

2010

# Twig Dances: Improvisation Performance as Ecological Practice

Sarco-Thomas, Malaika

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/936>

---

<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/4993>

University of Plymouth

---

*All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.*

**Twig Dances:**  
**Improvisation Performance as Ecological Practice**

by

Malaika Sarco-Thomas

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dartington College of Arts

March 2010



## **Copyright Statement**

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognize that its copyright rests with its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the author's prior written consent.

Signed.....

Malaika Sarco-Thomas



**Twig Dances:**  
**Improvisation Performance as Ecological Practice**

by

Malaika Sarco-Thomas

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dartington College of Arts

March 2010

**twig 1 noun**

1. a small branch or shoot, especially one from a tree or shrub
2. a structure that resembles a branch, for example, a minute offshoot of a nerve or blood vessel

**twig 2 verb**

*U.K. to understand or realize something (informal)*

## **ABSTRACT**

### **“Twig Dances: Improvisation Performance as Ecological Practice”**

**Malaika Sarco-Thomas**

This thesis charts the role of dance improvisation performance as a practice of ecology by analyzing data collected from a series of experiments in improvisation. Conducted in a number of locations in Europe and Asia, these experiments examine the usefulness of improvisation performance practices to notions of “ecology” and common understandings of humans’ relationships to our environment. Using “ecology” to describe an investigation of interrelationship as well as a commitment to act with an awareness of one’s actions in the social, mental and natural spheres discussed by Felix Guattari (2000), I outline ways contemporary improvisation practices can facilitate this investigation.

To do this I draw on my own experience as a dancer at the Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS) in Brussels from 2004-2006, and as co-director of the TWIG Project in China in 2006. Using the experiences of improvising, learning dance, seeing dance, performing dance, creating scores for dance, and teaching movement improvisation, I argue that ecological practice is defined by its ability to instill a sense of “response ability” and personal agency in its practitioners.

As a way of observing and incorporating new knowledge, improvisation functions herein both as a research practice and as the object of study. By improvising and documenting my experiences using a phenomenological lens derived from Merleau-Ponty’s work, I reflect on how practices of awareness in dancing can constitute new ways of knowing. I discuss how improvising can assist awareness of the body’s relationship with the environment at a number of levels including sensory, spatial, temporal, conceptual, social and political. I also investigate the notion of paradox as a theme throughout the thesis and present its usefulness as a way of producing and reflecting upon a practice of bodily research.

The term “twig dances” represents an expanded understanding of what I mean by “improvising”, and points to my use of improvisation as a research process. As an action taken “to understand or realize something”, a twig dance is any of a number movement practices which take as their focus an active investigation into relationships between people and the non-human world.

# CONTENTS

Copyright Statement	i
Title Page	ii
Definition of “twig”	iii
Abstract	iv
List of Contents	v
List of Illustrations	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Author’s Declaration	x
Preface	xv
Introduction: Relating Relationships	1
1. Pointing to “Nature” in Performance	11
2. “Ecological” Performance?	20
3. Methodology	26
Chapter One. Sensing: A Process Philosophy	39
1. Perception: Linking Sense and Sensibility	40
2. Intelligent Flesh	53
3. Deborah Hay: Whole Body the Teacher	57
4. Practicing Perceiving	66
5. Sensing, Feeling, Action	70
6. Experiments in Sense: <i>Response Ability</i>	81
7. Conclusion: Process as Practice	87
Chapter Two. Spacing: Interactive Imaginations	89
1. Touching Space	92
2. Here: Rosas Carves Rosas	100
3. There: Delving into New Spaces	109
4. Everywhere: “Passing Through” Me and You	125
5. Conclusion: Sensing Beyond the Self	132
Chapter Three. Timing: Sensing Emergence	135
1. Thinking Time:	
Capitalism, Globalization and Postmodernism	141
2. Grosz and Simson: Time and Transformation	160
3. Rhubarb Jam: Rhythm as Movement	178
4. Time: Sensible or Senseless?	188
Chapter Four. Structuring: Roots and Routes	195
1. Relating, Creating: Structures in Philosophy and Dance	199
2. Discipline: The Tree	201

3. Rhizome: Reason for Routes	219
4. Beyond the Technocratic in Technique and Theory	231
5. “Creativity at Every Level” of the Canopy	255
Chapter Five. Observing Politics of Placement	261
1. The TWIG Project in China	262
2. Audiences and Places	272
3. Re-Territorializing as Eco-Subjects	283
4. Watching Watching	301
5. Context and Responsibility	312
4. “Play” as Ecology in Everyday Practice	317
5. Dissemination, Cross-Pollination, Farming	324
Chapter Six. Paradox in Transveral Practices	327
1. Transversality: Unexpected Evolution	328
2. Recognizing Paradox	331
3. Paradox in Perception	334
4. Using Paradox	338
5. <i>Twig Dances</i> : Translating Perception	350
6. Embodying Imagination	365
7. Embodying Identification	371
8. Conclusion: Moving from Intra- to Intersubjectivity	376
Bibliography	383

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1	“Red Square 1”	287
Figure 2	“Red Square 2”	287
Figure 3	“Red Square 3”	287
Figure 4	“Red Square 4”	288
Figure 5	“Red Square 5”	301
Figure 6	“Red Square 6”	301

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Choosing to research improvisation brings with it a host of uncertainties. Even as improvisation is a process of becoming at home with the unknown, it demands rigorous attention to this impossible task, and working toward such attention brings with it an assortment of rewards and frustrations. The sense of creating, for an audience of onlookers, dance enthusiasts, or eager children, something out of nothing in an improvisation performance is enormously satisfying. This sense of relationship generated from performance events was my first impetus to investigate the wider potential of improvisation to shape relationships between humans and their environment. Yet, wanting to offer a lasting expression of my practice has left me feeling empty-handed at times, realizing that improvisation is only as appreciable, relevant and enjoyable as it is performed in an ongoing, participatory way. This thesis is one way of making improvisation last longer than its performance; it is an attempt to articulate, in writing and in images, the wider ripples that improvisation practices generate, and to call attention to their ability to hone our relational capacity.

In improvising my way toward these words, I have been fortunate to receive guidance and assistance from many sources. The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation generously supported my research for four years. My advisors, Professors Claire Donovan and Emilyn Claid, have proven steadfast sources of advice and encouragement. Early on in the research process, Diana Theodores also offered

inspiration and an incentive to write from my own experiences. The many teachers and students at PARTS who gave fully of themselves to the task of dancing and questioning, dancing and answering, dancing and questioning, etc. brought flesh and vitality to this project, and expanded my experience of dance improvisation from a solo endeavor to a social phenomenon. I am grateful to Zhang Wei, Huang Xinghai, Nanling EcoTourism, Melody Ye, Liu Chun Mei, and Yu Ying whose work and support made the TWIG Project in China possible, and to the generous and dedicated library staff at Dartington Campus of University College Falmouth for allowing me to take out scandalous numbers of books. In managing the nuts and bolts of compiling this thesis, the support of technicians and IT staff at Dartington Campus has been great. I am particularly grateful to the examiners of this thesis whose detailed feedback brought needed depth and scope to the project.

I thank Rowan Thomas and Coral Thomas who have done much to teach me about improvisation as a practice of having fun, and how to notice the smallest or most unusual living members of any landscape. Finally I acknowledge the unequalled support and motivation which my husband and collaborator Richard Sarco-Thomas has brought to this project as co-director of TWIG, and also as sounding board, support, generative provocateur and consultant for the thesis. Seeing his quiet love of the outdoors and ability to spend time with – not only read about—plants and animals brought me out of the dance studio and into the fresh air.



## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

This research was supported with a Graduate Fellowship provided by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, a part-time fee bursary and other financial assistance provided by University College Falmouth incorporating Dartington College of Arts.

### **Programs of study:**

*Improvisation* [Workshop]. Charlie Morrissey. Bristol. May 2009.

*Impact Factor: Writing for Publication* [Workshop]. Plymouth University.  
September 2008

*Writing for Research* [Workshop]. Dartington College of Arts. November 2008.

*Improvisation* [Workshop]. Kirstie Simson. Penzance, 2007.

Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS) Brussels. 2004-2006

### **Workshops Taken at PARTS:**

*Yoga*. Rita Polveroode, Mia Lawrence.

*Contemporary Technique*. Lance Gries, David Hernandez,  
Dominique Duzchinsky, Ori Flomin, Chrysa Parkinson, David  
Zambrano.

*Classical Technique*. Libby Farr, Elizabeth Corbett, Paul Estabrook,  
Janet Panetta.

*Forsythe Improvisation Technologies*. Elizabeth Corbett and Ana Roman.

*Passing Through*. David Zambrano.

*O*. Deborah Hay.

*Theater.* Jan Ritsema.

*Contact Improvisation.* Scott Smith, Kurt Koegel, Kirstie Simson.

*Theory.* Rudi Laermans, Bojana Cjevic, Levin DeCauter.

*Repertory.* “Achterland” with Joanne Saunier, “Drumming” with Roberto Olivan.

*Rhythm.* Michelle Debrulle.

*Singing.* Lucy Grauman.

*Action Theater Training* [Workshop]. Sten Rudstrom. Berlin. August 2005.

*Forming a Research Question* [Workshop]. Plymouth University. July 2005.

*Ki Aikido* [Classes]. Sensei John Stoner. Totnes 2003-2005.

### **Publications and performances:**

“Improvising with Twigs: Paradox in Transversal Practice” (forthcoming 2010)  
*AIAS Conference Proceedings.* Association of International Arts Schools  
Conference. November 2009. University College Falmouth.

*Quercus* [Solo performance]. Winter Dance Gathering. Dartington Campus,  
University College Falmouth. December 2009.

*For and Against* [Group improvisation performance]. Winter Dance Gathering.  
Dartington Campus, University College Falmouth. December 2009.

*Twig Dances in Nanling* [Video screening]. Winter Dance Gathering.  
Dartington Campus, University College Falmouth. December 2009.

*State of Play* [Group improvisation performance]. Barbican Theatre, Plymouth.  
November 2009.

“Improvising in Ruyang: Community Art as Ecological Practice”, *Journal of  
Arts and Communities*,1 (1), May 2009, pp. 45-68.

*Twig Dances* [Solo performances]. Various outdoor locations in Belgium, Germany, Poland, China, Swaziland, Liberia and England. 2006-2008.

*Nesting Here* [Solo performance], *Mark* [Exhibition]. Dartington College of Arts Gallery. May 2006.

*Noah's Living Room: Living Trees* [Installation and solo performance]. Dartington College of Arts Gallery. April 2006.

*In Praise of Compost* [Solo performance]. PARTS. Brussels. 2006.

*Blackpool* [Duet performance]. In collaboration with Ondrej Vidlar. PARTS. Brussels. January 2006.

*Rhythm Project* [Performance] Directed by Michelle De Brulle and David Hernandez. PARTS. Brussels. February 2006.

*Achterland* [Performance]. Choreographed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker and set by Joanne Saunier. PARTS. Brussels. November 2005.

*Mhmmmm* [Performance]. Directed by Jennifer Lacey and Nadia Lauro. Kaai Theater. Brussels. October 2005.

*Shiver Thy Timbers* [Event]. SoWatNow Festival. Santa Cruz, USA. November 2005.

*Spinning Towns* [Performance]. Directed by Eilla Goldhahn. Buckfastleigh, UK. July 2005.

*Here, There, Everywhere* [Solo performance]. Rosas Performance Space. Brussels. June 2005.

*Passing Through* [Performance]. David Zambrano. Rosas Performance Space. June 2005.

*Rhubarb Jam* [Group music and dance improvisation performance]. In collaboration with Benjamin Vandewalle, Albert Quesada, Luc Evans, Lisa Dangotte and Audrey Lauro, Rosas Performance Space. Brussels. June 2005.

*The Meeting Point* [Group music and dance improvisation performance], Beursschouwburg. Brussels. February 2005; Bimhuis. Amsterdam. March 2005.

*In-sourcing At Home: People in Crap Hotels* [Performance]. Directed by Jan Ritsema. PARTS. Brussels. January 2005.

“*Something*” and “*Nothing*” [Solo performance]. PARTS. Brussels, 2005.

*Forsythe Improvisation Technologies* [Performance]. Directed by Elizabeth Corbett. PARTS. Brussels, 2004.

“Bonehead and Other [un-]Reason[able]s to Dance Headless”, *I, Theatron*, 2005. Available at: [http://itheatron.net/batch\\_two.swf](http://itheatron.net/batch_two.swf) (Accessed: 9 March 2005).

### **Presentations and conferences attended:**

“Improvising with Twigs: Paradox in Transversal Practices”. Conference presentation. *AIAS Conference: What is the Relationship Between the Visual Arts and Ecological Thinking?* University College Falmouth, UK. November 2009.

“Improvisation as a Practice of Ecology”. Conference presentation. *European Contact Improvisation Teachers’ Exchange*. Edge Hill University, UK. July 2009.

*Global Perspectives on Dance Pedagogy- Research and Practice*. Conference delegate. *Congress on Research in Dance*. De Montfort University, UK. 25-27 June 2009.

*Desire Lines: Art & Ecology at Dartington*. Conference delegate. Dartington College of Arts. September 2007.

*Desire Lines: Art & Ecology at Dartington*. Conference delegate. Dartington College of Arts. September 2005.

*Music & Dance Exchange at Dartington*. Collaborative performance lab participant. Dartington College of Arts. April 2005.

*Constructing Contemporary Dance*. Conference delegate. Antwerp: Monty. Documented at: <http://www.sarma.be/nieuw/taz/audioarchief.htm> 9 October 2004.

