullivan 2006 p.46).

Studies in cognitive science have confirmed the presence of the gap by demonstrating a half second delay between “the onset of brain activity and conscious awareness of the event” (Massumi 2002 p.195). This gap is improvisation in all *its* simplistic, mind boggling complexity. Massumi calls *it* the “thought-o-genic lapse” and says, “It can never catch up with its own beginnings” (Massumi 2002 p.195). Dancing, I find the “thought-o-genic lapse” between registering and acting on the impulse, extraordinarily fertile. *It's* a space where attention can be amplified, re-set

28. For a more detailed explanation, see O’Sullivan (2006) *Art encounters Deleuze and Guatarri: thought beyond representation*. For Bergson, attention was about perceiving the imperceptible by suspending normal motor activity and thereby enabling other “planes of reality,” or other realities to come to the fore (O’Sullivan 2006 p.45). And this kind of attention is made possible by the power of memory, which enters in the gap and makes creativity via the breaking of habit possible (O’Sullivan 2006 p.45-6).



and re--directed to the pathway and direction the movement's passing through now, not the one I thought, or presumed *it* would have travelled. "Suspended. Looped out," attention is full of gaps. They never disappear, they just get smaller, become less frequent – or opportunities for something else. "Outside any given sense, outside actuality. Outside coming in" (Massumi 2002 p.134).

More and more my dancing involves playing with/in the gaps - noticing, extending and inhabiting them, following the shifting impulse as *it* shifts in the space of the "thought-o-genic lapse," and following the new, different, unexpected trajectory elsewhere, someplace other than where, doing something other than what I thought.

Surprised arrival.

Massumi analyses the phenomena of the gap philosophically, in terms of thought, but his conclusions seem equally valid for movement and sensation – which at *its* simplest is "already a complex duration" (Massumi 2002 p.195).



This is because awareness doesn't lag a constant half second behind each individual stimulus, but each successive stimulus affects the response in waiting that the previous stimulus would have become. And because the stimuli keep coming, the response keeps shifting, merging and smudging with all the other would-have-been responses. The conclusion: our lived experience is an ocean of "micro awarenesses without the actual awareness, gnats of potential experience" (Massumi 2002 p.196).

These "gnats of potential experience" can potentially be accessed by slowing down and stopping to undo: by lingering in an active listening that increases awareness of the gap. By stopping what is and would have been to engage the almost-but-not-quite; and by slowing down to sensorially re-assess and re-direct the future by remembering and re-inventing, which is to say, forgetting the past.

And if we open the gap a little further, some things may seem a little grey, or start to look like an interlude.

Interlude

TICKLING A RHYTHM OF THOUGHT

Thinking moving. Moving thinking. Feeling movement. Movement feeling.

Feeling movement moving – a thought of thought.

Thinking thought. Thought in, thought as movement - thinking movement.

Thinking movement moving – movement thinking.

Thought and intelligence of movement thinking – thinking movement thinking and moving.

Thinking how thought moves is a way of thinking – but not feeling, not unless *it's* a tactile feeling-thinking feeling the thinking – of how movement thinks.

Movement doesn't just think; *it* imagines.

What's a thought?

"Thoughts are clouds." (Lyotard in O'Sullivan 2006 p.30)

But words aren't thoughts. They're things. No more thoughts than any other things.

They're word-thought-things – half-thought, half-lost. Lost half felt-thought-things.

Thought, like movement, disappears into and forever.

Words form formations of lost half thought felt-thought-things, saying always something other than the thought in movement that was, undoing and unworking as they go, making the moving felt-thought becoming appear unexpectedly from *its* forever disappearing, vanishing beginning – again and again.

Don't think - disappear in movement following half lost half forgotten felt-word-thought-things turning into other things.

ANOTHER RHYTHM

Trying to create new languages – movement or spoken – is an endless, ongoing play of questions, of stopping in all kinds of weird in between spaces and places, then in between in between places and in between in between in between places looking for places that are more non-places than places, placeless places, placeless places between placeless places that are only noticeable when you stop and stop and don't stop stopping - interrupting and redirecting tired older tongues, not one, but as many as we can find, combine, pull a-parr-t, chop. Ping. The. Lang. widg-erz. Uppp.. in to. Bi-tz. and. P-e-e s-er-z. Playing.

With. Rhythms, rhythm – what a word. To find. Change. Building and developing worded non-sense from unworded sense to extend not just what but how *it's* saying what *it's* saying, sometimes cutting short, sometimes flying off stopping and starting and looking for all the placeless places in the infinite inbetween spaces along the continuum between the in-finitely large and the infinitely. Small. To make. Str. A – ay ay ay-ing sense.

Writing the music and rhythms of language. Trying to. Make *it*. Dance. “Less to say this or that but to listen to language speak” (Calle-Gruber 1997 p.142). And sing.

‘Words are never the thing; they only point to the thing.’ But what is the thing – and if words aren’t it but we’re working with them why don’t we forget the thing and make an-other thing, a silly sounding-singing-ring-a-ding-dinging word-thought-thing.

But maybe there’s already too many things, too many thoughts and too much of too too much, and “Maybe we need new thoughts less than we need to decelerate, to reduce our thoughts, to refold them into other thoughts, and to recycle them” (Goulish 2000 p.3).

Maybe we need more unthoughts, unworded unthought things and disappearing felt-thought word things turning into unthought unthings.

Uncultured uncouth unstuck undone and unmannered, I’m un, which brings me back to undoing, unknowing, unlearning and other unlikely unthings.

- Oh stop *it*.

- Stop what?

- That unning thing.

- But unning isn’t a thing.

- Of course unning’s a thing, all ings are things.

- No, things are things and ings are other somethings, or something other unthings, or something otherings: other otherings that aren’t things at all.

- Well stop other othering then.

- I wasn’t, I was unning; but I’m not anymore, I’m following.

- Following what?

- Ings things and unning running something othering unthings thinking and feeling

themselves in and out of appearing and disappearing, morphing and merging into other othering unnings running to who knows where or when that you can only find or figure through following without demanding to know or define where or what or who or how, which is to say by following the (Douglas D)unning punning running of other othering unnings with the (Kenneth K)ing²⁹-ing zinging singing ring-a-ding-ding word-thought-thinging and weaving and layering squillions of ings-things-and-something-othering-unthings together to eventually make a new thing that isn't a thing but an unexplored, unexpected, unheard unbelievable unimpeded, even un-inged unthing. Which makes *it* an unth.

- An unth? What's an unth?

- An unth is an un-inged unthing you find by following the unthness that comes after un-inging the ings-things-and-something-othering-unthings: by following the unthness of the unth unth-ing – and there's a big difference between an unthing and an unth unth-ing – as *it* unths.

- And if you un-un the unth?

- You have a th.

- And if you un-th the th?

- You can't un-th the th after un-un-ing the un of the unth because then your done and out of uns to un with, and if you un-th the th after un-un-ing the un of the unth you'd be left with minus un which wouldn't be th-un but would take us back to un, or rather minus un, but because un is already kind of minus we'd have unun. Und un and un andunandun.³⁰

29. Douglass Dunn and Kenneth King are each dance artists from the U.S.A whose work usually includes the playful use of text. For an excellent example of each of their writings see Alexander, E (1998) *Footnotes: six choreographers inscribe the page* Amsterdam: G+B Arts

30. Beyond, or perhaps more accurately beneath the interlude is the desire to move beyond representation and avoid 'thingness,' so the temptation to divide the unth by u, take the th root and push it to the nth degree would be one too many manipulative operations upon the unthing, causing it to lose its unthness, inadvertently turning it back into a readily identifiable thing – which for the sake of moving beyond representation in the direction of non-sense, we're trying to avoid.

History part four

EXAMINATION
PERFORMANCE

WHAT IS IT? – ENERGY AND AFFECT

History was, is, a pragmatic dream. And framing the discussion in terms of *its* past is a way to avoid defining *it*, and that avoidance - speaking about *it* on *its* own terms rather than speaking about *it* as being about, or what *it's* doing - is essential.

Though affects are created and radiate out in all directions - ones I'm aware of and intend and ones I'm not - beneath those affects, is simply my attention to the movement of, and the subtle modulating of energy. Philosopher Luce Irigaray, speaking about music's non linguistic nature, says that *its* strength derives from *its* "ability to modulate energy without arresting it in a precise structure" (Irigaray 2004, p.135). I frame the work for *it* to be seen, hopefully in a way that allows my attention to the movement, and subtle modulation of energy to continue, becoming more refined, more felt, more 'real.' And yes, in the process certain affects are created. Yet even as I'm creating and aware of them, I'm not concentrating on them. This not concentrating on affects, but simply following and playing with the movement of energy, is what I try to pay attention to, more than anything else, in the watching, doing and making of performance.

As *history* continues, *its* pasts slowly fade, yet the creative documentation of those now fading pasts linger to create *its* present. Something of the materiality of *history's* past processes stubbornly persist, ghosting *its* present outcomes. Or less abstractly and more literally, the boxes from *history's* first component, the box event, along with an absolute plethora of process notes and in progress writings become the set for the solo. The solo is placed in the laneway where the project's second component took place, and the remnants from parts of the set that were burned after part three, now become part of a concluding happening to the solo.



In part three of this text, I quoted Trevor Patrick, saying, “any performance is affected by the largely invisible play of energy through the mind and body” (Patrick 1998 p.31).

I’d say the liveness of performance isn’t just affected, but based and dependent on this movement of energy. My desire is simply to follow it as far, as deeply, subtly and intensely as I can to find a dance beneath the form that leads to performances subject: transformation (Schechner 1993 p.1).

While *it’s* ‘true,’ as Schechner says, that transformation is about the “ability of human beings to create themselves, to change, to become – for worse or better – what they ordinarily are not” (Schechner 1993 p.1), *it’s* also, I think, not just a manipulation of affect, as is often said about the shamanic traditions, but also a manipulation of energy.