*Klapstuk #11bis*. Performance festival/conference delegate. Stuk: Leuven. Documented at: <http://www.sarma.be/nieuw/taz/audioarchief.htm> 25 October 2004.

**External contacts:** PARTS associates, Richard Sarco-Thomas, Vitamin Creative Space, Nanling Eco-Tourism, Huang Xinghai, Jennifer Monson, Kirstie Simson

**Format of submission for PhD:** two bound volumes including a main thesis of text and images and a separately bound collection of appendices including images, text, table and four DVDs.

**Word count of main body of thesis:** 79,890

## PREFACE

“Twig Dances: Improvisation Performance as Ecological Practice” is a thesis presenting findings and outcomes from research through practice. Using improvisational methods to research dance improvisation and ecology, I have developed an improvisation practice which inquires into and performs certain understandings of ecology. This practice consists of a number of actions including studying dance and improvisation, creating improvisation scores, performing improvisation, organizing workshops in improvisation, honing skills of observation, planting trees, performing with trees, and coordinating projects which facilitate ecological enquiry through art-making. I conducted my practical research for this thesis in two main locations: first, at the Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS) in Brussels, and then on an overland journey from England to China as part of the collaborative venture “TWIG Project: Together We Integrate Growth”.

This document presents the theoretical contextualization of my practice, which is referred to throughout the thesis and documented in audio visual material contained in the appendices. A DVD of particular performance moments addressed within the text can be found in Appendix A, and following appendices contain a wider range of my practical work represented through video recordings, photographs, journal entries, and a log of *Twig Dance* performances.

Practice has generated the evidence and data I have used to make clear my understandings of improvisation and ecology, and academic research has served to map a larger web of ideas to which I connect my dance.

A number of key words in the text call attention to the importance of bodily experience as research tool. “Performance”, “understanding”, and “perception” are terms I use because of their ability to reveal relationships between action and cognition. “Performance” describes an action which is done consciously and with an interest in being observed at some level; “understanding” can be interpreted as knowledge practiced in environmental context (Maturana and Varela 1992); and “perception” links sensing to learning. Just as these terms also highlight the irreducibility of the body’s actions in relation to observer or environment, they point to the simultaneity of word and deed, indicating the importance and difficulty of practicing improvisation in order to research its effects.

The term “twig dances” also points to this necessary correlation—between practice and reflection, and between object and perception—and illustrates the first of many paradoxes described by this thesis. First, *Twig Dances* refers to a solo improvisation performance form I have developed that is significant as a site-specific performance form that brings public attention to tree and plant qualities. Documentation of performances of *Twig Dances* is featured in appendices A, C, D, E and F. Second, “twig dances” describes the act of

dancing to comprehend something. In the UK, “I twig” is an informal way of saying “I understand or realize something”. Therefore, twig dances (unitalicized) are bodily actions that bring about experiences of realization through understanding or even misunderstanding. These may include but are not limited to dancing. Many of my own moments of “twigging” improvisation’s relationship to ecology come as a result of doing activities other than strictly “dancing”: planting trees, hitchhiking, describing TWIG’s overland journey to a classroom of Polish students, and drawing with children in China, to name a few examples. The more I perform twig dances to understand my connection to the environment, the less I see this connection as a fixed or finite phenomenon—therein lies the paradox.

Paradox runs throughout the text as a theme; it identifies the question of “how is improvisation a practice of ecology?” as a conundrum in a number of ways. Practicing improvisation as research is one such paradox. Because the nature of my research is experimental, improvisation is a methodology as well as an outcome. Mine is not just research about dance improvisation, but an action research project which is itself experimental. The research process describes the research product and vice versa. However, rather than falling into the double bind of defining a word with the word itself, this thesis documents, traces, observes and analyzes the practice of improvisation with a spiraling contextualization of theory, practice, theory and practice. Just as improvising with the utmost sensory awareness (what I call “facilitating the feedback loop”)



invites a practitioner to include her observations and sensations as part of her experience and fold them into her dancing—thereby creating new movements which provoke new experiences which conjure new observations and sensations, creating new movements, *ad infinitum*—this thesis also charts my own folding of thought and action into thought and action as an improvisational process that evolves as it observes itself in action.

My practice has involved improvisation from the beginning and has evolved to encompass a wider definition of improvisation than simply a tool for artistic composition. Twig dances usher widening scopes of awareness as they offer methods of focusing attention on details of the body performing in contexts of sensation, space, time, structures, politics, and paradox. My widening scope of awareness in practicing improvisation eventually led me to co-create the TWIG Project, which involved a range of ecological practices that are not solely about dancing. The practices of walking to China, planting trees, and engaging with children were ways of observing and responding to ecological needs. As a result, twig dances are not just about dancerly dances; “dances” refers to dances of learning, leading workshops, walking, observing and practicing different modes of engagement with the world.

Throughout the thesis, both “improvisation” and “ecology” become identified as research practices. “Improvisation” comes to refer not only to the practice of composing dance movements in the moment of performance, but to purposefully

navigating any situation—in life and in dancing—without a fixed expectation of an outcome. “Ecology”, understood broadly as the study of the relationship of organisms to their environment, is used here to encompass a host of awareness practices which foreground the human-environment connection, and the ways in which thoughts, actions and practices affect our understanding of that connection. Through analyzing and documenting performative acts across a range of twig dances and *Twig Dances*, this thesis traces the development of improvisation performance as a practice of ecological research.



## **Introduction: Relating Relationships**

Consciousness co-arises with sensory activity. It does not exist prior to or independently of its environment, but is called into being and conditioned by that which in turn becomes its object. It is always consciousness of something (Joanna Macy 1991, p. 67).

This study offers a close look at possible relationships between dance improvisation and ecology. Through documenting and reflecting on my own performance practice in relation to those of other performing artists and in relation to notions of “ecology”, I map how practices within contemporary dance improvisation comprise a rich collection of embodied knowledges that can widen perception and awareness of the world. As ecologist Joanna Macy suggests in her phenomenological refrain, consciousness requires engagement with another, and I propose that dance improvisation offers routes toward such engagement. To examine these embodied phenomena, I reflect on my experiences as a dance performer and improviser in light of “ecology” or a set of propositions for what might constitute “ecologies”.

Beyond environmentalism, ecological practices can be considered as creative acts which invite or instill in individuals an empathic interest and a maximum sense of agency in the world’s mental, natural (physical) and

social spheres, identified by Felix Guattari as the “three ecologies” (Guattari 2000). Ecological acts invite productive, sculptural thought and action, asking how one can be, as artist Joseph Beuys challenged, creative at every level by participating in transforming and reshaping the conditions, thinking, and structures that shape and condition our lives (Beuys in Tisdall 1979, p.190). As I use the term, “ecology” can introduce radically sensitized propositions for relating through active dialogue, generating practices which investigate relationships between people and ideas, people and environments, people and people, and people and objects on multiple levels. Guattari posits people as “interlocutors”: actors in a drama which takes place between us and objects *and* the planet in a “chaosmos” of interrelationship (Conley 1997, p.94).

As a performative investigation of corporeality’s understandings and its propositions, dance improvisation offers a useful point of departure for researching ecologies and their practical application in the moving, living organization of interactivity that is the dancing body. “Improvisation” as I use the term focuses on the tradition of dance improvisation practices emerging from and influenced by the work of artists and performers of the Judson Church era in New York City in the 1960s. It refers to a selection of methods whereby a dancer responds to certain set of propositions through unplanned, non-choreographed movement and in so doing trains

herself to become maximally responsive to the changing landscape of performance situations. Within this tradition are contact improvisation (e.g. Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark-Smith, Kirstie Simson), music and dance improvisation (e.g. Kathleen Hermesdorf, Katie Duck), improvisation as research into modes of perception (e.g. Simone Forti, Deborah Hay, Lisa Nelson, Chrysa Parkinson) improvisation as a means of spatial exploration (e.g. William Forsythe's *Improvisation Technologies*, Michael Schumacher) and group scores for improvised interaction (e.g. Ruth Zaporah's *Action Theatre*, Mary Overlie's *Viewpoints*, or David Zambrano's *Passing Through*).

Within this family of practices, attention, awareness, or perception is the currency of improvisation, and in dance the body is its medium. Examining these attentions under the lens of ecology invites a consideration of the circulations, connections, networks, exchanges, reciprocities, feedback and traffic that necessarily comprise these dancing ventures. Furthermore, as a participatory act that involves a group of students or public witnesses to a performance, dance improvisation also operates as a social statement, and one appropriate to the ecologically revisionist projects claimed as particularly possible through postmodern performance (Fuchs and Chaudhuri 2002; Marranca 1996; Kershaw 1992 and 2007; Giannachi and Stewart 2005).

While elucidating likenesses between practices of dance improvisation performance and ecology, this study is essentially a close look at relationship. The relationship between the thinking, moving body and space can be compared to the relationship between an organism and its environment, making up the logical link between the two disciplines. To research how an understanding of this link might enable a more nuanced and sustained dialogue with the nonhuman which has suffered for lack of human regard, I utilize phenomenological research methods that acknowledge the doorway of the body—my body—as necessary starting point for understanding that which is other than the body.

As a dancer, my ongoing research project is to understand and develop my bodily relationship to the world, physically in space, rhythmically through time, socially through performance, and conceptually through analysis. By correlating ecology to improvisation performance I work to understand processes of a complete feedback loop: recognizing the flow of information from the world to the body as well as from the body to the world. Coming to consider “the world” as an integral part of my dance practice has also been a process of considering what “the world” might actually be. Using Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological theories as a framework for considering my bodily role in this process, I develop an understanding of

processes for both studying and changing “my body” and “the world” by reflecting on dance as a conversation between the two as sensibly intertwining entities. Merleau-Ponty’s work on perception introduces the idea that the perceiver and the perceived are necessarily “intertwined” through the reciprocal activity of perception. I use his descriptions of perception as a starting point to help describe the processes and effects of this “feedback loop” and to suggest that such interpretations of perception can dehierarchize the flow of information in such practices.

“Response ability” is the term I have begun to use to describe this conversation, and to indicate individuals’ capacity to address hierarchical injustices through conscious performative acts. “Response ability” has given me a context in which to investigate the connections between dance improvisation and politics. While the rarified movements of contemporary dance are born from diligent and sweaty labors within studio walls across the globe, to ask how these activities impact networks beyond the theaters, performance venues and audiences for whom they are created is to raise the necessary question of ecological responsibility and its corollary, response ability.

Before concerning myself with a “larger, living environment” I trained for many years in a dance studio. As metaphor for my journey, I first became



enamored with modern dance by glimpsing a Horton technique class through a studio door left ajar. The driving rhythm of the live drum music, the synchronized bodies hurling themselves through space with power and accuracy, the adrenaline and purpose in each movement held me captive, and I enrolled on the spot. Dancing awakened a profound sense of health and aliveness in my body, sparking the question of how to increase or expand this experience—first for myself, and later, for others.

In 2004 as part of my research for this thesis I enrolled at the Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS) in Brussels in order to deepen my training in dance and awareness practices. Studying techniques of key improvisers such as William Forsythe, Deborah Hay, Jan Ristema, Kirstie Simson and David Zambrano enabled me to experiment with ecological practices in dance, and to test out my embryonic ideas in the lively climate of dance performances, criticisms and debate that is Belgium. The time could be seen as an incubation period; within the warm rooms of the European cultural capital the closeness of “culture” and its activities provided a springboard for my site-based activities that followed. Like Simon Schama illustrates in *Landscape and Memory*, his catalogue of historical western preoccupations with storied places and mythical landscapes, efforts to represent “the environment” are always conditioned by the designs of culture. As such, our involvement with “nature” is

located within our cultural framework, and colored by our descriptions of this involvement (1995, pp. 6-7). This position is developed by Macnaghten and Urry in *Contested Natures*, who argue that the different “natures” we understand are a result of various social constructions that are realized through our everyday performances of dwelling, discourse, transaction and individual agency (1998, pp. 1-3). In an attempt to describe my individual agency within that community I used the cultural parameters of contemporary dance to begin composing a series of statements about “nature” as an exterior space.

Two solos I made at PARTS chronicle my exploratory references to “the outside world” in dance performance, and are characterized by first opening, and then stepping through a door to the outside. In *Here, There, Everywhere* I use spoken text to evoke images of faraway places after opening a door to the outside. In the second solo, *In Praise of Compost*, I walked through an open door to first climb a tree, and then plant a young tree in the PARTS garden. At PARTS I refined my sensitivities and abilities as a responsive mover, learned working methods of other improvisers, and saw the economies of exchange behind contemporary dance performances. These provoked me to want to effect ecological change in broader and more tangible ways, and to examine how practices

of ecology might manifest in improvisational acts performed beyond theaters working as production centers for European culture.

Upon leaving PARTS in 2006 I widened my scope to a new extreme. With collaborator Richard Thomas I created TWIG: Together We Integrate Growth, an action research initiative to discover how improvisation could be a practice of ecology in other contexts than those offered by contemporary dance venues in Europe. On an overland journey from England to south China we improvised to investigate other notions of space, site and place. We walked, talked to schoolchildren about global warming and planted trees. I performed dance improvisations with trees, called *Twig Dances*, along our route. In China, TWIG facilitated a six-week-long workshop series in art and ecology for 135 schoolchildren, incorporating drawing, dancing and music. The lessons I learned at PARTS (including improvisation skills, technical versatility and performative range) substantiated my endeavors in *Twig Dances* and with TWIG. Ultimately, by using dance improvisation as a method of studying plant morphology and observing plants in their environment, *Twig Dances* and TWIG provided a tangible, translatable resource for performing while devising a singular practice of ecology. Improvisation presented both the subject and the means for studying ecological relationships, providing

evidence and experience of how improvisational practice can constitute acts of response ability.

With increasingly widespread recognition of climate change, “ecology” has become a catchword in contemporary discourses across fields from education to industry, often used to suggest notions of globalized interrelationship. Though “ecology” as a field of study in the natural sciences differentiates itself from environmentalism or environmental science, its terminology is often used to evoke a sense of urgency in response to the environmental crisis. The Greek roots of ecology are *oikos*, referring to the home, dwelling place or domestic property of a citizen, and *logos* meaning a topic of discourse or study. The “ecology” discussed by Guattari designates humans as essential actors in an environmental crisis spawned by oppressive mental and social systems, with activity at the level of the individual’s interactions with his place of dwelling. However, despite its widespread use as a term, “ecology” does not present a unified set of principles for action to bring about the change necessary to regenerate the biosphere. This is perhaps a strength as well as a weakness, due in part to the various postmodern discourses which have influenced the development of the term. Rather than seeking to describe such a mandate for restorative action and environmental reparation, this study asks how ecological awareness can be initiated at the level of the individual, through

the moving body, as a performance practice that brings attention to interrelationships.

Suggestions for how ecological awareness might be provoked on individual, societal and global levels have been offered by many writers, such as David Abram, Andy Fisher, Warwick Fox, Felix Guattari, Luce Irigaray, Arne Naess and Paul Shepherd. Texts such as *Performing Nature* and *Nature Performed* also offer critical examinations of how ecology and performance practices in the arts can develop and define one another.

Focusing on theater, writers such as Una Chaudhuri, Elinor Fuchs, Bonnie Marranca, Baz Kershaw and Richard Schechner have offered more detailed accounts of ways cultural understandings of ecology might be developed through performance. Chaudhuri in particular has also warned performing artists against overuse of the terms “ecology” or “nature” metaphorically, which only reinforces “a new relation of the human and the natural worlds, making the latter a privileged sign of the superiority of the former”

(Chaudhuri 1997, p. 77). In response to Chaudhuri’s cautionary note, it becomes useful to consider how “ecological” performance might or might not adhere to extended definitions of ecology, particularly when these definitions are created and sustained by our sociocultural performance of them (see Schechner 2002; Dolan 2001; Szerszynski, Heim and Waterton 2003; Franklin 2002). As Giannachi and Stewart (2005) point out in the

introduction to *Performing Nature: Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*, finding a way to answer Bonnie Marranca's call to unite "ecology and aesthetics" in order to foster a "biocentric worldview" (Marranca 1996, p. xvi) includes seeking ways to access sensorial, pre-linguistic and individual experience through performance forms (Giannachi and Stewart 2005, pp. 39-40), which phenomenological readings of performance can offer (Garner 1994, States 1985). The following brief survey of site-based or ecologically-concerned live art practices offers a glimpse of how artists have contextualized their practice to enable a socio-cultural questioning of our framing of nature as well as an aesthetic or sensorial engagement with the same.

### **1. Pointing to "Nature" in Performance**

A number of movement-based artists of the last century have made visible and articulated connections to "nature" in their practice, and many of these have used improvisation within their methodologies. Notably, butoh artists associated with the Body Weather practice developed by Min Tanaka in the 1980s, such as Oguri, Tess de Quincey, Frank van de Ven and Takenouchi Atsushi work with natural, biological processes and metaphors as starting points or images for generating movement for performance. Body Weather has defined itself as a movement practice which initially connected dance to the processes of farming, and sees movement study as necessarily arising

from tactile involvement with land. For example, a Body Weather study of the qualities of chickenness would take place only through taking full part in raising, killing, preparing and eating chickens (Rotie 2009), or an exploration of mud would come only from moving in the mud (Perron 1999). Body Weather practitioners such as Oguri, based in the USA, test the body's limits through interacting with elements and extreme environments (2004). While my own work is not founded in the butoh tradition, the *Twig Dances* discussed in chapter six and the TWIG Project reviewed in chapter five incorporate usage of site-sourced work, metaphor of natural objects, and training methods which develop a group experience such as the Body Weather work.

The work of butoh dancer Takenouchi Atsushi takes a slightly different approach to movement in nature; his performances take place in locations of cultural or historical significance, or sites of great natural beauty. As commemorative acts, he has danced on sites of genocide in Cambodia and Germany, and has performed on the melting icebergs of the Arctic (Rotie 2009). As a traveling performer Atsushi studies a landscape and its situation in a relatively short space of time before creating a performance in it, believing that the movement of a dance arises from inside the individual who experiences the discord or chord of elements in that place (Jinen Butoh 2007). Of these artists' work, Atsushi's methods of improvising

with a place are similar to my practice of *Twig Dances* discussed in chapters five and six, with a main difference being my focus on a particular tree or plant specimen as structure for my improvisation.

Other contemporary approaches to site-based choreographic practice include work by artists building on a tradition of site-based improvisation and performance work stemming from the post-modern dance work of Anna Halprin and Judson Church innovators Meredith Monk, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown and Deborah Hay. While approaches vary, through-lines of such work often include an increased visibility for dance performance in public places and functioning as public art (e.g. Trisha Brown, Stephen Koplowitz), a reconsideration of the role of the public within the performance (e.g. Deborah Hay, Anna Halprin, Monochrome Circus, Pearson Widrig Dance Theatre, Seven Sisters Group, Simon Whitehead), and an exploration of a natural site as material for site-based, experiential compositions (e.g. Steve Paxton, Helen Poynor, Suprpto Suryodarmo, Jennifer Monson, Sap Dance, the BodyCartography Project).

A wider consideration of site-based performance practices includes the growing field of urban exploring, mapping and trespassing as acts of art. In Devon, Wrights and Sites of Exeter produce performances and map-like “Mis-Guides” to encourage individuals to discover less known landscapes.



In the series called *Homing Place* artist Misha Myers creates sonic and guided walks around the city of Plymouth in order to trace refugees' stories of cultural displacement (Myers 2006). The performances of The Fictional Dogshelf Theatre Company, located in such "non-places" as a roadside welcome center, also add to the growing critical discourse on performance in place/non-place/site/space. Rebecca Solnit discusses the act of walking as a particular kind of performance which, like Jackson Pollock's drippings, leaves traces, memories or maps which mark a relationship to a path or place (2000, p. 268). In addition to recording walks, the projects of movement artist Simon Whitehead seek an approach to deep ecology through movement, and investigate diverse performance practices as ways of reconnecting people with the landscape. He asks how performative events such as "Walks to Illuminate" (2005), which features participants walking with glowing shoes in a night forest for example, can spark curiosity for sites and places in the landscape. Marina Abramovic has also taken the act of walking as a kind of performance of endurance within several of her works, notably the 1988 *Great Wall Walk* in which she and collaborator Ulay met in the middle of China's Great Wall, having each walked toward one another from its opposite ends. For these artists, walking is framed as art by communicating an intention of the event; artworks involving walking are significantly represented through the stories they produce. The peripatetic TWIG Project also established itself through

walking, yet the rationale for this transport was as a resistant form of travel in an age of global warming. TWIG used walking and over-land transport to find a closer relationship with the places being traversed between England and China; our project included telling the story of our journey to those we met along the way.

Storytelling is incorporated into walking performance practices in the work of Mike Pearson and the politically motivated performance group PLATFORM whose projects such as “Critical Walks in the City” and “The Museum of the Corporation” take participants through the streets of London to trace activities of early multinational corporations, or locations of pre-urban rivers (PLATFORM 2002). British theater companies such as Wildworks and Welfare State International additionally produce more fantastical narratives, which unfurl in located outdoor performances involving community members as collaborators, consultants and sometimes performers in a spectacle where the audience’s movements are choreographed over the terrain. Such performances, based on a specific outdoor experience, aim to weave audience and place in order to highlight direct relationships with a place or landscape. In a less overtly theatrical way, storytelling surrounds the work of social practice artist Basia Irland, whose projects such as *A Gathering of Waters: The Rio Grande, Source to the Sea* bring community members together through work on a common

project (in this case carrying water by hand from the source of the Rio Grande river to its mouth at the sea, thereby completing a symbolic flow of the river which no longer flows continuously due to industrial management). Shelley Sacks, through the Social Sculpture Research Unit and the Earth Agenda, has also sought to create works that operate as “‘instruments of consciousness’, in contrast to ‘objects of attention’”(Sacks in Social Sculpture Research Unit 2008). Works such as *University of the Trees* provide “kits” to participants, which claim to “[enable] groups and individuals around the world to participate in processes of joined up thinking, perception and action” (University of the Trees 2007).

The terms Social Practice Art, social sculpture, littoral art, dialogical art, new genre public art or eco-art point to various particular approaches in which artists provide a platform for experience and exploration of an issue in the social realm (Heim 2005, pp. 201, 214; see also Lacy 1995, Spaid 2002, Bourriaud 2002 and Kester 2004). Live art and theater practices which test the body’s endurance and inquire into the constructions of the self through image, can also register as ecological in their commitment to transformation through experience. The work of Rachel Rosenthal, Marina Abramovic, workshops and public rituals facilitated by Anna Halprin, the training systems of Grotowski’s paratheatre, and the Odin Teatret’s Barbers of the 1970s all represent modes of heuristic inquiry into the constructed

relationship of body and world, through improvisation techniques as well as through the staging of live art or improvisation performance in places with little previous exposure to theatrical events.

As a way of studying large scale natural processes, dance artist Jennifer Monson has used improvisation techniques to develop a series of performances which call attention to phenomena such as aquifers (Monson 2009) or the patterns of migrating whales and birds (Weiss 2005). Her Bird Brain Dance project included a host of community outreach activities where workshops in improvisation brought participants to experience, through movement, some principles behind the behavior of migratory creatures. Recent projects of Monson's use improvisational and sensory processes to engage with natural sites, such as in the explorations of Morecambe Bay, UK, through the Re-enchantment and Reclamation Project (2007).

Within these myriad approaches to walking, site and place in performance, it is interesting to note the problems arising from a close critique of performing in place and site. Where the British contemporary artist Richard Long takes walking further afield as a central practice, using walking to find a shape upon a landscape and also to bring his walking to other parts of the world, Solnit warns that such blatantly transplanted

practices carry a traces of colonialist attitudes in their execution (Solnit 2000, p. 272). The meaning of a walk (or a dance performance) changes depending on who is walking, where they are walking, and for what reason. The “ecological” value of a walk or performance can be considered in terms of its impact on the mental, social and physical landscapes it crosses. These artists complicate the traditional separation between audience and performer/artwork and viewer, and use performativity and qualitatively evocative or reflective (movement) languages such as mapping to expand notions of how we relate to a place/nature/landscape/site.

Evocations of this relationship are not confined to outdoor performance endeavors, however, and where modern dance might be seen as a paragon of humanist statements, notable explorations of “natural forms” through movement have taken place through the work of dance innovators such as Isadora Duncan, Doris Humphrey, Loie Fuller, Rudolf Laban, Merce Cunningham and others. Duncan, through her development of the wave form in dance, expressed a desire to emulate natural undulations seen in hills and oceans, and at the same time Fuller portrayed forms such as serpents, flowers and flames through her solos performed with silk costumes on vaudeville circuits in Europe. Humphrey developed a technique based on natural forms such as spirals, extensions, falls and recoveries in coordination with the breath to explore the body’s potential

for movement in a way that followed “universal” movement processes of organisms (Stodelle 1978), which Jose Limon later expanded upon (Male 2005). Rudolf Laban’s choreutics endeavored to build on certain “organic” forms within technical movement. By using lines such as the “four fundamental trace forms” (Laban 1966, p. 83), eight effort actions (Laban 1988b, pp. 52-84), and shapes such as the cube, pyramid and icosahedron to analyse bodily movement, he professed that human movement followed “rules corresponding to those of mineral crystallisations and structures of organic compounds” (Laban 1966, p. 114) and developed his theories of space harmony from these interrelationships between “trace-forms within the body and outside it” (Laban 1966, p. 91). Choreutics uses principles for identifying spatial reference points for movement discovery and efficiency, rather than only encouraging mimesis of predetermined forms (Counsell 1956, p. 107), yet Laban was interested in using the body’s perspective to understand external forms and wrote, “the role of the bodily perspective is especially important in *all* investigations into movement and space” (Laban 1966, p. 91, emphasis mine), implying an underlying belief in harmonics between the human body and the universe (Carlisle and Preston-Dunlop 2010, p. 40). Nigel Stewart (2010, p. 221) has described how Laban Movement Analysis can be used to describe the movement of birds in flight as part of choreographic exploration.

Later Merce Cunningham used the studio to isolate and recreate movement events he observed outdoors. Works such as *Inlet*, *Inlet 2*, *Beach Birds* and *Pond Way* evoke movement patterns of water or of birds near water through reflective rhythms, gestures and patterns. Cunningham's work demonstrates how translating these environmentally-sourced forms into studio-based choreography can create a sense of the hyper-real, where displaced birdlike movement reads as larger than life when performed by human bodies (Kisselgoff 1992, Dunning 1987, Reynolds n.d.). More recent pieces like Rosemary Lee's *Beached* or Jacky Lansley's *View From the Shore* work in similar ways, using choreography to distill sensations gleaned through a site-responsive research process in order to evoke a qualitative resemblance of that site on stage (Lee and Pollard 2004). This can happen through dialogue with music in Lansley's case (Jacky Lansley Dance Theatre n.d.), or through condensation of choreography to formal principles, such as the oceanic "churning" or "currents" depicted in Celina Chaulvin's *Phos* (Jennings 2006).