In *The Future of Ritual*, Schechner repeatedly draws analogies between artists and shamans, saying, among other things, that both are “dream trained” (Schechner 1993 p.262), and calling experimental theatre practitioners “para-shaman.” (Ibid) I’ve no doubt about performance’s intimacy and direct ties to shamanic – and meditative - traditions. Each of these (shamanic and meditative) traditions, is, according to psychologist Michael Winkelman, “functionally and experientially

SOLO IN LANEWAY WITH BOXES (BEFORE, AFTER, BEHIND AND AROUND THE SCENES)

Sunday, and my brother Matthew brings another ute load of boxes from the old man’s work. We take em to the laneway, unload em and stack em against a wall. He goes home and I drive out to Simmo’s to swap our car for his ute, and move the rest of the set out of the house and into the lane. Monday and we level out the ground with boxes then lay the floor. Then, late in the day I go to the studio and take some time to find, reconnect with and inhabit the piece. Tuesday and after a morning dance we unfold and gaffer tape the boxes into walls. Wednesday and body and set preparations continue, the walls are papered, the body is slow, reluctant to get going. Being sun kissed and calloused and having popped a rib it takes everything I’ve got, so Heidi saves me by looking after the set.

TOO ‘REAL’

I don’t know if I created myself with this piece or fell for my own fakery; am even less certain what the difference is, if there is one or if *it* matters - in fact, I’m certain there isn’t. And *it* doesn’t.

What performance, and especially dance knows I think, is that the best, most ‘real’ affect arises almost coincidentally from a deeply felt embodied engagement with your task. When I watch performance I’m always seeing at least two things - the task and the affect, and the

distinct with distinct psychobiological characteristics that constitute different integrative modes of consciousness” (Winkelman 2000 p.187).

Winkelman’s work has potentially far reaching implications for modellings of consciousness, which, as he points out, is directly connected with knowledge systems. He links “shamanistic practices,” with “deep structures of knowledge” in the brain, which he says operate “independently of language and link somatosensory and metaphoric processes” (Winkelman 2000 p.2). In one sense, what he’s talking about is the production of what he calls “integrative relationships among brain systems and psychocultural beliefs.” Though I find his work fascinating, I don’t want to get lost in, or make too fine a point of *it*. Instead, having left a fuse of incomplete associations gently smouldering, I want to highlight the near indissolubility between energy and affect; and that a manipulation of one can often be – or at least lead to - a manipulation of the other. Or, as Winkelman might say of shamanic practices, a manipulation of “physiological processes,” can also be - or at least be seen as - a manipulation of “psychophysiological reactions, personal experience, and social psychology” (Winkelman 2000 p.xii). Because of my prejudices and preferences, as a performer

performer and how they’re handling themselves within *it*. *History* works best when the performing is firmly kept in the exploration, and when that exploration is operating at the edge of the known and the unknown – that’s when *it*’s most ‘real.’ I try to create an experience for the audience with their coming and going to and from the event and with the structure of the work and the way in which *it* unfolds. I try to not want anything from my audience; by not wanting I can go as deeply into the exploration as I can, and make the piece and *its* affect as ‘real’ as can be. This allows me to be generous, and requires me to trust the experience I’ve crafted. This crafting of experience, moving you into and through the event, to me is the choreography, the structure off which the improvisations hang. The structuring, the choreography provides a framework that supports the explorations, and that when all goes well, allows those explorations a freedom...

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

...The day of the exam dawns bright, but with potential rain forecast for the afternoon. We watch the weather forecast change four times in three hours.

Unexpected wind cuts my morning warm up short, the set needing much more maintenance than we’d planned for.

I leave the set at 5pm and head to Dancehouse for an hour and a half of what should be a warm up, but instead is a space preparation for the post performance conference. As I’m there frantically

I prefer to focus on the energy, the movement and sensation of and within physiological processes, because this grounds me in what I experience as most real: the facts of the body.

Now I'd like to quickly leap from performance's intimacy with shamanism – or *it's* "para-shamanic" nature as Schechner might say – to *its* subject, transformation, which as I think, or feel of *it* is made possible by an increasingly attuned awareness to the subtle movements of different manifestations of subtle energies. That attunement to subtle energies, leads me to consider a meditative tradition.

In Buddhist philosophy, "The bodymind complex is analyzed into three levels: gross, subtle and extremely subtle" (Thurman 1994 p.35). The gross is the level of the senses, the subtle approximately "what we think of as the central nervous system," conceived as a series of "energy pathways" that traverse the spine (approximating the chakras); within this network of "energy pathways" there are "subtle drops of 'awareness transmitting substances,' moved around by subtle energies called 'winds'" (Thurman 1994 p.36). At the level of physiology, I think, or feel of these "awareness transmitting substances" moved around by "winds" as corresponding to the

building another cardboard kingdom the rain gods decide it's time to tease us with drizzle. I leave Dancehouse and head toward the set feeling the cold in the air the rain has brought with *it*. When I get there *it's* a mess. Peter and Heidi have been frantic, cleaning the space from the debris left by the late night visitors who left cigarette butts and ash all over the place, stacking the walls into a corner and covering them with tarps to protect them from the rain, and laying spare cardboard boxes over the floor. The neighbour has lent us her umbrella to sit the audience under. Twenty minutes to go and *it's* a fucking disaster zone, but a manageable one thanks to Peter and Heidi. And also Michaela, who after helping me at Dancehouse went to help Peter and Heidi at the site before waiting



cranio-sacral system and the flow of fluids I discussed in part three. The extremely subtle level, or “extremely subtle body is called the indestructible drop” (Thurman 1994 p.36). In Buddhism, *it*’s considered “the deepest seat of life and awareness, whose continuity is indestructible, though it constantly changes” (Thurman 1994 p.36).

This account of the bodymind complex provides a helpful way of thinking about *history* in *its* entirety - because change lies at *history*’s heart. Very early on I spent so much time playing with what I was doing, and the play changed *it*, forced me to forget or relinquish my ideas of what *it* was, and instead follow what *it* was, or is now becoming. I call this ‘following a shifting *it*’ – that somehow, like the “indestructible drop,” has a continuity “though it constantly changes.” Of course, following a shifting *it* makes *it* difficult to say what *it* is - and that’s kind of the point. But in spite, or maybe because of our silliness, both I and *it* (whatever either may be), are quite Buddhist like – at least for now for the sake of the story. So we’re going to use the indestructible drop of Buddhism to help think about how I feel my way through following a shifting *it*.



quietly out of sight to play a Tibetan bowl most people mistake as coming from the one of the neighbour’s houses.

Heidi guides the exam party to the park where Peter is waiting under an umbrella. He calls to tell us they’re leaving and Michaela and I run to pull the last tarp away from the boxes. I’ve been nursing a torn calf muscle, which has recovered, but hinted at giving way again throughout the day. Two steps into the run toward the tarp and *it* goes. I ask Michaela to get the car keys so I can get the nurofen gel I bought to ease the rib I popped when I fell off my bike a couple of days earlier. I smother my calf in this crap, give *it* a stretch and a shake and hope *it* holds for the performance.

The Buddhists say the indestructible drop is composed of very fine, sensitive energy (Thurman 1994 p.40). And according to Brian Massumi, “energy and matter are mutually convertible modes of the same reality” (Massumi 2002 p.5), and matter of course is intelligent and alive - the ocean from which “all individual awareness arise[s] and return[s]” (Massumi 2002 p.195). So I think of, and feel of the indestructible drop, or a shifting *it*, as matter. I try to approach *it* by paying attention to the sensations of lightly charged electrical impulses, vibrations that tickle my pores and the tiny spaces surrounding the filaments of hair on the surfaces of my skin. Or as gentle pulsings of fluid, traveling, swirling, spilling and splashing along neuro-electrical pathways of communication tracing the contours along the dips and crevices, curves and indentations of my bones. Or as a softening into myself, a settling and softening of my fascia and connective tissue that creates space between my skin and muscle, between muscle and bone, and that allows my flesh to fall away from the skeletal structure and pool into the floor. And another settling away inside the skeletal structure, from the containers of the head, pelvis and torso - brain settling and softening inside the skull; heart, kidneys and viscera away from the ribs; intestines falling deeply into the pelvis.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

I leave the confined space at the end of the breathings section and walk to the edge of the now exposed stage space, facing the laneway and the night. As I walk to the edge of the space I see Heidi creeping toward me.

Stupidly mistaking her intention, thinking she’s still caught up in the pre-show chaos and rushing a moment I’ve choreographed to take time, I shoo her away. Peter has been clunking about on the other side of the space. I signal him to get in position to move the wall. He mistakes the signal and clunkily rushes the audience out of the space without moving the wall. The choreography, and the end of the work is changed from a slow, seamless, satisfyingly revealing ending to a quick and clunky one.

It feels like a disaster. And I’m devastated.

Later, Heidi tells me she was tiptoeing into position, timing her walk with mine so she wouldn’t be heard, and was planning on waiting, giving the moment the space *it* was intended. The mistake, the failure to realize the ending was my fault, so I’m doubly devastated, then overwhelmed by sorrow and disappointment. That night I cry myself awake from a troubled, whiskey addled sleep and lay sobbing, at times convulsing in bed.

A sense of increased separation between my layers, from skin through fascia to muscle, bone and organ; and through the organ walls into the micro-anatomy of the insides, and the contents of the contents. Between, and through each of those layers I try to feel the cytoskeletal frameworks, the intricate micro geographical networks of veins and arteries, the lacework of capillaries, lymph, fluid vessels, membranes, cell walls - the striations of fat, the micro folds of wrinkles and pores. Then, I try to get a sense of my cells, and the interstitial spaces between my cells increasing, and ever so slightly dispersing, making my shape kind of simultaneously vaguer and clearer.

Why do I tell you all this?

‘Just because.’