## **2. "Ecological" Performance?**

What emerges from this list of practitioners engaged with implicit or explicit notions of ecology, is that the sociological or textual *framing* of the choreographic event as somehow contributing to ecological discourses has as much impact on the reception of these works as the aesthetic or

compositional techniques employed in their making. This of course raises the question of what actually constitutes ecological performance. Susan Manning, for example, questions the essentialist implications of Anna Halprin's introduction of *EarthDance*, a "prayer" and "participatory event" (Halprin in Manning 1995, p. 174) for the earth in the context of a 1992 Choreographing History Conference. Manning questions the universality of participant experience in such so-called "earth-centered" ritual performances (Manning 1995), and links the form of large-scale movement choirs to their historical significance in other political contexts such as Nazi Germany (Manning 1995, pp. 173-174). Without closing or determining meaning for participants in improvisation techniques, this study aims to elucidate frames of reference whereby certain considerations in improvisation practice align with theories of intersubjectivity espoused by Merleau-Ponty, and work to enhance agency and Guatarri's notion of singularity at the level of the individual. Where all these artists engage explicitly or implicitly with human relationships to natural phenomena using a range of techniques, *how ecological philosophies can be embodied in particular physical practices in the field of dance improvisation performance* is the new question this project asks.

If dance improvisation performance practice is taken as a series of emergent propositions for mobilizing the human body in relationship to



space and forces of nature, and if a simplified understanding of ecology is the study of interrelationships between organisms and their environment, then evidently the two disciplines are of great consequence to one another. Yet little effort has yet been made to critically investigate their relationship. While receiving marked attention in writings on the visual arts (Andrews 2006, Collins 2003, Kwon 2002, Lacy 1995, Tufnell 2006, RANE 2008, Wallis and Kastner 2005) and theatre (Marranca 1996, Kershaw 2007, Chaudhuri and Fuchs 2002), “ecology” as a term has still seen little attention in the field of academic dance studies. Exceptions include Sandra Reeve, who approaches eco-somatics as a practice in which “the ecological body [... views] the world from motion rather than stasis” (2009), Andrea Olsen’s experiential correlations between body and earth (2000, 2002), Ali East, a dance researcher working to articulate a definition of “eco-choreography” (2001), and Sondra Fraleigh who has remarked upon the ecologically significant practices of a number of butoh artists (1999, 2005).

The dictionary definition of ecology separates an organism from its environment when it describes ecology as “the study of the relationships and interactions between living organisms and their natural or developed environment” (Encarta World English Dictionary 2001). Because these two elements, organism and environment, are presupposed to be separate, the project of ecology is to articulate *how they relate*. As humans are

constantly making choices about how to interact with our environment, our possibilities for ecological articulation through action are many. This thesis acts to expand the possibilities for our human, ecological articulations by looking at how a human organism might *choose to relate* to its environment—either its “developed” studio environment or its “natural” or larger surrounding environment. As Nigel Stewart and Gabriella Giannachi note, using artistic practices to observe and articulate relationships has implications for humans on a number of levels.

Ecology, the study of animals and plants, our habitat and environment, as well as the analysis of the inter-relationships between us all, is therefore not only one of the most interesting and crucial tools for the interpretation of nature but also an important model for cultural observation. In fact what is so crucial in ecology, and what is subsequently so interesting for the arts, is the possibility of an analysis that focuses on these inter-relationships, on the in-between of the human and nature, on the idea of the possibility of a relationship of opposites within a given environment. It is therefore in the interface between ecology and the arts that some of the most aesthetically inspiring and politically challenging works are found because it is in an ecologically-oriented art that the very relationships between human beings and nature are being questioned, critiqued and even reinvented (Giannachi and Stewart 2005, p. 20).

The reinvention of relationships referred to by Giannachi and Stewart is a key contribution of ecological thinking. This thesis not only documents possible improvisation-sourced relationships that can be understood as ecological, but also points to ways of considering, sensing and practicing

the body's performed movement in the world in ways that subvert fixed, isolated or hierarchical modes of thinking.

An emerging force of writers identify the solipsism and self-gratification perpetuated by integrated world capitalism as fundamentally degrading to the project of preserving the health of the biosphere (Fox 1995; Gablik 1985, 1991; Gare 1995; Guattari 2000; Macy 1991; Spretnak 1999). Suzi Gablik challenges artists today to move toward art which is participatory rather than exclusive, and concerned with transformation rather than transaction. A critic whose main concern is about art-making as a relevant response to the crises (ecological, political, social, mental, physical, corporeal, agricultural) of our time, Gablik is for compassionate or “empathic” art which “has the potential to reconfigure our emotional, physical and spiritual orientation in the world” (Gablik 1991, p.93). To use the whole body in performance, as the dancer does, is to include these multi-layered orientations in practice. To use different performance scores for physically investigating these reconfigurations—and the different perceptions of our reality they generate—is the unique possibility offered by dance improvisation. In performance practice, the findings of these investigative projects are made available to witnesses.

With a few exceptions (East 2001; Enghauser 2007; Fraleigh 1999, 2005; Stewart 2005), scholarly discourse in dance has little examined the ecological implications of the performing body, though contemporary or “post-modern” dance since the Judson Church era has often identified itself as a field that celebrates innovative, anti-establishment agendas (Banes 1993). Substantial literature documents the dancing, performing body as a site for commenting on social and gender politics (Albright 1997; Banes 1994; Daly 2002; Fensham 2008; Martin 1998; Phelan 1993; Claid 2006; LePecki 2004; Thomas 2003), and seeking to reinscribe the body as a signifier of subjectivity and agency (Briginshaw 2001, Butler 1990, 1993; Phelan and Reckitt 2001; Schneider 1997), issues which I maintain are addressed in ecological practice. Dancemakers in recent years have also notably defined themselves as conceiving of or practicing emergent contemporary philosophies upon and through dancers’ bodies (LePecki 1999, 2006a, 2006b; Cvejic 2005; Ritsema 2004) and aspects of these contemporary philosophies exemplified in performance have sometimes been identified as “ecological” (Briginshaw 2005, Fraleigh 2005). For dance artists, a bold alignment with theory can bring license to continually re-present the body anew through performance. It also brings with it a responsibility to consider dancers’ work in relation to the wider political, cultural, economic and environmental climate of our time. Toward this end, unpacking the particularly ecological implications of contemporary

dance theories and performance practices is relatively unbroken soil, and my starting point.

### **3. Methodology**

Phenomenology is foundational to many of the approaches to ecology with which I engage, and my research methodology is also phenomenological. I look at how the body learns to improvise and relate to objects in its immediate and wider sphere of perception. While I draw on Husserl's process of reduction as a way to formally engage with the sensorial qualities of an object within my performances of *Twig Dances* described in chapter six, I use Merleau-Ponty's corporeally-grounded strategies of engagement to describe my experiences of dance and location throughout the thesis as a way of focusing on the coherence and context of my own body's experiences as an articulated enquiry.

Using phenomenological research methods to qualitatively analyse data with respect to my processes of perception, I have taken my body as starting point, lens and guinea pig by which to reference experiences of improvisation. Using writing, photography and film to capture processes of improvisation invented during TWIG, my research has included looking at both the experience, the documentation of an experience, and the context

of that experience in order to deduce themes. By inscribing my experiences in performance and re-presenting them in these pages I conduct a third layer of phenomenological research; a research into the essences of the experiences which I have had as dancer, practitioner, questioner. Without mystifying these “essences”, my task is to transmit them in terms of their impression upon me through my bodily experience of them. As sociologists Moustakas (1994) and Manen (1997) point out, phenomenological research is necessarily concerned with human experience, and the task of capturing the essences of lived experience through text “in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience” (Manen 1997, p. 36). This relates to Stanton Garner’s analysis of Beckett’s theatre as phenomenological event where the presence of the body can be paradoxically “grounded and dispossessed” (1994, p. 32) or simultaneously lived and questioned. My central question, “how can dance improvisation performance articulate a practice of ecology?” operates as a rhizome from which my own activities evolve, generating a broad set of personal, lived experiences. Over the course of three years of research I have gathered and engaged with my data by delving into situations—academic, performative, physical, conceptual—with maximum attentiveness to all the signs and sensations inviting my perception, and

with an intention to allow these processes to reveal the tendencies in my own means of learning and interpretation. Beyond a research topic, improvisation has featured as a mode of research and experimentation. By using a combination of sense, structure, intuition, personal agency and practice I have improvised in order to understand its practical relationship to ecology, but also to test improvisation's usefulness as research methodology.

My physical participation in dance enables a rigorous, multi-dimensional examination of the improvisation practices I have engaged in during the past three years as action researcher. As an experiential and participatory enquiry into a research question, action research foregrounds experience as a source of data and knowledge (Nakamura 2001), and seeks to describe and relive that experience in order to understand it. As Manen has said of phenomenological research, the project of writing constitutes an effort, not to pin down a universal truth of essences, but to communicate the essences of a particular *experience*; “and these lived experiences gather hermeneutic significance as we (reflectively) gather them by giving memory to them” (Manen 1997, p. 37). My immersion in the research has presented me with the challenge to, when writing about my experiences, both relive them and bracket them so as to reflect accurately on the work that has emerged, despite the close relationship I have to these practices.

My full-bodied impression of the various and potential ecological readings and effects of these improvisation practices is thereby balanced with observations made by other performers, writers, witnesses and critical participants because, as dance phenomenologist Maxine Sheets-Johnstone notes, reflecting on the subjective activity of dance begs larger questions about the nature of consciousness and knowledge.

The phenomenological method is one of description; yet, as is evident, it is at the same time more than that, for in aiming toward a description of the phenomenon, it reflects backwards toward an elucidation of the structures of consciousness. It bypasses all question of the subject's objectivity or the object's subjectivity by elucidating the immediate world of lived experience, the world as it is immediately and directly known through a pre-reflective consciousness. This initial and direct knowledge constitutes the foundation upon which all future knowledge is built (Sheets 1966, p.13).

Therefore, my inquiry into methods and experiences of dancing in order to heighten ecological consciousness requires unpacking the assumptions and intuitions which found my own processes of doing so. I ground some of my personal observations by linking them to the comments of other dancers, the responses of bystanders, and further by finding points of contact in the words of ecologists and theorists. Yet the bulk of my data is gathered from my personal experience of dancing and grappling with the propositions and problems that improvisation poses. Because in improvisation my basic starting point and finishing point for all my experiences is my moving body,



Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh becomes central to my interactions with space, time, theories, locations and people. In an effort to bypass the subject-object dyad, Merleau-Ponty posits flesh as a continuous surface by which we interface with objects and which also enmeshes the experiencing body in the world (1963, p. 163), each encroaching upon and altering the other. Later he takes this further into his discussion on the chiasm or intertwining which produces an "intra-ontology" (1968, p. 227) between objects and bodies. This is useful as a working theme whereby I reflect on the effects of body and place on each other. To do this I embody and test my perceptual observations through acts of performance in which I note my body's perceptions as well as projecting my awareness upon my framed activities from the perspective of a hypothetical watcher. This practice, borrowed from Deborah Hay, serves as a particular methodology of intentionality. By becoming conscious of the viewpoint of the imagined watcher, the act of improvising becomes a focused mode of data collection according to my perspective from two different positions, a practice comparable to imaginative free variation (Moustakas 1994 p. 35; Husserl 1977, pp. 34, 60). The intentionality of the improvisation performance as *an act*—a mode of data collection—renders it a phenomenological investigation. In affirming the usefulness of imagination Merleau-Ponty also cautions that the operative mode of our knowing comes from embodiment in the world, and attempts to elucidate essences through

imagination will always point back to some truth of our own experience (1968, p. 112).

Husserlian phenomenology proposes a rigorous methodology by which to identify the actual qualities and modes by which subjects perceive the world, and his later writings identify the complexity of this task by describing our world as intersubjective, where both matter and consciousness intermingle in the experience of living. Merleau-Ponty's later writings on phenomenology locate the "lived body" as the preeminent substance of a subject's sensing universe, challenging the privileging of consciousness over experience implied in Husserlian methods (Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. xi-xii; Flynn 2004). Merleau-Ponty further encouraged corporeal investigations into phenomena of experience which are both sentient and sensible. Seen as a methodology but also a practice, improvisation training offers phenomenology the promise of ways to hone sensory capacities. Used to engage with the world as a process, improvisation can evolve to match the unfolding evolutionary processes, which, according to process philosophy developed by Alfred North Whitehead (1926, 1969; see also Bergson 1998), comprise the natural world.

Merleau-Ponty's notion of the intertwining or the "chiasm" challenges Husserl's assertion that phenomenological research into an object's essences is possible through a focused attention on an act of consciousness or *noesis*, in relation to an object of attention or *noema*. Merleau-Ponty claims that consciousness is a pre-reflective act which is always already situated through the body as it is lived in the world, and that we share this situatedness with all things. To this degree only embodied experience permits insight into "the things themselves" through mapping our own engagement through *movement* with the sensate (1968, p. 133). Seen thus, dancing as an act of perception offers itself up as an immediate lived interpretation of a score; dance performance produces an experience of immediate responses to kinds of intentionality.

Writings in dance phenomenology have focused on the temporal yet definitive nature of dance and movement as a form that necessarily brings on such a "pre-reflective consciousness":

Dance is a phenomenon: it, too, gives itself to consciousness; it appears, and the consciousness of dance is a pre-reflective consciousness. Yet beyond this, it is clear that dance is a particular kind of phenomenon, namely, one which moves, one which is kinetic. A descriptive study of dance must therefore concern itself with an appearance, a phenomenon, which, while moving, remains a totality (Sheets 1966, p. 13).