But also because “the end run of embodiment back to matter always somehow coincided with its emergence from it” (Massumi 2002 p.206)³¹. And because I’m interested in different ways of listening, in playing with different depths and intensities of listening, and in trying to create a space where the audience might be able to hear. I’m interested in non traditional viewing environments where audience and



My partner, the amazing Astro Girl, who I met under a strawberry bush, got married to on a BMX, and built a cardboard castle of dreams with.

My beautiful partner who was in this work with me so deeply for the entire week in the laneway, whose days were occupied with taking over my tasks so I could focus on preparing myself to perform – her near invisible influence permeating every layer.

As I remember seeing and shooing her away, I am deeply, profoundly disappointed by my response, which was a failure to trust. And in a relationship based on trust, ‘messing up the ending’ in that way wasn’t just ‘my fault,’ but

31. The word ‘embodiment’ was used in this Massumi quote.
To replace the word ‘mindedness’ which he actually used.

performer share the space, partly because as a watcher, I want to get closer and closer, to feel the energy, to taste, touch, feel the space changing, in the moment, as *it* happens. I want to get inside. And as a performer, I want to take you with me - as deep and far as I can go, into a space where the “invisible play of energy” and decision making processes become transparent.

LISTENING – ATTENTION

One way of attempting this is by aspiring to focus our attention on (feeling) the most subtle, and the most impossible. This “intensity of concentration,” says Matthew Goulish, “transforms the material,” and gives *it* “its sense of value” (Goulish 2007 p.208). What you’re focusing on doesn’t necessarily have to be real, or even possible. The important thing (for me as a dancer) is to come up with a concrete (physiological) means of feeling *it* in my body – a kind of systematic way of sustaining my attention within *it*. The primary way I practice maintaining and sustaining my attention, paradoxically, is via distraction – by noticing the smallest, subtlest sensations going on at the edges of my attention, where a plethora of minute changes, shifts, ordinarily unnoticed, subtle breathings and pulsings are happening, both in stillness and in movement. In movement these sometimes manifest as micro-

was a betrayal of that trust which is love. For this I am deeply, profoundly sorry.

Why do I tell you this – to make you aware of losing what you never had? No - because *it*’s performance: deeply, profoundly, irreparably human.

A work has affects beyond the work, and investment in the work goes beyond the work.

Performance is always ghosted by the loss of what was. And *it* turns that loss into a gain. That is why I watch *it*, and that is why I make *it*. The theatre (and dance) that plays out behind the scenes is no less a part of *it* than that which plays within the scene. This writing: an effort to bring what’s behind the scenes into the frame.

The next day I go into Dancehouse to pick up the boxes from the post performance conference, and Melbourne dancer, Brooke Stamp, wearing white is being filmed from above, whirling continuously in an ode to the Sufis as Yoko Ono sounds gently in the background. *It*’s a beautiful image, and I begin to smile.

mistakes, tremors, adjustments, unfamiliar, off-pathway movements and almost imperceptible dialogues happening beside my listenings. *It's* a special kind of attention - increasingly distracted and increasingly interested in increasing the distractions and divergences that get richer, taking over more of my (distracted) attention. *It's* attuning to what Lepecki calls 'microscopy,' to cross "thresholds of sensorial perception" (Lepecki p. 344) and discover the 'microscopic moves' stillness and movement are laden with.

Discovering the microscopic movement engendered by quieting one system to hear another: like shallowing respiration to focus more clearly on the flow of cranio-sacral fluid, or holding the bones to discover the micro musculature settling independently of the skeletal system, or trying to still the blood to increase the sensitivity of the pores of the skin; listening, hearing differently; cutting movement into infinitesimally small fragments, interrupting *it* at the minutest level perceptible, making decisions about the flow of blood, the settling of bone, the release of fascia, of breath; the firing of neurons, a heart beat.

A dream.



Within this there's the activity, or movement of stillness, and of decision making processes. Stillness, or pausing isn't the absence of movement or a sensory break; *it's* a sensory assessment, an opportunity to change directions, make decisions and pay attention to (the movement of) decision making processes: playing with different tones, qualities and durations of stillness can draw the movement of a moving attention to different ways of listening and playing with the bodies moving-thinking-feeling-thinking-moving. Following the movement of attention: (virtually) audible listening: minute shifts of the movement of perception perceiving itself. Registering sensations and noticing the sensation of registering sensations can drop you straight into your nervous system and your thinking-feeling-feeling-thinking-dancing self on overdrive: *it* can create a double dance, a dance of double (in)decision as you move and dance between responding to and moving with specific sensations and the sensation of registering sensations - zooming in, out and between one then the other, cutting across and combining both, waiting for one to lead into, toward or away from the other.



Memory is inherent within this, as attention and memory are intertwined. So the decisions not made but briefly considered (registered) are part of the dance. Remembering past decisions and movement pathways affects how attention moves and is directed to move now. Forget, or try to forget. Remember, take time to re-direct - decisions once considered, once considered redirected forgotten memories.

Follow the movement, attune to, feel, and play with the micro movements, tremors and adjustments - follow their pathways, and re-assess every micro moment between each micro tremor along the way. Lurch with, make decisions about, and re-direct the process in strange, curious ways. Stop. Feel sensations move, actively register their location and potential quality: feel the sensation of registering sensation, and look for the place where the movement of the sensation and the movement of the sensation of registering the sensation meet. Stay stopped. And listen to the microscopy of stillness moving in and amidst a convergence of multiple coordinated rhythms of movement loading potential into stillness speaking silently of movement undone. A silent moment. A simple dream.

WHAT IS IT? – THE QUESTION

“What is it?”

The question could be fatal”

(Etchells 1999 p.22-23)

What is *it*?

The question, perhaps is important,
perhaps more important than an answer
– and so needs to be treated carefully.

Matthew Goulish says we should “compose responses that do not annihilate the question’s delicate ecology,” that we should “avoid the answer that kills it, and seek the response that disarms and multiplies it.”

This is because the question itself “does not express a lack, but a creative force: propose, disarm, multiply”

(Goulish 2007 p.133)

What’s *it* doing?

Many things about which I’ve many ideas, but I always want to allow you to find your own, good or bad, even if *it* means running the risk of being misunderstood. I’ve never thought *it* was about understanding, only about following and listening. Clarice Lispector said, “‘not understanding’ was a concept so vast that it surpassed any understanding, which was always so limited.” (Lispector 1986 p.25) Peggy Phelan speaks of the “generative and hopeful” benefits of misunderstanding as the effort

“to walk (and live) on the rickety bridge
between self and other”

(Phelan 1993, p.174).

Perhaps *it* would be better, if rather than
seeking the understanding of an answer
to the question, we listened to the echoes
and reverberations of its repetitions. The
question of what *it* is, or what *it*'s doing is
perhaps made more fertile by remaining
a question. After all, as Goulish says,
“The question does not affect the answer”
(Goulish 2007 p.137).

But isn't this just a way of escaping
the issue?

“I will leave that as a question.”

(Goulish 2007 p.133)



History part five

BURNING

SKATING ACROSS THE SURFACE – WRITING, THE BODY, MOVEMENT AND MORE

Isn't this writing, and this work just constantly skating over the surface of everything, avoiding going too deeply into anything?

Well, yes.

I've tried skating over the surface of *history's* edges rather than recounting *it* in depth because I'm interested in trying to create a mobius strip - which has no inside and no outside, or whose inside and outside are continuous, meeting and merging with one another through travelling across the surface. In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz refers to the body as being similar to a mobius strip: "as a purely surface phenomenon, a complex, multifaceted surface folded back on itself, exhibiting a certain torsion but nevertheless a flat plane whose incision or inscription produces the (illusion or effects of) depth and interiority" (Grosz 1994 p.116). Among other things, embodiment - a deeply felt, tactile, kinaesthetic knowing - is a way of understanding without intellectualizing the way in which the body is in the process of being written by the world or environment surrounding *it*. As Grosz continues to say, "surface effects...are not merely superficial, for they generate, they produce, all the

Saturday night and the boxes go up in flames, melting the plastic pegs on the clothes-line - smoke and alcohol, PhD conversations and gags, followed by sirens and fire engines at 3:00 am.

Sunday and I take Simmo's ute back and collect our car. Monday and as I'm wondering what the hell I'm gonna do with the mountain of ash I'm shovelling into garbage bags, I also think back to the question in the conference room, 'where are we in the practice?,' and realize *it* was naïve to think this would be the end.

I also hear the question echoing my own, and leading to another.

What is a work, where does *it* begin and where does *it* end - and where does one work end and another begin?

Tuesday, in the studio, (still wondering what to do with the ash), I feel myself falling into terrains from *history* at the same time as I feel myself approaching new ones that were beginning to emerge in the weeks leading up to the performance. I let them intermingle without falling into the specificity of either. I keep going and start to play with the intermingling, avoiding going into or staying in any one terrain. The four major sections from *history* slowly compress and move into a new one.

I think of the video of Billy Forsythe's *solo*, presented on his *Improvisational technologies* CD Rom, remember him talking about *it* as

effects of a psychical interior, an underlying depth, individuality, or consciousness (Grosz 1994 p.116 + 117). Like the mobius strip, when thinking, or feeling, the body, “tracing the outside...leads one directly to its inside without any joint leaving its surface” (Ibid).

So I've tried, and continue to try to skate over the surface of *history's* edges by changing the way I speak about *it*, and what sort of language I use to speak about *it* with. This change of course, not only changes what *it* was and is, but hopefully also helps create, or add a certain manyness to the surface of *its* dimensionality.

The project - already composed of several smaller projects - is constantly changing, and as much as *it* can, this writing is trying to add to and continue that change by following *its* own changingness.

One way for us to follow that changingness, as I said in part four, is by using the idea of Buddhism's 'indestructible drop,' another, as mentioned in the introduction, is to simply forget what *it* was, and follow *it* in the moment, from micro moment to micro moment.