It is unclear whether Sheets-Johnstone is saying that a dancer himself uses a pre-reflective consciousness to execute a step, or whether a witness utilizes a pre-reflective consciousness to interpret that step. Likely both are true, for in my experience the dancer and the watcher can occupy the same role. I discuss this further in chapter five. Whichever meaning is intended, what remains obvious is that phenomenology acknowledges the tendency of lived experience to manifest in multiple and immediate ways throughout the dancing body and the bodies of others, and because of this my writings on dance document my sensory experience in the present tense, as “a totality”. From this point I take these accounts as data to reflect upon.

Corresponding to my goals to understand the body’s relationship to the world physically in space, rhythmically through time, socially through performance and conceptually through analysis, this dissertation follows a similar trajectory in its chapter structure. In the following chapters I describe further the practical and theoretical steps I have taken to align dance improvisation performance and ecology through the practices of sensing, spacing, timing, structuring, observing and employing paradox. The description is both an exploration into the alliances between certain ideas within the two fields of praxis—that is, if you can call “dance improvisation performance” and “ecology” each a “field”—and an account

of how my own practice of improvisation-as-research has evolved into a way of simultaneously gathering data and responding to that data.

Because of the myriad branching philosophies and teachings within these fields of inquiry, I have chosen the work of certain dancers to look at through a lens of ecology, and have chosen ecological theories that permit expanded considerations of corporeality, presence and performativity essential to improvisation. Furthermore, I use a personal voice throughout the text as an underlying narrative; these italicized sections chart my own course of discovery through improvising and dancing, and serve as an experiential window into the processes of perception I have been working with since my first enamored peep through “the open door” of the dance world, to my passage through “the open door” to the outdoors.

The structure of this thesis follows a progressively expansive trajectory of examination; each chapter addresses an incrementally larger dimension of the body’s relationship to the world, both in ecological theories and practices of dance improvisation performance. As the notion of space permeates both disciplines, it is interesting to note the correlation of Christopher Tilley’s five types of spaces to the discussions herein. In *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, Tilley identifies five kinds of space useful to understanding relationships between society, space and place. These

spaces are: somatic, perceptual, existential, architectural and cognitive (1994, pp. 15-7), and these correlate roughly to the path this thesis takes in its analysis of dance improvisation. I begin in chapter one by looking at the immediate relationship of the body to itself through sense, or somatic space, “the space of sensory experience and bodily movement” for Tilley (1994, p. 16). This develops into an examination of theories and practice of the body’s relationship to others in space in chapter two. The question of time in improvisation performance opens a further dimension as a way of understanding bodily acts in relation to notions of history, rhythmic development and future possibilities in chapter three. These notions of space and time correlate to Tilley’s definition of perceptual space, which involves memory, intentionality and “individual perception of distances and directions, natural objects and cultural creations” (1994, p.16), particularly as they explain our subscription to cultural ideologies and meta-narratives. Looking together at the elements of the sensing body, space and time, chapter four explores the question of how to structure these in performance. Here, Tilley’s discussion of architectural space, as spaces which are intentionally created for particular users, relates to improvisation scores (1994, p.17). Using scores and parameters practiced in dance performance and in ecological theories, in chapter five I offer critical viewpoints on the political implications of performative agendas in international and social contexts, a discussion which aligns with Tilley’s

discussion of existential space, or space which is produced and reproduced through group activities and often located in a particular landscape (1994, p. 17). Finally I examine how a wider view of improvisation as ecological practice benefits from taking all directives with a healthy dose of paradox. As Tilley writes, “space can only exist as a set of relations between things or places. In this sense there is no space that is not relational” (1994, p. 17). Partially embedded in the “cognitive space” of discourse identified by Tilley, paradox also invites a reassessment of the familiar by using theory to suspend “knowing”. An antidote to certainty, paradox permits the sensing body to navigate improvisation practices and ecological ideas with a necessary degree of autonomy, agency and sensible reflection. The journey outward from the body, through space, time, structures, politics and paradox, returns to the sensing body as feedback, and registers as newly embodied knowledge.

This document might be seen as a series of apertures, incrementally widening to look at various levels of bodily relationship to the world, and seeking to illuminate a *constantly developing action* of bodily perception that expands outward *as* it deepens inward. As Merleau-Ponty cautions, “to speak of leaves or layers is still to flatten and to juxtapose, under the reflective gaze, what coexists in the living and upright body” (1968, p.138), and so this thesis seeks to look at each level of relationship *through* the

located, reflective “living” medium of my own dancing body. Keeping in mind that, as Claire Waterton points out, “classifications are seen to be ‘performative’ of natural, moral and social orderings” (2003, p. 113), and often silently support hierarchical world views, the chapter-classifications used in this study operate more like improvisation scores for building perception and less like definitions. They are more like senses which have been teased apart from synaesthesia (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 229) in order to be examined and then allowed to remingle through a discussion of paradox.

This study offers new perspectives where research has been called for. Improvisation, as a program of learning the body’s capacity for response and recognition through movement, has much to offer the field of physical education, which, having been the subject of phenomenological study, has yet presented few “practitioners *doing* phenomenology” (Connolly 1997, p. 535). The phenomenological methods of reflecting upon one’s choices in observation and improvisation examined in chapter six offer a means whereby students of movement can reflect upon their processes of perception while moving, and provide an individualized description of experiences in dance that build on arguments for experienced dance as a valuable end in itself (Sheets 1966, pp. 30-31).



As Wallace Heim comments in his overview of literature offerings in the emerging “field” of performance and ecology, “what is often missing from metaphorical uses of ‘ecology’ and ‘landscape’ is a performance-based critique of those concepts, the agency of the other-than-human and the alteration of the human in relation to that agency” (Heim 2005, p. 407).

The wider enquiry of twig dances responds to this call, as does the performance score of *Twig Dances*, where the task of the improvisation is to interpret, or bring into focus the features of the other-than-human, inviting that embodied information to impact the practitioner and a widening circle of witnesses and participants.

## Chapter One

### Sensing: A Process Philosophy

Sense perception is the most fundamental process by which our bodies enter into relationship with the environment. This chapter investigates the cultivation of sensing as a key practice in dance improvisation and certain ecological philosophies. I look at how *notions* of sensing, exercised in key improvisation practices, influence our ability to use sensation as a way of relating to others.

I begin by looking at phenomenology's contribution to understanding perception in dance improvisation and ecological thought, developing the idea of "intelligent flesh" as fundamental to both. I then use my experiences improvising with Deborah Hay, Chrysa Parkinson, Sten Rudstrom and myself to illustrate how perception can be exercised to increase bodily awareness. To think of sensing as a process we knowingly participate in rather than a passive event can bring us into closer relationship to our own bodies and our surroundings; this supports a larger claim that it is possible to make contact with the environment in a way that acknowledges the participatory interaction and sentience of all bodies.

## 1. Perception: Linking Sense and Sensibility

Our flesh is the mind's most immediate environment. Any act of perception begins with the body and is qualified by its condition. Using flesh to sense flesh, the project of using phenomenological description to rigorously analyze or describe the dance brings a challenge: how can I describe the effects of a dance which I am doing? How can I make “sense”—intelligent decisions and sound judgments—out of my “sensibility”—my capacity to engage with a sensory landscape—without reducing my findings to solipsistic relativism?

According to Heidegger, we can never encounter nature as it is in itself, but encounter nature as part of *Dasein* as it concerns our own purpose in the world (Dostal in Stewart 2005, p. 369). Merleau-Ponty, however, offers a radically different notion of encounter which accounts for both the sense and sensibility of the body, and posits it as inextricable from the wider world of objects through a holistic and indivisible application to an environment. In his description, both the “seer” and the “seen” are bound into a fundamental relationship by the “flesh” of their encounter (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p.135).

Taken thus, the flesh enveloping our flesh can be said to be the same stuff of the larger environment in which we dwell. The meeting of these flesh environments creates our experience of the world, and, for Merleau-Ponty offers an opportunity to recognize the “chiasm” where both perceiver and matter form one another.

If [the body] touches [objects] and sees them, this is only because, being of their family, itself visible and tangible, it uses its own being as a means to participate in theirs, because each of the two beings is an archetype for the other, because the body belongs to the order of the things as the world is universal flesh (1968, p.137).

Merleau-Ponty describes the activity of the separate senses as intertwining, supporting one another in perception. Just as the eyes offer two different perspectives to give a depth to vision, so do the senses “intertwine” to create a synaesthetic experience of an environment (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p.229). In the same way, in his later writings Merleau-Ponty describes the act of seeing as a kind of flesh which reciprocally envelopes the flesh of the visible to make real both visible and the seer (1968, p. 131).

In many contemporary dance and improvisation classes the teacher will often begin by inviting students to “sense your own body; notice how you feel.” This offers a concrete example of linking sense and sensibility; by regarding sensations as sensible—noteworthy—an improviser elevates the status of the sensing body. Examining the relationship of self to body is

ecological enquiry at a basic level. Before I expand my investigation out into space in chapter two, or time in chapter three, I begin now in the same way such improvisation workshops begin: by taking stock of corporeal perception from within the body, acknowledging that our perspectives on the objects of this world are always qualified by the windows of our flesh.

How we perceive our environment determines how we respond to it. “Our environment” includes every object, force and living thing inhabiting and surrounding us at levels from the local to universal, and can be studied in incremental doses. Deeming all aspects of this environment worthy of research, whether it is built or wild, urban or rural, natural or developed is the first step toward acknowledging “the environment” as an all-inclusive notion of place.

However, how we perceive our environment is affected by language, indicating that our experiences, to some extent, are also socially constructed (Evernden 1992, Franklin 2002, Proctor 2001, Rolston 1997, Soper 1995, Smith 2001). Macnaghten and Urry (1998) point out that our ability and willingness to sense the environment is often contingent upon the discourses through which we define “an environment” as natural or social. Furthermore, these definitions can also be said to have usurped authority of the sensing body’s role in determining “the real”. Where

mediatized information and scientific measurements might call our attention to such “invisible” threats as nuclear radiation, thus making them more real, the sense-able body also tends to be undervalued in the wake of such authoritative information (Adam 1995). Rather than enhancing the body, machines threaten the utility and agency of the body; instantaneous telecommunications collapse space and make movement through space unnecessary (Virilio 1993, p. 4). Given this situation, restoring authority to the sensing body is essential to a project of ecological study that seeks unmediated contact with the world.

The phrase “the natural world” can be useful here to point to elements of the biosphere which are not produced by humans, but whose activities make life possible. That the life-sustaining balance of these elements are now under threat due to human-induced climate change makes “the natural world”, or those living elements which have evolved in balance with other life around them, an imperative study which can be furthered by expanding perception. Ecologist David Abram claims that the environmental crisis can be traced to our loss of relationship with the natural world, and to regain that relationship we must return to our bodily perception (1996).

Merleau-Ponty names perception as the lynchpin between observing and understanding the place of our bodies in the world; perception for him is

the corporeal activity which integrates comprehension and sense, mind and body in one seamless process. His theory of corporeal perception posits the body as both sensor and meaning maker in its interaction with objects. He renames it “the body-subject”, emphasizing it as that sensitive agent which makes possible our interactive modalities for being in the world. These theories lay the groundwork for phenomenology, which is characterized as a method which can reveal “essential features of this life-world or lived world” (Pratt et al 2000, p. 59), features which our mechanized or habituated ways of conducting ourselves in the world fail to recognize fully. The foundations of corporeal phenomenology posit bodily experience as reality, making sensations inseparable from actualities. The research of dancer and phenomenologist Maxine Sheets-Johnstone offers insight into the relationship between bodily sensing and human patterns of cognition. Her books *The Roots of Thinking* (1990) and *The Phenomenology of Dance* (1979) expand on the idea that thinking is a function deeply intertwined with the behavioral phenomena and movement experiences of a body. Her findings suggest that moving in different ways can be synonymous with thinking in different ways. Abram similarly suggests that by opening our perception to include new sense impressions we can come to think in new ways—ways that acknowledge the nonhuman world.

In *Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, Abram's ecological treatise built on phenomenological principles, he encourages humans to broaden our perception as a way of empowering ourselves to dialogue and empathize with the natural world. Because of the historically western cultural tendency to dismiss nature as inert or unfeeling, Abram argues that as a culture we are losing our capacity to dialogue with the inhabitants of the natural world, and as a result are damaging our connection to that world which sustains us. Abram suggests that if we begin once more to seek meaningful exchange with the world through our sensory awareness, then empathy, reciprocity and appropriate action toward this world will arise within us. He draws on Merleau-Ponty to illustrate how our perceiving body serves our capacity for relational dialogue:

It is the body which points out, and which speaks....This disclosure [of the body's immanent expressiveness]...extends, as we shall see, to the whole sensible world, and our gaze, prompted by the experience of our own body, will discover in all other "objects" the miracle of expression (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 197).

Abram uses Merleau-Ponty's discussions of perception to launch a compelling argument for humans' inherent ability to notice and sense the environment as it is—without needing intermediary experts such as scientists, theorists, shamans or priests who rob individuals of agency and the ability to instigate change. Instead, Abram encourages us to understand



our sensual capacities as sufficient and deeply intelligent; he does this by arguing that our capacity to sense nonhuman energies is rooted in our capacity to empathize with what we see by relating it to our own *bodily* experiences. Abram articulates how Merleau-Ponty's ideas bring sense and sensibility together:

I am, in my depths, indistinguishable from [my powers of bodily perception], as my sadness is indistinguishable from a certain heaviness of my bodily limbs, or as my delight is only artificially separable from the widening of my eyes, from the bounce in my step and the heightened sensitivity of my skin. Indeed, facial expressions, gestures, and spontaneous utterances like sighs and cries seem to immediately incarnate feelings, moods, and desires without “my” being able to say which came first—the corporeal gesture or its purportedly “immaterial” counterpart (1996, p. 46).

Merleau-Ponty calls attention to the inseparability of bodily actions from the “feelings” that infuse them. Just in the way that we recognize the eagerness of a dog wagging its tail, David Abram suggests that we can use our intuitive understanding of bodily gesture to connect to the natural world; he encourages readers to imagine that those parts of the nonhuman world which we experience daily are in fact indivisible from our own sensual perception of them (1996, p. 81). Abram proposes that humans are even able to understand the language of animals, rocks, trees or rivers, for example, inasmuch as these entities make palpable, unique sensual impressions upon us. And so he constructs his plea for a realization of embodied consciousness and perceptive agency within human beings.

Such ideas affirm the experiences I have while dancing and living in a dancing body: our ability to understand the world is as rich, as qualitative, as our bodily experience of sensing and come about when we *choose to pay attention* to them.

*My eyes have been closed now for half an hour, heightening my other senses. I finger the flaky bark, amazed by the intricate and repetitive texture of this straight and scratchy specimen. It smells a bit woody, dusty and fresh at once—like lichen growing. I can feel some fluffiness like moss on one side. I sense my partner witnessing my blind exploration, seeing my thumb discover a small knothole and teeming fungi nearby; this sensory exercise becomes an improvisation performance.*

I have been using the words “knowledge” and “to know” thus far in order to indicate a kind of familiarity with an object. However the project of “knowing” one’s body, another, or one’s environment in a way that is active but not reductive is essential to my definition of ecology. I use the verb “to know” in the sense proposed by biologists Maturana and Varela in their 1992 book *The Tree of Knowledge*. Maturana and Verela propose that “knowing is doing” inasmuch as it is an active expression of how we engage with information, impulses and the provocations of otherness which

we daily expose ourselves to. Seen in this way, applying oneself to dance improvisation practices that seek to expand bodily sensibilities in moving would also translate as seeking expanded modes of knowing.

Within a dance studio, the environmental elements are simplified—floors are flat, smooth, and hopefully clean, and obstructions are cleared—to allow a dancer to engage with the body in space and to acquaint himself with the modes of doing and knowing inherent in movement.

*I understand how hard a floor surface is after jumping on it. My body 'understands' the profound joy in the accomplishment of an easy turn, an agile and effortless leap, a smooth landing—all instances in which my mental and physical self organizes itself in alignment with gravity and other motion principles to execute a successful step.*

This sensory perception so honed in a dance studio, however, can easily be taken outdoors, into wild spaces and unfamiliar environments to include in one's awareness the inhabitants of diverse ecosystems. The same perceptive skills that a dancer practices within a studio and uses in improvisation can be used to acquaint oneself with the textural, visual, auditory elements of any environment, and to navigate one's relationship with that environment.

This navigation must be intentional; improvisation requires dynamic bodily participation in this project of awareness-building. Merleau-Ponty holds that it is this participatory comprehension—our “sensibility” of our “sense”, that calls us into action and interaction; he challenges us to recognize that we understand all things, objects of nature and of culture, *primarily* through the feelings that surface through our entire body during interaction with these objects (1962, p. 235). Rather than isolating vision from hearing from touch, the whole body is seen as an integrated sense organ (1962, p. 229). Rather than imagining that a disembodied Cartesian mind is the processor of information, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the whole, integrated body as sensing subject (1962, p. 198).

In order to cultivate the body’s sensitivity in dance improvisation, we must become more fully aware of our own actions. With an observation similar to Maturana and Varela’s idea that knowing is doing: “[knowing, or] cognition is an *effective action*, an action that will enable a living being to continue its existence in a definite environment as it brings forth its world. Nothing more, nothing less” (1998, pp. 29-30), Merleau-Ponty points out that we use our bodies nearly unconsciously to perform numerous familiar tasks. Merleau-Ponty asserts that our flesh applies itself to practiced actions with memory and intelligence (1962, pp. 143-144). He writes,

Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. [...] For us the body is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions (1964, p. 5).

Merleau-Ponty maintains that our body expresses both our unconscious habits and conscious intentions in the world. David Seamon proposes that through such “place-ballets” of habituated movements we define our geographical dwelling through experience that is often underexamined, and through examining our sensible experience of our daily actions we can investigate the relationship between our habits and our wish for change (1980, p. 157; see also Shusterman 2008 and Juhan 1998, pp. xvii-xxxii). Bringing meaning and value to the ways in which we inhabit our bodies through *conscious* performance however, is a defining aspect of dance improvisation and ecology and a fundamental point of this thesis. As we think and move in ways that enable us to define our relationship to other things, our bodies carry the manifestation of our intention.

Making references to Cartesian thought throughout his writing, Merleau-Ponty rebels against this form of dualism by positing the body as innately intelligent through its powers of sensation, recognition and perception. By focusing on our lived experience in the body, Merleau-Ponty encourages us to recognize our perception as the fundamental action which holds the key to how we can re-value the world.

However, using perception to learn movement can be a complex matter wrought with inaccuracies of self-perception and new challenges in coordination (see Alexander 1923 and 1932; Feldenkrais 1972). As the somatic movement education that is increasingly incorporated into dance training shows, bringing awareness to the unconscious and not always helpful habits of our bodies can also bring about the potential for change. Richard Shusterman questions Merleau-Ponty's implied assumptions about the body's unreflective abilities to move itself and things "as if by magic", or with a "normal" spontaneous ease (Shusterman 2008, p. 64).

Shusterman offers a third option for bodily experience which can be considered with Merleau-Ponty's advocacy of a return to pre-reflective experience as contrast to representative scientific explanations. This key and potentially fruitful third understanding of the body as "lived somaesthetic reflection" could include both a concrete *and* "reflective bodily consciousness" according to Shusterman (2008, p. 63). Where Merleau-Ponty advocates a return to the instantaneous experience which has not been fragmented by "instruments [of] reflection" and so can "offer us all at once, pell-mell, both 'subject' and 'object,' both existence and essence," both seer and seen (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 130), Shusterman points to the idea of "somatic mindfulness" which can be practiced as part of a philosophy of "reflective bodily consciousness" toward the self. A

further discussion of how self-reflective bodily consciousness can be exercised in dance learning can be found in chapter four, and while Merleau-Ponty's critical reflection upon the body leaves room for somatic discussion, his discussion of relating the experiencing flesh to its surroundings has proven valuable to discourses in environmental aesthetics discussed in chapters five and six, and to ecological philosophy.

While many writers have used phenomenology as a foundation for ecological action (see Brown and Toadvine 2003, Buttner and Seamon 1980, Pratt et al 2000, Seamon and Mugeraur 1985, Seamon and Zajong 1998, Tilley 1994), Abram's use of Merleau-Ponty's work is unique in how he initiates a rich discussion of the sensual capacities of the body to relate to the "more-than-human" world by making possible an intimate understanding of wildlife and intimate *relationships with* these creatures as well (1996, pp. 1, 15). Through making contact with wildlife, writes Abram, we transform our imagination of ourselves (1996, pp. 275-276).

This willingness to participate purposefully in active perception, is a hallmark of key contemporary dance improvisation practices. While many of these practices and trainings occur inside dance studios and may not make explicit their intentions to participate in the "more-than-human world", their methods provoke deep inquiry into the sensing capacity of the

body itself, and through this provocation they can be understood as initiating greater sensory awareness that has substantial implications for our contact with the entire living world, humans and nonhumans included. In the following sections I explain how the awareness practices of dancemaker Deborah Hay and improviser Sten Rudstrom relate to goals of enhanced perception. I also discuss my own explorations in phenomenology through performance practice, examining how my methods of tuning into my own body began my investigation into a wider world. Through improvisation I began perceiving the exterior world of otherness in relation to my interior one.

One can say that we perceive the things themselves, that we are the world that thinks itself—or that the world is at the heart of our flesh. In any case, once a body-world relationship is recognized, there is a ramification of my body and a ramification of the world and a correspondence between its inside and my outside, between my inside and its outside (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 136).

## **2. Intelligent Flesh**

Practicing perception is my method of increasingly recognizing and developing the intelligence of my flesh. The innate intelligence of the body is described by Merleau-Ponty as residing in its powers of recognition and perception, but this intelligence can be forgotten if ignored. Dancing in theatres and studios has been an effort to develop the “intelligence” of



my flesh through a twelve-year study of the kinetic, perceptual and kinesthetic workings of my body. Through these efforts I have learned how to care for my body and have developed a great desire to ensure its well-being. Hence, interest in ecology can begin with interest in the health and functionality of one's own body—one's own piece of nature to live inside, understand and develop. Improvisation offers methods to notice and develop the "intelligence" of one's flesh.

The concept of intelligent flesh researched in the somatics work of Body-Mind Centering (BMC) is supported by Merleau-Ponty's theories of corporeal phenomenology. Both schools of thought hold bodily perception to be our central mode of understanding the world, and describe the body as our locus for making meaning through sense and gesture.

Body-Mind Centering students broaden knowledge of the body by focusing perception on the different systems including digestive, adrenal, circulatory and musculoskeletal. While BMC does not focus on improvisation for performance per se, it uses movement improvisation as a method of broadening perception through sensing, probing and improvising with bodily systems. BMC, like Merleau-Ponty, holds that corporeality is an experience that is only expandable through perception; likewise, the

subjectivity of corporeal perception requires that each person discover his body for himself.

*As long as I can smell, see and feel, I need no intermediary to examine the stench of maturing compost and assure me it is rich, no advisor to explain the grain and density of an old oak tree.*

Rather than submitting to authority for ideas about the world, understanding one's own sensory impressions as valid is the first step toward cultivating the bodily intelligence which dance improvisation utilizes. As both BMC and Abram contend, it is through direct contact and sense perception that we can understand our bodies or the bodies of others, both human and nonhuman.

In other words, conscious experience fuels understanding. Therefore, I propose that for my purposes "ecology" is the understanding of the interdependence of living systems as conscious experience and "dance improvisation" is an active practice of conscious experience. Implicit in the understanding of these interdependent systems is the drive to ensure their health, and so to use phenomenology as a tool toward ecological practice can bring an ethical imperative to the project of dancing.

Equally, our conscious and unconscious ways of perceiving influence our relationships with others and our environment. Beginning with the supposition that by practicing awareness we can enhance awareness, somatic practices and improvisation practices seek to expand our conscious experience of moving. Merleau-Ponty asserts that the body does not exist in but rather “inhabits time and space” (1962, p. 139), as we move in relation to objects that we perceive. BMC exercises likewise elucidate how the ways we feel, touch, smell and see the world form our understanding of how we are a part of, or apart from this world. By focusing awareness on our bodily processes in movement, BMC’s simple exercises can have a profound effect on one’s sense of physical agency, improving sensitivity, perceptual acuity, skill, health and efficiency (Olsen 2000; Batson and Schwartz 2007).

*Studying the structures of the body, I find echoes of my insides everywhere I see living things. Lungs look like branches, breathing leaves. I feel my capillaries like tributaries, my arteries like rivers, heart is a heaving, tidal ocean...*

*In anatomy class this morning I dissected my cat’s abdominal cavity and was fascinated to pull back skin walls and see its compact display of slippery, rubbery, jiggly, twisted and tubular intestinal viscera. Now I improvise in the studio, recapitulating the BMC “Organs Exploration”*

*exercise. My intestines feel like they look; jiggling and pouring their watery mass about the space I become gutsy as I move. I see myself in the mirror and imagine my own plush internal pipings, out the window I see a squirrel and my x-ray vision hones in on its belly... the policewoman, the janitor, all carry around these labyrinthine workings. I am using my guts to move more powerfully, not sucking in or gripping them in worry.*

Merleau-Ponty echoes my experience in BMC when he writes, “inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself” (1962, p. 407). Looking simultaneously inward to the body and outward to the world for explanations about our sentient life is a key component of somatics practices as well as the improvisation practices which have ecological relevance. Specifically, developing the capacity to become intimately aware of the sentient capacities of the flesh is fundamental to the improvisation practices of Deborah Hay, Sten Rudstrom and myself.

### **3. Deborah Hay: Whole Body the Teacher**

Deborah Hay practices a physical performance of inquiry when she dances. She doesn't call her work improvisation, but there is very little physical choreographic instruction in her dances. Instead, she choreographs

attention. “Ask the question, notice the response, whole body the teacher” (Hay 2006). Hay assumes the intelligence of the sensing body and uses improvisation to practice perception and to learn from “the teacher” of her whole body (2005) through a practice that manifests like a meditation.

Hay, who has been chronicling her inquisitive performance practices since 1970, takes the concept of bodily intelligence as an underlying principle to all her performance work. Rather than quantifying what her “whole body” is or how it teaches her, Hay chooses instead to articulate her inquiry in movement. *Through the act of moving*, Hay researches a bodily perception which is not reducible to any part of the body. In an interview with Ann Daly, Hay describes how her attention while improvising transcends divisions of body/mind/spirit.

[Daly:] Your bodily practice—your dance—is not just about the physical body, but about the physical/spiritual body.

[Hay:] This is crucial. In dance I do not divide the body into physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, psychological parts. I am adamant about this. The whole body is the perceiver of everything imagined, created, invented, not imagined, guessed, faked (Daly 1999, p. 15).