This can be difficult, but also fun, because *it* can allow us to follow in any direction, through detours and distractions, using our intelligence, our intuition, our senses

compressing twenty-five years worth of dancing into five minutes. The next day I do the same with the residue of *history*, and over the next few days a new terrain, born from the compressed and combined residue of all four sections begins to emerge.

It's been an ongoing interest, from my earliest works. Already in *Rapid* (2002), I was playing with compressing and combining things, moving back and forth between different scores and states, creating a new one with the movement between. Trying to create a simultaneity and complexity within the body that isn't any of the one things *it's* doing, but all of them. A manyness. Etchells speaks about Ron Vawter from the Wooster Group telling him about appropriating “from several different sources at the same time,” then juggling the separate weights of the things until “a new kind of theatre text is created” (Etchells 2009 n.p). A new text, or work, or section of work that hopefully isn't any of the original sources, but somehow creates a whole that's greater than - or at least different to - *its* parts. Showing this combination of things early on, before *it* has become a new thing of *its* own, can also be interesting, like a kind of semi-ordered chaos, which Etchells describes as, “A dramaturgy of knots, collisions, tangles” (Etchells 2009 n.p). Each new work begins like a yoghurt culture – where the compressing and moving between opens out into an unfinished, or unidentified tangential interest from the previous

and of course our own mind changingness. And by using all these - and more – we get the opportunity to look from many different directions with an always shifting eye.

The other reason for skating over the surface and avoiding depth is to maintain fidelity to my art making process, which tries to remain as open to interpretation as possible. Going into any particular thing too deeply can put too fine a point on *it* and give the sense that the work – or the writing - is trying to communicate that particular point. I'm reluctant to the point of steadfastly refusing to attribute any kind of unifying idea – or convergence of ideas - to *history* (or *history* to any unifying, overriding idea). Any meaning or explanation, as Karen Christopher from Goat Island says, “tells you nothing about the experience of witnessing the piece in its own time and its own space, and nothing about the journey you would take through your own mind as you watched it” (Christopher 2007 p.15).

So instead of searching for the meaning of *history* or *its* writing in *its* depths, I'd like to ask you once again, much more simply to follow. This might give you the freedom to take your own journey through the writing, and allow you to sense, experience or feel the project rather than (intellectually) understand *it*, or somehow come to your

work that sets off and ignites the beginning(s) of the next work.

Over the course of the next few days *history's* residue gives way to a slower, more intense, almost character like new beginning – part junkie, part over-muscled monster man. From somewhere the idea of corrugated iron and rocks appears, a piece of wood floor (from *history* of course) on an angle, and a couple of hundred ‘redheads’ match boxes covered in ‘pink lady’ apple stickers - a leftover, or side project to emerge from *history* that began when I attempted a modeling of the set. Is this how *history* falls into the past, or how *it* begins? Or maybe both?



‘understanding’ through sensing *it*. Cultural theorist Rosi Braidotti says, “one cannot know properly, or even begin to understand, that towards which one has no affinity” (Braidotti 2002 p.241). We could think of sensing as an oblique approach that can open more possibilities for more meanings, connections and interpretations; or an approach that creates space for imagination, invention of your own story - full of fantastical adventures, or quiet sojourns. A whole library of thought, a box of dreams. A world of essays. Flying carpets and magic theories.

Wednesday and the real estate agent, maybe having smelt the smoke from Saturday night’s fire returns. She says the landlord thanks us for looking after his property, and would like to reward us by putting the rent up \$200 a month. A hike we can’t afford. The boxes, having been burnt, mean the cardboard castle in the laneway is no longer an option. So we slide across the surface of the story, out of the city and into the bush, where we can still afford to live.



MOVEMENT AND MORE

The primary basis of the practice is one of abstract movement. Among other things, *its* strength lies in *its* polysemy: the manyness of *its* interpretive possibilities, and the ways in which audience – or readers - become complicit in the making and unmaking of meaning and sense.

And in writing, ‘among other things’ is a beautiful turn of phrase that works in conjunction with this. *It* implies more, something, or many things else and so points to a remainder, which according to Stella Kramrisch suggests a certain endlessness. She says, “the remainder is the germ and material cause for what subsists. It is the concrete reality of a thing” (Kramrisch in Seymour 1994 p.24). Hopefully, the remainder implied by ‘among other things,’ does something to add (an awareness of) a manyness to the surface of *history’s* dimensionality.

It also I hope does something to acknowledge your complicity as a reader in the making of the writing and the work – that not only is there more to *it* than I can do or say or know, but that you, your history and duration, and your body bring a reading, a meaning and network of personal associations that for me, as a maker, are an enormous, and always unknowable part of that more.

RESPONSE

In the introduction, response was said to be more complex than mimicry; response to another dancer, for example, was said to involve plurality and a need to ‘pass through the blood,’ becoming embodied. But nor should a process of moving towards an embodiment be denied and sometimes trying on, or simply stealing another’s way of moving (or writing) is an excellent way to begin. And sometimes, the response that comes before a fully embodied understanding provides a valuable way of extending ones movement (or written) vocabulary. What follows is a kind of written dance of response that involves mimicry, to Brian Massumi:

A POETIC-THEORETICAL PLAY IN RESPONSE TO MASSUMI AND PERCEPTION

“Instrumental reason makes thoughtfully, actfully explicit what is materially implied by the criticality of operative reason. Instrumental reason is operative reason’s unfolding, its extension. Instrumental reason doubles perception with possibility: thought-out futurities in extrinsic relation to each other; mutually exclusive paths standing outside and against each other. Untangled by routine. Only thought, unimplicated.” (Massumi 1998 p.2)

So in some fundamental way, alterity is always present within *history*. By underlining *its* inherent unknowability, I try to welcome and embrace this alterity. One way of doing this, instead of going into things in depth, is to focus on the beginnings of things, and to constantly begin again. Calle-Gruber says that beginnings “arise from a capacity for welcoming and for permeability” (Calle-Gruber in Cixous 2008 p.31), and that a writing “of beginnings and interruptions is exactly that. Not stability, linearity, but mourning, lashes of light, starriness, crossroads” (Calle-Gruber in Cixous 2008 p.38).

This writing, like each individual component of *history*, in many ways is driven by beginnings, interruptions and distractions, and that’s partly reflective of the way I try to approach my dance practice. At *its* simplest that practice is one of attention – to and with the body. The point isn’t so much to get *it* right as to become more aware of my constant inability, my constant failure, which because *it’s* a failure is in need of constant attention.

Call extending operative into instrumental reason by changing voices, languages, distances and theoretical/conceptual vantage points, imagination: ‘felt thought – thought only felt. Felt as only thought can be. Insensibly unstill.’ (Massumi) And call the repeated departures and returns along different trajectories, the different recapitulations and imaginings of moving from operative to instrumental reason, ‘interludes’ (or sections or parts if you have to) Call the termination of the line of flight of an interlude a new beginning; and think of each beginning as a new, overlapping sensation: the calling of “habit to eventful attention” (Massumi 1998 p.3).

The recapitulated imaginings new beginning point is a transformational “follow-up thought-perception” (Massumi 1998 p.3) playing between interconnected, overlapping, resonating fields of creativity.



Training and maintaining (this practice of) attention in and through the body, is the ground of my movement practice – which is largely sustained by distraction. And thankfully, the body offers a lot to be distracted by. The moving attention of an attentively distracted distraction fueling awareness of *its* infinite complexity.

Keep *it* simple was the smart thing to do; but never what I did. Instead I suffered the strange joys of my inability not to not sidetrack and distract, circling everywhich way in this body of dreams and confusions, that more than anything knows about tangling and entwining, complicating and compensating just to keep going. To keep moving – toward another beginning.

Circularity.

Prefix the entire process with ‘schizo-nomadic.’ Refusing to be tied down by any particular logic, making it up as it goes along, changing from day to day, ‘scrambling all the codes’ (Deleuze and Guattari), and trying wherever it can to scramble and jump between them all.

Re-direct. Begin again.

Call operative extending to instrumental, struggling to return to operative reason after translating across mediums, ‘criticality.’

‘Criticality’ is when a system folds in on itself, becoming ‘materially self referential,’ transformable and ‘hyperconnectible.’ “In chaos theory it is conceived as the co-presence of all of the possible paths the system may take.”

(Masumi 1998 p.1).



ENDLESS BEGINNINGS

And now, so far from the beginning, *history* continues with endless beginnings, because fragments falling endlessly away. With life and living, because dying.

In response to Helen Herbertson's *Morphia Series*, Beth Shelton wrote "the woman seems to carry a full sense of the predicament of being alive and at the same time fully aware of the inevitable coming of ageing and death" (Shelton in Herbertson 2002 n.p.). Good, mature dancing needs this. The gap between playing and being played by living and dying becoming so infinitesimally small there's no gap at all.

That's where *it* begins - in the space between.

The Buddhists believe that maintaining awareness in the journey through the space between death and re-birth is made possible by the continuity that the indestructible drop provides through the time of change. So at the same time as I ask you to follow through the many superficial tangents, I'd also like to ask you to spare a moment's pause to sense (or maybe search in vain) beneath the changing surface of *history's* terrain for a continuity - not an indestructible one, but a tentative, often fragile thread (this writing tries to pick up and weave as *it* follows).

Pure potential.

Endless beginnings, and endless becomings, where 'one metamorphosis leads to, or melts into another without much restraint.' (Braidotti 2002 p.128) Immanent virtuality of the least obvious sensation: the "more to the less of every perception" (Massumi 2002 p.93).

"Sensation and thought, at their respective limits as well as in their feedback into each other, are in excess over experience: over the actual. They extend into the nonactual." (Massumi 2002 p.98) Nonactual edge of the virtual: seeping edge, "where potential, actually, is found." (Massumi 2002 p.43)

Where what isn't (yet), but could become, the virtual, isn't waiting to be brought into existence, but waiting to cross a threshold of perception. Creative research: looking for what isn't and hasn't been yet; trading actual memories of ongoing ontological experimentations on the real, for virtual worlds of sensation driven by desire.

Stopping what already is and would inevitably have been to engage awareness of other possibilities. Fast track of becoming for as long as you know how to not know – you can't become if you do. And in this crazy time of speed, the more you slow down the more becomes possible, the more becoming opens. Radical politics: trust in the unknown, virtual future following a different trajectory from the past and actual now.

“Every first perception of form is already,
virtually, a memory. Perception is an intensive
movement back into and out of an abstract
‘space’ of experiential previousness.”

(Massumi 2002 p.196-197)

Now, here and/as elsewhere haunted by multiple,
overlapping actual and virtual pasts. Meltdown.

Remember; forget.

Begin again.

History part six

SCATTERING THE ASHES

ENCOUNTER

Recognition, says Massumi is just “the habit of no longer seeing what’s new” (Massumi 2002 p.221). An ‘encounter’ isn’t recognition, or something known – *it’s* of a different order. Deleuze says, “Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter” (Deleuze in O’Sullivan 2006 p.1). Encounter “disrupts our ways of being and knowing, affirming instead anew, an-other world, an-other way” (O’Sullivan 2006 p.1).

I believe of course, that art is less a mode of production and more a way of being. Art is surprised seeing, seeing surprise – and surprise to see a new seeing seeing surprise. Art - like Massumi says of philosophy – is a pursuit “dedicated to keeping wonder in the world” (Massumi 2002 p.239). Massumi says, “philosophy is gloriously useless” (Massumi 2002 p.43). So is art.

A LONG NOW

After burning the set and giving away handfuls of ash to various audience members, peers and collaborators involved in *history*, I collected over five garbage bags full of ash, took *it* with me when we moved house, and scattered *it* around the Dja Dja Wrung³² owned land of Mt. Tarrengower, where I now live. With boxes, clothes, books, furniture and the debris of my life scattered under the carport and around the house following the move, I drive to a walking trail at the base of the mountain, unload the five bags, and begin walking. Each of the bags (triple bagged) is too heavy to carry on *its* own, so I break each of them into two, making ten in total. Walking up the mountain with a bag of ash, back down to collect another, then back up again, *it* was hard not to give a nod to old Sisyphus, and at the same time think about what Brian Eno calls ‘The Long Now’ – “the recognition that the precise moment you’re in grows out of the past and is a seed for the future.” (Eno 2000 p.93) From the beginning, at sunset, the fourteen hours that stretched ahead of me until dawn seemed present. As did the last three and a half years of making and carrying this work with me. And, in some obscure way, in a durational variation, so was Brian Saner’s ‘five seconds’ (part three – p.57). “The longer your sense of Now, the more past and future it includes” (Eno 2000 p.93).

32. Sometimes referred to as Dja Dja Wurrung, but the Dja Dja Wrung Aboriginal Association of Central Victoria, use the latter spelling, so I followed suit so to speak.

But at the same time, or maybe because philosophy and art are so 'gloriously useless,' they're also, as Elizabeth Grosz says, "among the most forceful ways in which culture generates a small space of chaos within chaos where chaos can be elaborated, felt, thought" (Grosz 2008 p.24)

This writing, like the dancing that gave birth to *history's* other performances, yet in a very different way, strives to create, elaborate and feel a small space of 'chaos within chaos.' And *it* does this because *it* believes that *it's* here, in this space that we "prepare ourselves not for the world as it is, but for the world as it might become" (Goat Island 2002 p.248). *It* believes this is

As the weight of the ash and the past push into my back, I remember Richard Long speaking about the materiality of his walks, the weight of the rocks pressing through his rucksack into his back, and the duration over which they unfold. Many of Long's works take the simple form of journeys and are mostly, simply created through the act of walking. Whether *it* be a line made by dragging his boot heel on a hundred mile walk, or making a simple circle of stones, Long makes work "for the land, not against it" (Long in Seymour 1994 p.12).

His work exists almost exclusively through *its* documentary trace, and according to art theorist Anne Seymour, is a "visible moment at a resting place during an invisible journey, a knot in the handkerchief of memory" (Seymour 1994 p.24).



important because “In this preparation, we experience this world as it becomes that one, for a moment” (ibid). And *it* believes that the wonder of experiencing ‘this world as it becomes that one,’ is an encounter – artistic and philosophical. Encounter - discovering ways of seeing beyond recognition - is an art, or philosophy of life that helps keep ‘wonder in the world.’ Life lived, and art attentively made “is a history of these [wondrous, disrupting] encounters” (O’Sullivan 2006 p.1).

Initially as I disperse the ash, I remember parts, snippets of the solo work and bring them into, use them in my encounter with this powerful place. Walking into the mountain’s terrain, I come often, in the early stages of the night to places I feel need a certain strength to enter. I walk into these, strongly making my presence known and felt to the place by reliving a stronger, bigger variation of the breathings section of the solo work, which was first developed in response to different natural landscapes.

Though this is subjective, uninformed and based on only an intuition, I feel I need to do this to be able to meet these places and feel allowed into them. Once I feel I’ve been allowed in, I soften, somehow pay my respects to the place by dancing in response to - dancing with and allowing myself to be

As I walk on I wonder what Long’s works, works of the earth would be, or might become if their traces also returned to the earth and disappeared?

Walking to scatter the past, thinking again, that this should be the end, my feet press into the earth – kangaroo tail pushing into the ground, head floating from the spine - and rather than an ending, I feel myself laying roots; and wondering how determined you have to be if you want to leave the past behind.

MT. TARRENGOWER

Here, you can feel, or sense slow moving geological time, land formations that have quietly settled and formed into stone. You can also sense untold stories and ghosts that breathe, stories the mountain seems to remember through the visible scars it carries – from the first, Aboriginal inhabitants to the miners of the gold rush era through a genocide; then more recently of local mountain bike riders, mobile phone companies and their satellite dishes along with small scale tourism. But there’s also untold, unrecorded histories – as evidenced by the rock cairns that are organized into beautiful sculptural formations at certain places, even in the deepest parts of the bush.

danced by - the landscape, the terrain, and I remember this small but important part of my physical practice I tend too often to neglect to mention.

As I continue walking, the world of the bush animates itself, the trees become creatures, the night comes to life and the breeze starts to whisper. After about three hours I feel the mountain open, welcome me into its folds as I continue, imprinting myself into it while remaining sensitive and receptive to its moods. Over the duration of the night there are two places where I feel strongly and distinctly I am not allowed to enter. I remain respectful of these places and turn back.



To this medley my small and unofficial *history* falls into the earth – and as *it* does I remember other small artists, like Alice Cummins, and her writing about “contributing to the air, to the mutterings of madmen and geniuses and artists of all kinds” (Cummins 2008 p. 67).

And as I walk over, trespassing on this land I think also of Melbourne artist Gretel Taylor, and her insistence on acknowledging her whiteness, acknowledging herself as a trespasser on this land. Thinking of Gretel reminds me of her writing about artist Milos Sejn, whose art includes “walking as a philosophical activity” that combines the physical, the visual and language, in an over-writing (or over-drawing) of the landscape (Taylor 2008 p.110). As a local Melbourne artist who undertook his PhD initially under the supervision of Mark Minchinton, *it’s* also difficult for me not to mention Minchinton’s epic journey: a 650km performance walk across the country of his family history in Western Australia. While the 650km walk was an epic in itself, the personal history Mark describes leading to *it* - an “awakening to my indigenous identity” that took “more than 40 years” - pushes *its* duration beyond the territory of art, and deep into the overlapping territories where life, art, identity, and becoming intermingle. He walked from Busselton to Perth; to Wyalkatchem; to Kellerberrin, retracing the movement and lives of his great-grandfather, grandmother, aunt and mother. And if you read the personal history he

wrote about discovering his Aboriginal ancestry, one can also see this journey as one from black to white and back to black again (Minchinton 2004 n.p).

Aside from the story of white Australia's horrendous treatment of Black Australia, part of what I sense of/from Mark's walk is the profound isolation and loneliness of arts practice. I've no idea what transpired for Mark on that walk, and mine, in comparison, was trifling. But having walked through the night, what remains etched in my memory, is the materiality, and the perceptual encounter with the place, *its* feel – what might euphemistically be called *its* spirit.



GHOSTING/DISAPPEARING

I think about the audience (the reader?), or lack of one, and wonder in some ways, what difference *it* makes. I've rarely been so nervous in the lead up to a performance as I was throughout the day preparing for the walk. As the night wears on I wonder who, if anyone will see the scatterings of ash in the deepest of the bush, or if the odd walker or mountain bike rider will notice the small, subtle interventions that spread out from the various trails – or if *it* matters.

What is a work, where does *it* begin and where does *it* end?

And what is an audience – and is one necessary?

And of course I'm led back to the brilliant Allen Kaprow, whose mission with happenings was to make the audience obsolete – to somehow get back to the existential imperative and quest for self knowledge that for him, and me, is the impulse of art. And as I continue walking, mixing my ghosts with the artists who ghost my work and the ghosts of the mountain, I wonder how to capture and write the materiality of the experience, which is at the fore – and how to give that a value of *its* own, freed from theory or thought. The dustiness of the ash, *its* fine powder insidiously infiltrating layers of clothing - clogging my skin, my pores, my nose. The biting crisp cold of the clear mountain night and the sparkling clarity of the sky, the wind. The rock, loose stones and earth beneath my feet. The constantly changing micro-terrains and micro-

climates. The slow, gradual stopping over the course of the night to add layers of clothing in a losing battle against the dropping temperature. The sounds of roos and other creatures of the night, eyes glowing in my torch beam. The accumulative fatigue of fourteen hours walking - and the magnificence of the sunrise and the brilliance of colour playing across the horizon.