Hay’s way of seeing “the body” as unified composite parts enables her to practice perception in a simplified way. She dances by creating conditions for movement and then noticing how her body responds to those conditions. For example, from 1970 to 1980 Hay practiced this underlying

score for all her dancing: “I imagine every cell in my body hears, performs, and surrenders the dance simultaneously” (2000, p. 103).

While Hay’s requests sound impossible, the result in dancing her movement scores is an incredible lightness and feeling of possibility in the body, as I “sense” all my cells spinning off into different directions, in new and uncommon organizations. The dancing that comes out of this certainly does not come from a body whose parts have reconfigured themselves with a spleen leading a clump of tibia cells over the left elbow newly relocated over the right ribs, but rather the inquiry into the “What if?” possibility of unpatterned movement instantly creates an eager response in the body to try. The body becomes a facility containing trillions of intelligences, each possessing and activating the potential to “dialogue with all that is” (Hay 2000, p. 104).

Hay considers this practice to be a performance practice. She calls every rehearsal a practice of performing the practice of asking the question. In this way one becomes more and more adept at noticing the body’s response to the question, and more and more available to ask the question again.

When encountering other dancers or audience, Hay asks her dancers to say, “When I see you I see you practicing what I’m practicing.” In this way the

dancers become accustomed to accepting all input as responses to the “What if?” question.

Hay teaches that the ideosomatic wisdom of the body itself is the site of multiple, profound intelligences which provide insight when inquired into. Privilege to the body’s “subtle forms of knowledge” (Hay 2000, p. xxv; Drobnick 2006, pp. 44-45) are those who take time to practice inquiring into their bodies through movement, according to Hay. The elusive phenomena she seeks are the moments of an improvisation where one feels “ah-ha!”. Hay’s supplication to her moving body creates the conditions for these unquantifiable phenomena of “wisdom” to arise.

#### **4. Critical Capacities of the Phenomenological Observer**

One notable characteristic of Hay’s intra-subjective perceptual process is its limited ability to gauge the aesthetic impact of a performance upon an audience, and her work has been both acclaimed and reproached for its attentive self-involvement (Bailey 2009; Smith 1976). In this case the work of dance phenomenologists (Parviainen 1998, 2002; Fraleigh 1987, 2004; Sheets 1966; Sheets-Johnstone 1979, 1984, 1999; Kozel 1994) offer helpful ways of locating the knowledge of a dancing body for a dancer and evaluating its transferability to an audience.

Inherent in the phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty in particular is the understanding that the body exhibits a kind of valid, pre-cognitive knowledge which saturates any experience of perception. One's own body is inherent to one's experience. In dancing which seeks to make visible an experience of perception, this phenomenon of knowledge manifests through the body's movement which reads as an experience which to some degree is both sensible to the dancing body and visible to a watcher through the medium of "the lived body" (Cohen 1984, p. 164). Though there are significant questions around how far the lived human body offers a medium for a universalized performance experience (see Barba and Savarese 1991; Koppers 2003, Schechner 2006; Schechner and Schuman 1976), phenomenological interpretations of aesthetics propose that a close communion with a work of art necessarily entails entering into a creatively receptive relationship with its sensible qualities (Ingarden 1975, p. 260) where perception engenders "a sympathetic reflection on the aesthetic object" (Dufrenne 1973, p. 395; see also Freedberg and Gallese 2007). For Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, this experience in dance is grounded in the "imaginative consciousness" of the dancer to recreate forms that align with certain images (Sheets-Johnstone 1979, pp. 113-114). Thus, this "knowledge" possessed by movement can be seen as the intention of the dancer to practice awareness of effort and of translating energetic pathways of movement images.



Sondra Fraleigh argues that the extent to which a dancer can know himself through movement depends on how he qualifies his intention of moving (1987, p. 27; 1993, pp. 102-103), though Jaana Parviainen points out that a comprehensive epistemology of movement must be developed to substantiate theories of knowledge in dance. Parviainen explains how processes of learning dance also nurture the process of becoming attuned to one's own body. She writes, "learning dancing means becoming bodily sensitive in the respect of the kinaesthetic sense and one's own motility" (Parviainen 2002, p. 5). For Sheets-Johnstone, the fact that the intention of the dancer does not always translate as an exactly legible sign to the watcher does not diminish the significance of the dancer's movement as "a revelation of sheer force" reflective of "a pure phenomenon of feeling" (1979, p. 128). The knowledge of a dancing body is expressed in its movement qualities and not just the forms which are familiar to it. A dancer's skill is shown in his self-knowledge in moving: the body's range of tonal qualities, reflexes, responsiveness, balance, agility and strength show traces of movement training but also reveal the importance given to improvisational practice. Parviainen notes that a dancer's "bodily knowledge" is revealed in practice; an embodied ability may not be able to be communicated in words but will nonetheless become built and strengthened through ongoing practice:

A new skill learnt yesterday is sedimented in the dancer's body, becoming his or her indwelling tomorrow. This sedimentation of skills, knowledge and experiences in the body can be regarded as a path, also a personal choice, to learn a certain movement style and to habituate the body to this vocabulary, studying and living through it (Parviainen 1998)" (Parviainen 2002, p. 7).

Where a movement vocabulary becomes embodied through dedicated practice, so do improvisers become more fully attuned to their non-directive potential through continued practice (Hamilton 1993, Simson 2005, Schumacher 2003). This is what is significant about dance improvisation performance as a practice of other ecological principles: if a movement skill becomes "known" only through its practice, continued practice of physically responding to environments in non-habituated ways will strengthen perceptual capacities. As in the practice of contact improvisation, such training heightens one's reflexes and pre-reflective response capacity (Paxton in Nelson 2006). Without claiming that all skilled improvisers make great ecologists, Parviainen's research implies that only practical, *bodily* experiences of improvised intersubjectivity with an "other" can inform appropriately responsive and ethically engaged movements.

"Witnessing" the environment can be a practice that contributes a paradoxical awareness of the intersubjectivity between self and other. The

discipline of Authentic Movement, in which one person silently witnesses a mover who moves in a non-directed way with his or her eyes closed, uses witnessing as a way of supporting movement-based enquiry. Also referred to as “the MoverWitness Paradigm” (Goldhahn 2007), Authentic Movement has been used in conjunction with dance, therapy, psychology and arts practices as a way to commit to seeing another in the act of conscious moving (Adler 2002; Goldhahn 2007). From discussions with Simon Whitehead about a method of using Authentic Movement proposed by Susan Shell, Jennifer Monson worked with a model in which one witnesses the landscape as a mover before moving with the landscape as witness (Monson 2010). As an extension of her “sensory practice” work within outdoor environments, Monson uses Authentic Movement to “bring consciousness of self to a place” and to “warm up” by focusing energetic and imaginative presence that brings with it awareness of relationship to environment. She says,

When I’m witnessing, my consciousness moves out; when I’m being witnessed I sense the potential consciousness of place moving in. The energy of consciousness is coming into being with the relationship of myself sensing and perceiving the environment, and the environment sensing or perceiving me (Monson 2010).

In this model, the environment becomes part of an intersubjective relationship of conscious perception.

Awareness of the body in relationship to something else builds awareness of a dancer's movement. Sheets-Johnstone remarks that the epistemic sensitivity of the body is integral to this process of building practical movement knowledge; the body detects and measures the sensations of movement—clunking versus floating, sustained versus rhythmic—according to its responsiveness to the world, and its embodied self-awareness (1999). Self-awareness and reflection in moving is crucial to the phenomenological project, and phenomenology's commitment to critical observation affords it a complicated luxury in dance, where the subject of consideration is a moving body that is seen as well as sensing. Where Sheets-Johnstone insists more fully on Husserl's process of eidetic reduction, and on the necessity of writing to analyze the essential nature of a dance experience, Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the reversibility of body and world leaves less room for a sense of distance between self and experience. If body and world interface chiasmically, as one reversible flesh, and a certain disinterested distance is essential to the phenomenological project, the question becomes how to develop an embodied yet critically aware moving practice of phenomenological investigation that reflects both body and world. Merleau-Ponty proposes perception as the practical action which links both in embodied study. The performance-based improvisation work of Deborah Hay, Chrysa Parkinson

and Sten Rudstrom offer ways toward practicing more nuanced and embodied perception of body and world.

#### **4. Practicing Perceiving**

Improvisation practices such as Hay's require practitioners to open awareness to perceive with a whole integrated sense structure, and nothing less. There are many ways to actively practice perceiving while dancing, and many levels of activity to tune into.

*We are walking in only circles. Big arcs, small spirals, repeating perfect circle pathways, and I can feel the outside of my foot that is inside the circle being pressurized, so I change directions, making an S-shape and continuing in a small clockwise circle. My hip sockets are lubricated by all the walking, and my head feels heavy as it pulls away from my body that curves sideways toward the center of my circle, my feet were cold but are warming up as I use them for traction, sticking to the floor-pattern my circle makes so I can continue to lean into/away from the center of my circle. My arms hang freely and move a bit like wind chimes against my body, sensing also the possibility of needing to brush past someone to avoid a crash. My feet find the sticky and ripped piece of tape on the floor*

*each time I pass by the brick-wall-side of my small circle. Now I feel all the fluids in my body dragged to the opposite side as I lean into a new circle and walk counterclockwise.*

One can engage a kind of attention that is sensitively interested in what is happening in the body and in the space when improvising. This attention, expanded to include the body's engagement with its whole living environment, can be seen as the foremost step to practicing intentional contact with the world. Indeed, scientific research calls into question the "human" boundaries of the body, noting that 90 percent of the cells in a human body are "nonhuman" yeasts, fungi, bacteria and microbes essential to our survival (Hawken 2007, p. 169). Paradoxically, feeling one's human self to be an externally or internally integral part of the nonhuman world could propel a person to become more aware of his interactions with the environment.

*I step into the garden and my bare feet find a thorn. I hobble and crash into a stand of hawthorn—Ow! sending a sparrow flapping out in surprise. She has a strand of grass in her beak, and she flies up to the eaves of the house, disappearing in a crack. Regaining my balance I stand still, watching. After a moment she shoots out again, and floats to the lawn, landing next to a mossy rock about five meters from me. She works at the*

*moss to loosen it, then, eyeing me for a second, flies up again, past me to the eaves with a beak-full.*

Deborah Hay says, “My game is to be as fully awake as possible. I imagine that I can see with every part of my body – that I have eyes everywhere” (Drobnick 2006, p. 48). Similarly, improviser David Zambrano, whose work I discuss in chapter two, asks his pupils to feel “little windows and doors” in our fingertips, toes, heels and elbows (2005). Dance teacher Chrysa Parkinson asks her students to focus in on kinesthetically sensing different aspects of moving parts –the moving bodies in the studio space, and the moving bones and muscles in the body—in order to practice perception while dancing. She offers unusual and challenging instructions: “Bring perception to the inside of your body...Feel your eyelids moving...Register the ways you perceive motion...Feel your skin...Notice the bones of your lower leg crossing and uncrossing” (Parkinson 2006).

Merleau-Ponty remarks that patterns of movement and perception become habituated, noting, for example, how amputees continue to sense a limb after it is gone (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 66). In a similar effort to sidestep habits Parkinson’s work focuses on shifting our normal way of perceiving bodily movement so that we might understand it more poignantly—with

less familiarity. Dancing while blindfolded, imagining the floor as front, or watching dancing from an upside-down vantage point are exercises used to re-orient our sensing capacity from its visually-dominated patterns, and to refine dancers' tactile and spatial perception (2005). To engage with this kind of heightened attention throughout all one's dancing, blindfolded or otherwise, is the objective of the perceptive improviser.

Another way to defamiliarize perceptual patterns is to move in relation to particular objects in the space, for example by imitation.

*Emilyn places a red plastic folding chair in the center of the studio and invites anyone to come up and “perform the chair”. I immediately see it like a gaping red mouth leaning backwards on a slanted leg, so I walk up to the chair and assume that position: facing the audience, I lean back on one leg, tilt my head back, open my mouth wide, stick out my tongue and freeze. A sense of familiarity in my own body and sounds of amused recognition from the audience affirm I've performed a likeness.*

By using our bodies to emulate postures, shapes and textures, we practice actively perceiving, and can come closer to understanding the character of a thing. We can also then reflect on this relationship between body and thing through our perception.



Merleau-Ponty argues likewise for the inherent expressiveness of our own bodies which extends to comprehend and “discover” expressions in other objects. Abram translates this “discovery” to mean our bodily capacity for understanding the language of nonhumans. He argues that perception is always a participatory action (1996, pp. 275-276), and as such is our basic means for inviting relationship with the world around us. As such, improvisation practices that focus on physicalizing bodily perceptions can ground notions of relationship into concrete, sensuous physical efforts.

## **5. Sensing, Feeling, Action**

“I return in my mind’s eye to the northern slope of Bald Mountain on which I live. I look around and—pronto! Something happens. I see snow. I jump and curl in air. Hands and feet in air. Heavy rattle winter wind smashes dry sunflower stalks. Again. Again, smash, jump! Snow thud falls from laden roof. Feet slide out, thud. Whole body, thud, flat to floor”  
(Forti in Albright and Gere 2003, p. 53).

As Simone Forti’s words capture, improvisation is a practice of perceiving and performing simultaneously. Rather than editing feelings, a dancer can inform his performance with the fullness of his immediate sensations.