Strangely in this environment, I think again of Etchells speaking about investment - about what happens when we're so beaten and battered we move beyond rhetoric into events (Etchells in Helmer 2004 p.53). And I know I'll never be able to write this, never be able to explain *it* – and that explaining would explain nothing anyway, and miss the point. Now, as I go on writing, straining to meet the demands of discourse, bending everything I say to make *it* fit, succumbing to simplification and formality, then editing to make *it* reasonable when *it's* not reason, but the extremes that reveal (life), I remember a beautiful concluding essay to Adrian Heathfields' book about Tehching Tsieh,³³ *Out of Now*, in which Carol Becker picks up on

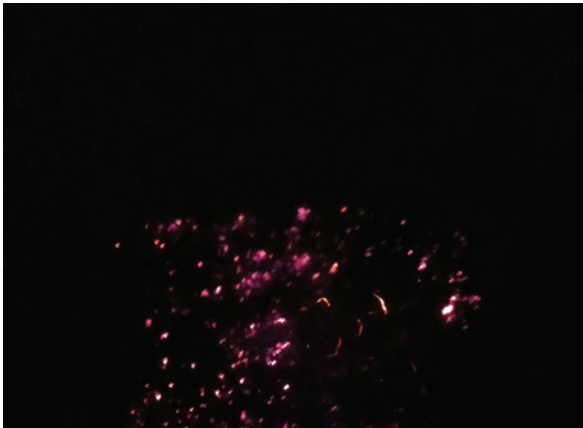
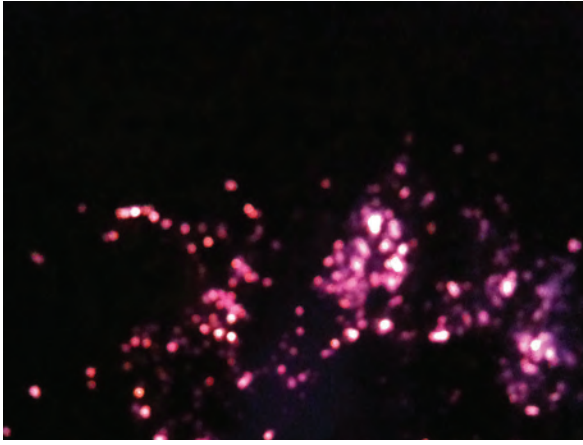
33. I think about 'going too far' and 'blurring the boundaries of art and life,' think of Tehching, and am humbled. This man's commitment to five, one year long performances – living in a cell with no contact (no speaking, reading, television watching or radio listening) with the outside world; taking a photo of himself every hour on the hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year; being tied around the waist with a rope to Linda Montano and not touching one another for a year; living outside and not going inside in New York for a year; and not having anything to do with art for a year; followed by 13 years of disappearing from the artworld.

the emptiness, the nothingness at the centre of Tehching's work. Repeating Etchells' comment that "it makes a sculpture of nothingness," she says this nothingness exists in 'art time,' a time that exists in an invented place where we go to move "beyond the historical dimension and the reality principle" (Becker 2008 p.368). She then goes on to ask if all our creations might only exist in 'art time,' and draws our attention to the ephemerality of all our work, the ephemerality of our lives...

THE ENTIRELY INAPPROPRIATELY TITLED THOUGHTS FOR A NEW BEGINNING: A SCATTERING OF SCATTERED THOUGHTS

...A couple of days later it rains, a solid downpour that continues from the earliest hours of the morning, all through the day and into the night. And *it* seems at last, that having been returned to the earth, *history* might come to rest by being washed away.

But walking over the mountain during the days, then weeks that amidst house renovations and working outside the arts for the first time in nearly two decades all too quickly turn into months - the near incessant winter rain (the heaviest in four decades) still hasn't managed to wash *history's* traces away.



“Everything carries forever the imprint of what it once was,” said Jeanette Winterson. As I yearn for an ending, a closure of sorts I think of performance artist Meloni Poole, who in *Small Acts: Performance, The Millennium and The Marking of Time*, asked, “Is an act of erasure, an act of forgetting, the only chance to begin again?” (Poole 2000 p.99)

The ash has faded now, and near invisible, but still, stubbornly there. *It* seems there is no end. So now, instead of explaining why this writing is a fiction; or why in part one of the introduction I said there were five components, but have in this writing mentioned seven; instead of offering a kind of meta-reflection on the entirety of the project, bringing all the different strands and tangents together, tying up the loose ends and coming to a resolution, I’m going to (try to) begin, again. Because the fact that this writing is a fiction; that *it* is a part of *it*, and that *it*’s still going not only explains the discrepancy between the number of components, but also makes a resolution seem an unquestioned, taken for granted formality, and so more ‘a stupid lie,’ than anything else.



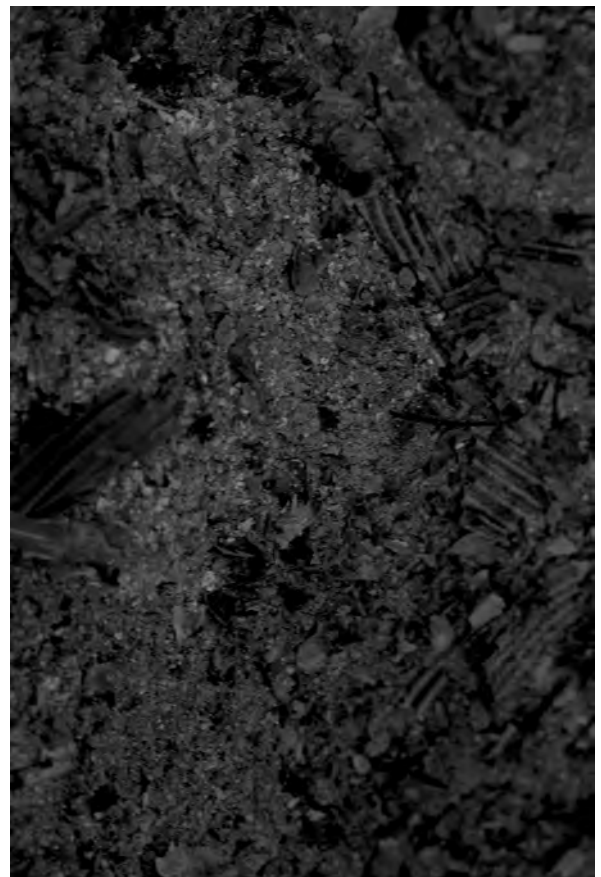
What is a work, where does *it* begin and where does *it* end?

As we begin the journey toward *history*'s final disappearance, I want to avoid the answers and continue the questions, continue the interruptions, and continue opening the gap(s) – destination of the ephemeral, disappearing, vanishing beginning – again and again.

And as a way of not quite cohering and concluding, I want to speak briefly, in passing, about the ephemerality of *history*'s materiality. According to the Australian aboriginal dreamtime, the earth creates and is created by dreams, each step bringing the earth and the dream into being. Documenting the work's dreams, dreaming the work's documentation, and following the dreaming (documentation) to frame and create a world for the work, then folding the dreams of the world dreaming itself around the work back into the work dreaming itself into being, everything begins, and ends with the body – which is the earth of work.

Dancing thoughts mutate from ephemeral sensations in the dancing body and morph into word-thought-things that crawl, crumpled from the page to the performance space, growing into a world of paper dreams (and cardboard walls), creating an immersive viewing environment that's an extended creative documentation of the felt-thought processes surrounding the construction of the work.

In some ways, this writing is a simple extension of *history's* set, which in *its* different incarnations was, is, and is born from the fleeting sensations that pass through the dancing body. These sensations that have a life and pass through, are the dance that dies and disappears. Born from the earth of/and the body, they return to the earth of/and the body - and "art time."



History part seven

DISAPPEARING

“Becoming isn’t part of history; history amounts only to the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to ‘become,’ that is to create something new” (Deleuze in O’Sullivan 2006 p.78).

History (and probably history) is the affirmation of the potential that is contained within, and continues through *it*. That potential is what enables *history* to rewrite itself. Engaging with the past to find the surprises lurking in *its* gaps, *history* is the ‘gloriously useless,’ highly artificial expression of its own self transforming activity.

History, (and probably history) and *its* self-transforming life-activity exists in “art time,” a time that exists in an invented place. A place that search for as I might amidst the debris of this writing, is almost no longer here. As *its* last remnants slowly disappear, responses, and stories from *its* past slowly trickle in – of ashes dropped off bridges, and tossed in the sea; of trees planted by train lines and in Outback Queensland; of danced rituals and scatterings as part of other processes; of ashes tossed on vegie gardens, and still others sitting on shelves... waiting. As *history* now waits for *its* final dissolution - a response to Tehching Tsieh. As part of *history*’s performative self-erasure, *it*’s going to disappear. To do this, from here *it* will need your help. And take time.

I’m going to ask you to burn this book, and scatter *its* ashes into the gap of “art time.”

Appendix A

MRM JOURNAL EXCERPTS

Working with S - she's a dancing nervous system, a kind of constant hyper-awareness; scanning, moving, lines and electrical impulses feeding back, forward and every other which way - always traveling through the global body. Head and brain processing information and being lulled into unconscious movement... doesn't use her bones much - mostly contents, organs for nervous support. ...fascinating.

I feed gentle provocations in as she's dancing: sometimes keep your head still; sometimes work with isolations; drop your brain into your pelvis and so on; then noticing her habits around pausing and impulse I offer playing with the thickness of her breath and the space. When she finishes we chat about decision making processes and options out of pauses and different types of impulse – where is it where is it not, where is it least and so on. We also talk about different waits: sometimes letting something build, define itself and then take hold, sometimes going before its taken hold or become definable.

She re-enters and her attention has shifted - it's almost like your seeing what she's doing but also seeing her work to make what she's doing something other.

My turn and S gives me this fantastic score that my head only moves in response to big movements, but doesn't move with fine or subtle movements. It's brilliant. A can of worms - it's one of those scores I can keep going back into and prising apart, keep finding more in, in a way that complements the material and my ongoing concerns related to trying to subtly make the listening audible.

She also feeds me feeling my eye sockets softening and swapping with my belly. It completely messes up the 'no head with small movements' score. Trying to get them both at once is beyond me until I realize that as I breathe with and soften my eyes my head is following. Another minute or so and I learn to hold my head still while playing with my eyes and start to feel like holding 'no head' and 'breathing eyes' together becomes possible.

Working with Michaela, I saw, no, heard the sounds of attention. I'm specifically speaking about being able to hear the dancers listening. We were working with increasing the gap, elongating the space, lengthening the time between impulse and initiation then feeding in live

scores to keep fuelling it. M began and I could instantly hear, initially it was like every pause crackled with possibility, and I could feel the activity within the stillness. As she progressed we fed in various scores - playing with changing how you're listening, sometimes putting something in the gap, changing the size of the gap, waiting for two gaps, varying the tone of her attention and so on. They all added something, fuelled it, amplified her attention and made the dance crackle with the sounds of listening.

Beginning in response to M, I re-discovered an old score: changeability. Trying to move from different body systems – skin, blood, muscle, bone, organ, lymph and so on – in different rhythms with different weights, efforts and qualities. It's fascinating because it really undercuts everything, but in undercutting everything, something else that's interesting, strange and surprising with a logic that's apparent yet elusive appears.

Partnering with Carlee, and a quick inventory of how we work, how we direct ourselves, what our strategies for interrupting ourselves are. She chuckles and takes one of my impossible scores: throwing bits of yourself you're not using in directions you're not going.

When she finishes we talk about playing with decisions more than worrying about how you're making them or what ones you're making. Many decisions at once with different body parts, no decisions, interrupted decisions, undecided decisions and so on. This leads into attention and varying the tone of attention becomes a score she takes back in and uses, drifting between kind of carefree and quite intense. It turns into a fantastically fascinating, unpredictable dance that effortlessly traverses a wide terrain, it's like the space changes several times over, until near the end she stands almost imperceptibly unstill. It's so quiet and so close to stillness and I don't know if it was because of the previous varied terrain or the varying tones of attention, but it's absolutely loaded...

My turn and it's a strange fun dance; seems to get almost everywhere without my rushing and ten minutes pass in a flash. I come out to chat and we talk about paring back the score, and simplifying. We also talk about 'being on top of things,' 'being ready,' or 'generating.' None of these descriptors are quite right, but what she identified came from some kind of

mutual recognition and somehow I understood. I see it in her too. So we talked about letting this bottom out. So I go back in with the thought of simplifying, paring back the score, letting this hard-to-define-thing fall away and trying to replace this thing I sometimes do with my eyes, jaw and smile.

It's a kooky little left field dance. Not so much different movement pathways as a different way of inhabiting material. Less a different way of moving; and more moving differently.

There's a fertile ground where the strategy to break habit and essentially improve the dancing complements and adds to the composition; and this is what fascinates me. The dance is the composition. The act of dancing is the material. To practice, refine, add to and layer the dancing refines and layers the material, the composition.

Finished with a duet. After all the talk about varying tones of attention, it started out all determined listening, which was strange because our previous (coincidental) encounters have always been super clear and charged - the recognition and acknowledgement of coming into the field of another thinking-feeling-moving-dancing-listening-machine. A little while longer and we remember 'varying the tone of your attention' - the listening and the dance change, and now we begin to play.

Appendix B

JOHN CAGE'S MUSICIRCUS SCORE

JOHN CAGE'S MUSICIRCUS SCORE:

Retrieved from: <http://www.madeleineandtim.net/Musicircus.html>

Performance created by Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey

In collaboration with David Wells, David Tyndall, Meredith Rogers, Kim Lawler, Kate Kantor, Jesse Stevens and with the generous support of over 300 Melbourne artists and performers.

Dusk Until Dawn, BMW Edge, Atrium and surrounds, Federation Square

Friday October 26, 2007 Melbourne International Arts Festival

"I have not made detailed directions for Musicircus. You simply bring together under one roof as much music (as many musical groups and soloists) as practical under the circumstances. It should last longer than ordinary concerts, start at 7 or 8 in the evening, and continuing, say, to midnight. Arrange performers on platforms or within roped-off areas. There must be plenty of space for the audience to walk around. If you have more groups than places, make a schedule: Group 1 in Place A from 7-9:30; Group 23 in Place A from 9:45-midnight. Etc. There should be food on sale and drinks (as at a circus). Dancers and acrobats."

John Cage, letter dated June 6, 1973

The Musicircus is one of Cage's omnium gatherum pieces, and was first performed in 1967 in the Stock Pavilion at the University of Illinois.

"One very important element is that there should at all times be many people performing simultaneously. The next is that, since none of the musicians are being paid, there being too many of them, the entire event must be free to the public. ... In harmony with the separation of this work from conventional economics, I have not made a score nor have I published one of course."

--John Cage, letter dated December 23, 1979

“Some years ago ... we gave a Musicircus ... in a large gymnasium. We simply had as much going on at a single time as we could muster. And we exercised no aesthetic bias. ... You should let each thing that happens happen from its own center, whether it is music or dance. Don’t go in the direction of one thing ‘using’ another. Then they will all go together beautifully (as birds, airplanes, trucks, radios, etc. do).”

--John Cage, letter dated February 17, 1979

There will be spatial and temporal ordering of all elements concerned with the performance by the Curatorial team. This design will consider the chance operations as developed by Cage, his instructions of letting the work happen from its own center, and with the superimposition of a spatial score over the entire performing space designing the performance.

In tune with Cage’s directive, performers will not be paid, but will get a party bag. The Curation team will also not receive a performance fee. The party bag will include (but is not limited to) a commemorative certificate signed by Kristy Edmunds, and an Artists Pass for the Festival. Each performer will have their name recorded on a program of the event, and each has the option of creating a description of their work in the context of the Musicircus.

Hopes for the Performance

“It is possible to imagine that the artists whose work we live with constitute an alphabet by means of which we spell our lives.”

John Cage

The event is seen as a contemporary mapping of the Melbourne Arts community at a particular space and time. We also hope that international/national Festival Artists would like to be part of this event.

Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey July 2007.

Appendix C

BOX EVENT SCORE

WINDOW SPACE 1

TIME NAME

0.00	Janette
0.05	Joey and Ash
0.10	Janette
0.15	Joey and Ash
0.20	Shaun
0.30	Gretel
0.40	Jo and Deanne
0.50	Ollie and Emily
	(2 min solo=duet from 0.58 -1.00)
1.00	Jo
1.01	David Tyndall
1.02	Emily
1.03	Janette
1.04	Sarah
1.05	Sophie
1.06	Emma and Paul
1.07	Michaela
1.08	Open Score - whoever whatever
1.18	Kate M
1.27	Jo
1.38	Ollie
1.48	Emma and Paul
1.58	Finish

BACK DOOR / STEPS SPACE

TIME NAME

0.00	
0.12	Gretel
0.17	Sarah
0.22	Gretel
0.27	Sarah
0.32	Sophie
0.37	Nikki
0.42	Sophie
0.47	Nikki
0.52	Kate M
0.55	The Boys
0.58	...
1.00	Emma
1.01	Phoebe
1.02	Shaun

1.03	Bec
1.04	Michaela
1.05	Ash
1.06	Martin and Shelley
1.07	Ollie
1.08	Luke
1.13	Michaela
1.18	Luke
1.24	Emily
1.30	Sophie
1.36	...
1.38	Emily
1.44	Sophie
1.50	Luke
1.56	Sophie
1.58	finish

WALL SPACE

TIME NAME

0.00	Emma and Paul
0.10	Bec and Tim
0.20	David and Jacob
0.30	Martin and Shelle
0.40	Emma
0.50	Paul
0.58
1.00	David Corbet
1.01	Gretel
1.02	Deanne
1.03	Sally
1.04	David Tyndall
1.05	Nikki
1.06	Bec and Tim
1.07	David and Jacob
1.08	Sarah
1.14	Nikki
1.20	Janette
1.30	Michaela
	(2 min solo from 1.36 - 1.38)
1.40	Bec and Tim
1.45	The Boys
1.55	finish

WINDOW SPACE 1

TIME	NAME
0.00	Ollie
0.10	Emily
0.20	Luke F
0.25	Pheobe
0.30	Luke F
0.35	Poebe
0.40	Tim
0.46	Bec
0.52	Peter
0.58
0.00	Jacob
0.01	Michaela
1.02	Martin and Shelley
1.03	Joey and Ash
1.04	Peter
1.05	Kate M
1.06	Jo and Deanne
1.07	Gretal
1.08	Joey and Ash
1.14	Poebe
1.26	Martin and Shelley
1.36
1.38	Pheobe, Paul
1.45	Gretel
1.52	Peter
	(2 min solo from 1.58 - 2.00)
2.00	finish...

ALCOVE SPACE

TIME	NAME
0.00
0.08	Kate M
0.13	Janette Hoe
0.18	Kate M
0.23	Janette Hoe
0.28	Peter Fraser
0.33	Jo Lloyd
0.38	Peter Fraser
0.43	Jo Lloyd
0.48	Janette
0.50	Joey and Ash
0.52	Janette
0.54	Joey and Ash
0.56	Janette
0.58
0.00	Paul
0.01	Ollie
1.02	Gretels
1.03	Tim
1.04	Luke F
1.05	Joey
1.06	Jacob
1.07	Kate M
1.08	Shaun
1.13	David and Jacob
1.18	Shaun
1.24	David and Jacob
1.30	Jo and Deanne
1.36
1.38	Joey and Ash
1.44	Jo and Deanne
1.50	Deanne
1.52	Michaela
1.54	Deanne
1.56	Michaela
1.58	finish...

Appendix D

MAD WORLDS
PERFORMANCE TEXT

It was ridiculous, but as I got older I was finding it more and more difficult to deal with what they liked to call reality, largely because I was a dreamer and just didn't quite manage to get around to it.

I sometimes wondered if all my work, years and years of work was all just digging increasingly large circles all around what I was looking for, but then everybody knew the treasure was in the search; still, I sometimes wasn't sure if I was getting closer or further away; was the building, the rubble of my world going up or coming down; I never knew. It always seemed like both – away from one thing and toward another, toward and away. It was always both.

They said it was mad when you felt too much, when you couldn't block out, censor, but I fancied that if I made myself sensitive enough to feel everything I could disappear into the earth, the sky; I'd be able to travel the universe, past the stars, beneath the sea, between worlds ...then come home and do the dishes.

I thought if only I could sensitize myself enough I'd be able to control everything, make myself perfect; I didn't realize things would just keep getting stranger and stranger.

At yoga they told me awareness lead to enlightenment, but it seemed to make me more aware of how twisted I was, and the more aware I became the more twisted I seemed to become. Awareness was closer to madness than enlightenment, or maybe enlightenment was madness, which explains why the monks are always laughing.

Yes, yes that was it, yes. This tiny little word, no more, seemed to say it all, everything that needed to be said, nothing else, just yes.

There were two worlds; the big one and the squillions we create, invent and encounter everywhere that are more important, more necessary than the big one; ones that live, sustain, transport us and travel between and through themselves, that make this one a farce, make all the people who think this is the only one, or the main, most important one, the same ones who destroy this one the most, bearable.

Other worlds, strange spaces, crazy infinitesimal time zones, wild imaginings and idiosyncratic worlds got easier and easier, more and more friendly, beckoning and real, while the world of the everyday, not the unexpected in the everyday but the everyday everyday became so surreal I could barely deal with it.

Part hermit, part mad man, bumbling scientist and full time dreamer I lived under the delusion that fantasy, worlds of imagination and desire were just as real and valid as the big stinky old one we were currently in the process of stuffing up. So I kept dreaming and kept elaborating my own little world and discovered a whole bunch of other people who'd made their own little worlds, some of which were staggeringly complete. The more I stumbled into other people living in other worlds the more I was convinced reality wasn't really real at all, but there was always someone somewhere from the big world or another world trying to tell me my world needed explaining or situating in relation to the big world.

I tried to explain I wasn't so certain the big world actually existed, I was becoming increasingly certain it didn't, and if it did I didn't know how to deal with it - or exactly what it was for that matter.

I wasn't trying to be difficult, things just worked differently, perched at odd angles, or lurching unexpectedly they tended to change shape and form, taking different directions at the same time, sometimes without much rhyme or reason.

How do worlds meet?

"How to translate << the intangible >> without touching it? ...the feel of touch, the taste of taste?

Can words paint the intangible? ...Is there a word for touching the intangible part of the real with a breath?" (Cixous 2005 p.33)

I loved meeting others living on their own fringes; of course we knew our fringes were still connected to the main highway world, even if only remotely - we'd always have to come back, submit to the corporate language of being responsible, accountable. Things had always been weird; only the big old world tried to pretend they weren't – managed to convince a lot

of people too. They laughed at 'primitive' cultures because they had strange cosmologies but then went off talking about God and doing all sorts of crazy things in the name of science. At some point the survey became science, like science had become God before that; was very strange to think of the survey as God: life reduced to numbers, and simple ones at that. They also laughed at 'crazy' people because they made things up and changed their minds about why and what and where and who and how from day to day, then tried to 'cure' them using psycho-analytical theories about castration anxiety...

Didn't seem like madness to me, seemed normal to make it up as you go along, and tell different people different stories, not just to make them happy, but to change the story for the time, the moment - the context, purpose, desire, or whatever reason; everybody knew everything was connected and in dialogue with, listening to everything else, and that nothing was all and only what it seemed; and everybody knew the best things were practically useless, things that weren't quite anything, that could have been anything, everything - who didn't love staring into flames, looking at clouds, making up pictures as they went along and who said everything had to be something or one thing and only one thing when clearly everything was everything?

It was always both/and, never either/or, everybody knew that, only everybody pretended not to, or pretended it wasn't, or that it was sometimes but not other times, or that it could be, but they wished it wouldn't be, or that it was all just too fast, too much and too confusing, which it was of course, but who could stop it and how to get off? - senses and nervous systems were overloaded and hope only really seemed to hang about in play and other useless activities and even they seemed like more fun when they went mad and embraced the nervous system overload; besides delirium or desire had an extraordinary fluidity and everybody knew that everything was fluid even if it'd temporarily solidified, even sometimes for a very long time; who wanted the same thing, the same explanation, who wanted one thing, one memory, one way anyway - it was much more interesting to change according to the questions, make things up and play without rhyme reason or end.

The world was mad; crazy people just knew it, the rest of us could only hope to discover the depths of our delusions. Even the philosophers were pushing thought to madness, because among other things madness helped keep you sane.

World capitalism, economic rationalism said it was madness when what they liked to call 'reality' cracks; but reality is cracked and a madman's "not the one who has lost his reason. ...[he's] the one who has lost everything except his reason."

(Chesterton in Phillips 1995, p.15).

The question's not who or what's mad, but who or what isn't?

...

...

...

When I first began noticing the voices, it was just the odd one, from time to time, usually in emergency situations like improvisation; but then I started to hear more voices more often, a whole cacophony of entertaining, mischievous, subversive, playful, enigmatic, defiant, evil and plain bizarre voices; somehow listening to the whole cacophony made the original voice louder because he just kept quiet and calm, becoming clearer and clearer as the cacophony swarmed and grew rowdier. The more amusing ones liked to send me off on all sorts of tangents, daring me to do things a calmer, more reasonable voice would never have dreamed of.

As things got stranger the chorus grew, making the calm voice harder and easier to find; sometimes I had to chase the others away, or strain to hear the calm through the hubbub, which soon became a game in itself: straining to hear the straining and playing between straining and unstraining to see what I could hear then, finding my way through delirium by looking for the small calm voice amidst the madness. Or maybe the small calm voice was madness.

Then I read Deleuze who said: 'there is no world, only possible worlds to be invented,' which sounded good, but then I learned that to invent a world you had to have read and read and read and at the end of all the reading I couldn't see why everyone couldn't and didn't invent their own little worlds without having had to read.

I couldn't help but to think there was a secret, just around the next corner maybe, so I walked into the woods, just off the path there were some trees, a kind of thick circular patch, walking towards it I sensed something there, so I looked a little deeper and what I sensed a moment ago still seemed to be there, only a little further away, so I go a little further, and it's still almost there, where it's always been: always almost.

I thought back to the real world we shared which didn't exist and wasn't real at all for a second and I still preferred other worlds for small people with little voices. But somehow, I had to invent how to cope and deal with the big one – only through inventing my own, trying to perceive the unperceived, because the unperceived is only unperceived in this one. Inventing to escape, and creating escape. The most insidious thing about world capitalism was leaching its way into our imaginations, preventing escape by codifying, trapping and defining...

long live dreams and desires, delusions and games, I shouted, like the game of playing in and between two different worlds, here and elsewhere, all the time. There I am, right here. Nowhere, somewhere, I'm everywhere grounded 'in an impractical dimension of reality' (Massumi 2002 p.183), between worlds, in simultaneous multiple overlapping subjective realities. Sometimes caught in the struggle of not fitting in, but wanting to fit in at the same time as not wanting to fit in. Being happy and terrified of fitting in and not fitting in, amongst those who do and don't fit in. Wanting to, desperately, especially with the other outcasts, but also not wanting to, being terrified of it, desperately needing to, hopelessly unable to, not really wanting to, having to – at the same time all at once.

Homeless I was almost at home everywhere, just passing through, a ghost in a disappearing world - without a tradition I just tried to figure it out as I went, staying away from the road so I wouldn't have to obey the rules.

But people told me I had to have a vision; only I never had a vision, just a vague feeling. Still, they kept asking what my vision was and I kept thinking I'd know when I finished; I was too young to be a naïve old fool old, so people said I was mad, but everyone knew madness was a sane response to a crazy world.

Dance grabbed me and I fell for it; being an orphan I made it home, and slowly through engaging, and dreaming, I continued, dancing, and dreaming a dream like breath, that was always already there, everywhere, here, without beginning or ending or rhyme or reason, playing, in a creative play space, creating more creative play space. I was on a vision quest, even though it was the wrong time of year. I was descending into the choreographic underworld, and I was going to emerge with a clear vision after having leapt into the abyss of improvisation. Or did I need a vision to get through the abyss and keep me from drowning?

A vision was like a life jacket, but I needed swimming lessons, or another dream, unfolding and changing with each step, bringing each step into being; such a simple dream: to want to keep dreaming, keep going and keep figuring it out and making it up as I went along. It was all so simple before 'knowing' got in the way and I learnt how little I know and unsimple it is; but stupid simple me thought if knowing is unsimple it would be simple to unknow and be happily simple.

Stupid cleverness made things unsimple; better to unlearn, undo and unknow, become cleverly stupid and keep it simple.

Ha! Stupid unsimple cleverness forgot how clever simple stupidity could be.

More concerned with discovering than remembering I was swept along by endless discovery, and I forgot to remember everything I'd discovered instead of remembered; even forgot I was forgetting, unlearning and not knowing for the joy of continuing to discover I kept dreaming my simple dream of continuing to dream, and kept forgetting what I should have remembered so I could keep discovering – unlearning and not knowing just to keep going, dreaming and unlearning forever...

How I'd fallen in love with the word forever, listening to it echo through eternity

I wanted forever so I had to constantly begin again because forever was a circle game without beginning or end – it was endless beginnings beginning again, endlessly.

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