Abram writes that we must allow ourselves to be moved by the sensual acts of life all around us: the exploding of a daffodil, a gruesomely wind-

slapping hurricane, the unfurling of a fern tentacle, a writhing and flopping pink earthworm. He challenges us toward ecological awareness through sensual empathy, arguing that we can engage meaningfully with the natural world via our innate capacity to see, hear, taste, smell and feel other beings (1996).

Action Theater instructor Sten Rudstrom teaches that improvisation can be a direct practice of sensing-feeling-action, thus producing a more embodied engagement with one's performance environment. As Rudstrom teaches it, Action Theater is performed in a theater or practiced in a studio setting, and so the "natural world", so to speak, does not significantly factor into his lessons; however within these practice settings an Action Theater improviser hones the relationship between his bodily perception and action in performance. As a kind of twig dance, sensing-feeling-action shows how an improviser's bodily sensations can inform and enrich his performance process.

Originally developed as a way of rethinking actor's training toward more embodied and less cerebral performance methods, Action Theater's emphasis on sensing and feeling as a prelude to all action has served as a useful technique toward this goal for many performers, and aspects of the practice are fundamentally relevant to a practice of ecological engagement.

“Sensing-feeling-action” features in Rudstrom’s training course as a particular exercise, and then manifests through the Action Theater performance method as a useful phrase to remind an actor to involve her whole body when performing. The sensing-feeling-action exercise can usefully demonstrate the performative possibilities of Abram’s notion: that we can literally be moved by the sensual acts of the natural world around us. It does this by training improvisers to mediate information at the basic level of the senses. There are three key ways Rudstrom’s practice serves to actualize an ecological agenda such as David Abram’s. These include interpreting sensation as feeling, turning feeling into action, and reflecting on action as sensation.

First, Rudstrom instructs his actors to understand sensation as feeling. At the most basic level of interpreting the world around us, the ability to observe how sensation manifests within one’s body as feeling affords a vital awareness. Both when improvising and when interacting with the environment, our senses inform and guide our actions. We can sense the coldness of snow, its fluffiness and fragility, and we feel something; that feeling affects us and brings us into responsive action. We can sense the rigidity of our spine in a moment of fear or apprehension, and recognizing that feeling itself can be the basis for further action and interaction. Here, I

use “sense” to describe immediate sensory input and “feeling” to describe the broader bodily response of tension, emotion and reaction that sense triggers.

Organizing a field of input in terms of the feelings it offers us is a method akin to the perceptual suggestions of David Abram (1996, pp. 275-276).

*Sten asks us to embody the state of dry leaves, in sound and movement. I imagine a leaf I saw and stepped on this morning, hearing it crack under my foot and I can feel my body as dry, thin and brittle as that leaf. I feel my spine as spiky and breakable as its spine, I feel my fingers curling up in imitation of its curled edges, and my body suddenly continues a fragmented, brittle, breaking dance, my mouth involved in c-c-c-c-ricking, c-c-c-c-racking sounds (August 2005).*

Leaves, sand, flames, moss, mud—these are all elements which students are asked to ‘embody’ through sound and movement in Sten Rudstrom’s Action Theater training exercises. What sound might mud make? What texture of movement? The task calls us to understand our perception as feeling and to turn that feeling into action (Rudstrom 2005). The exercise is abstract in many ways, asking us to imagine or recall our sensory memory of moss, for example, and to work with that impression, rather

than going out to find actual moss to touch. In doing so, Action Theater improvisation training encourages its performers to open perception to all kinds of input: imagined, felt, hoped for and remembered. In Action Theater all events are seen as capable of triggering bodily feelings useful to improvisation.

Merleau-Ponty argues similarly that our body responds impulsively to the evocative sensual associations of “cultural objects like words” (1962, p. 235). Abram takes up this point as further support for his argument that our responses to things or ideas manifest pre-cognitively in our bodies as (sometimes subtle) resonant sensations (1996, p. 53). Action Theater assumes likewise, and so improvisers are trained to be aware of how they respond to the bodily movement qualities of other actors, as well as be sensitive to the qualities of movement sparked in one’s own body at the suggestion of words, sounds, rhythms or feelings/emotions.

Emotional states *as such* (for example “sad” or “happy”) are hardly ever confronted in Action Theater—to name a state as an emotion is thought to distance a performer from what he or she is actually feeling and often lead to a pantomime of the performer’s ideal of the emotion. For example, if a performer interpreted a vague sense of heaviness in his limbs as “sad” and then proceeded to make a “sad” action by turning the corners of his mouth

down and furrowing his brow, such an action would be seen as an imitative caricature of “sad.” In Action Theater this is seen as a calculated action based on the actor’s concept of sad rather than an explicit response to the specific feeling of heaviness in the actor’s limbs, which might otherwise be turned into any number of actions which do not necessarily read to an audience as “sad.” Instead of acting out emotions, Rudstrom encourages feeling as an act of perception which connects performers to the sentient reality of their bodies. This can become tricky, because as bodyworker Deane Juhan notes, feelings and feeling can be virtually indistinguishable from one another in the ways our bodies recognize and manifest them.

We encounter...a great deal of ambiguity between sensory feeling and mental feelings. This is not just because it is sometimes hard to distinguish between the two of them, but because they are not clearly separable things. They constantly condition and influence one another to such a degree that it simply becomes an academic abstraction to contemplate the nature of one without the other. I “feel” things, and I simultaneously have “feelings” about them, and very often we find ourselves reduced to the question of the chicken and the egg when we try to determine which one causes the specific qualities of the other (1998, p. xxvii).

As a bodyworker researching the effects and qualities of therapeutic touch on enhancing our health and sensitivity to life, Juhan identifies the complex, ambiguous relationship between sensory feeling and mental feelings, a relationship which, I propose, can become reified and strengthened through the focused and specific inquiry that improvisation

practices such as sensing-feeling-action bring to bear on the body. We can acknowledge the resonant feelings that our contact with others instigates, and begin to identify our own roles as decision-makers within that intricate pattern of perception, reaction and response.

Furthermore, I propose that the practice of sensing-feeling-action that occurs as an exercise in Action Theater can be used to more effectively articulate our capacities for responding in our encounters with the natural world. This is not to advocate a policy of reactionary dealings with our feathered neighbors, or with other humans, but rather to elucidate the distinctive presence and guiding role of bodily feelings in each instance of contact with another. Once we recognize the informative quality of sensations, we can then set about the task of intelligently choosing how we use that sensation to perform as action—on the stage and in the world. Immediately recognizing sensation is an important aspect of practicing *Twig Dances*, which I discuss in detail in chapter six.

Secondly, Rustrum teaches his actors how to turn feeling into action. When we make a feeling into an action we can stretch, shrink, repeat or expand that action in performance.

*I feel excited to be performing in front of a small audience, and I notice how my eyes are widening and my fingers are twiddling and my whole body is kind of humming, so I take it further and perform it: I really widen my eyes, and really twiddle my fingers and totally let my body hum with the actions of feeling excited. The energy I pump into emphasizing these movements eggs me on further: my eyes are popping now, my finger-twiddling is becoming a whole-arm phenomenon, and my “humming” body is beginning to bounce. I sense myself becoming more excited yet. I feel the associated bodily tensions and flows, and emphasize them further. I quickly find myself in a delightfully deepening circle of sensing-feeling-acting-sensing-feeling-acting.*

Turning feeling into action requires embodying feelings until they become form. “Pay attention to your feeling. Start from the feeling,” Rudstrom repeats frequently in Action Theater training workshops (2003). Once an improviser can do this, her palette of choices in states and movement is as wide and as varied as her experience as a sentient human being.

Turning a feeling into a performed action also importantly locates that feeling as bodily. By acknowledging what is going on in the body the actor can exaggerate it into a performance. The recognition of the placement, quality and rhythm of a feeling as it manifests in the neck, back, head,



stomach and skin, etc. locates that feeling as a movement experience of a body-subject. This is significant because it acknowledges the physicality of our lived experience and encourages the practitioner's awareness of feelings as bodily manifestations. "Recognize your feelings and include them," Rudstrom advises his trainees. He reminds us thus that bodily feelings inevitably influence actions, and therefore including them in performance is far more productive than resisting them.

Through action and exaggeration, an Action Theater practitioner creates movement out of a feeling. The improviser sculpts a formerly inexpressible feeling into a tangible, communicable reality: heaviness in limbs becomes stepping slowly and weightedly around the stage with arms hanging low. This mobilization enables the actor enough distance from the action to playfully expand, vary and alter it. The slow and weighted steps around the room reveal a rhythm of their own, and suddenly he can play with that rhythm.

Playfulness enables a performer to dis-identify with his feeling because he can see it manifested as an action *which he has control over*. As an action one does rather than a feeling one has, the bodily sensation manifests as just another element of the performance, rather than an obstacle to performing. In this way, the improviser can see her actions simply as

elements of a performance. These elements work to create a feeling within the larger performance, and provoke responses in other actors. Understood thus, actions are opportunities to exercise personal agency.

Finally, Rudstrom teaches how to reflect on action as sensation. The sensing-feeling-action exercise teaches how to take any sensation, however tiny, and focus it into a readable bodily state or movement. The premise is that sensing-feeling-acting is a bodily process that operates quickly and efficiently to elucidate what a body-subject is already perceiving and to make that perception explicitly into a communication recognizable to the actor and any watching public. When a performer communicates personal feeling as an obvious action, he creates transparency for himself, and invites dialogue with those who see him. Reflecting on action as sensation therefore widens the scope of the practitioner's awareness; all those who share the performance environment can be seen as being affected by the action.

This transformation of feeling into performed action illustrates the concept of interconnectivity—the idea that the actions of every living thing have some effect on the state of every other living thing—central to much ecological thinking. As Abram suggests, actions are also sensual elements, and therefore can be catalysts for reflection and transformation.

In Action Theater, a feeling performed as an action becomes an exploration rather than a repetition; the actor then becomes interested in, rather than limited by his feelings. This activity bridges the gap between sensing and participating. It can be a practice of inviting, as Abram suggests, the body's extension into the whole sensible world as an active participant by "lending one's sensory imagination to things in order to discover how they alter and transform that imagination, how they reflect us back changed, how they are different from us" (1996, pp. 275-276). Applying one's sensory imagination to a performed action in an improvisation scenario enables an exploratory, interested and playful response to that action to be generated. Herein lies the key to contact with the outside world through sense: by actively (and creatively) participating with another we can more fully notice our own sensual reality. Acting as conscious decision-makers rather than blind actors, an improviser becomes a more aware, interested, and involved participant in his world. Action Theater is a laboratory in which to practice this.

Action Theater's sensing-feeling-acting exercise makes explicit the tangibility of Merleau-Ponty's embodied gestures, or Abram's inseparability between perceiving something and experiencing a bodily feeling which that perception triggers. As a performance method it works

directly with the sensual knowledge of the body, eliminating steps in which the rational mind judges, corrects, remarks or qualifies the intensity of a performer's feeling. Seeking swiftness of bodily responses through the sensing-feeling-action paradigm, an improviser can practice deepening embodiment, clarification and communication of her perception.

## **6. Experiments in Sense: *Response Ability***

*The Humpbacks* (excerpt)

Listen, whatever it is you try  
to do with your life, nothing will ever dazzle you  
like the dreams of your body,

its spirit  
longing to fly while the dead-weight bones

toss their dark mane and hurry  
back into the fields of glittering fire

where everything,  
even the great whale,  
throbs with song.

- Mary Oliver (1978)

This section describes my practical research into sensing as a foundation for improvisation practices. By describing my early development of improvisation practices that begin within the sensing body, I illustrate how an intimate involvement with a practice of sensing can focus one's

awareness on the self, and provide foundations to expand that awareness out beyond the self.

My own practical inquiries into the potential applications of bodily awareness in performance follow a similar trajectory to this dissertation: beginning with the internal body and moving outward into the environment.

In 2003 I produced the performance *Response Ability*, which illustrates my first level of involvement with sense in improvisation. During the performance, I performed movements that arose as a continual response to the impulses, feelings and movement-desires of my body. Rather than improvising in response to other elements in the space, such as gravity, the floor, the audience, the walls of the gallery, etc., I danced from the premise that my entire physical anatomy wished to move in various and palpable ways in relation to each other, and so my score was to move as these “body-dreams” arose. This became an anatomical improvisation of interrelationship between my body’s parts and resulted in a gallery-installation performance of ninety minutes in which I invited an audience to witness me responding to these “wishes”.

Body-Mind-Centering courses had honed my affinity for sensing-feeling-moving as one unified improvisational process, and an interest in anatomy further informed my solo improvisation practices as explorations into the qualities and movement tendencies of my own body structures. Together, these fields of inquiry contributed to my theoretical platform for performing *Response Ability*; my reasoning enabled me to perform in order to explore the body's tendencies toward movement. These tendencies manifested and operated at the most basic and immediate level of sensing and doing. Before I constructed complex theories of space, time, or cultural context to surround my dance, I chose to move as a simple practice of staying present with the physical desires of a moving body. I penned a poem which voiced some of these so-called desires:

### Bodyscape

This dancing bonesack whirls its spirals wild;  
a reach, a spring, extensions of the core—  
red rivers, cells and marrow croon the score  
of dazzling body-dreams. And like a child  
who crumples consequence and dives through space  
this skin spills risk and boasts cartography.  
Plush memory, concinnity and glee,  
they reign without, within this interface.  
These layers, ladders, limbs are lessons in  
polarity: as eyes are hips, so pelvis  
head. From muscle-roots like wishing wells,  
this spine can reach sequoia tall. Begin  
with tracks of spinning spirals, jewels of genes;  
to skeleton, life systems: beauty means.  
(Sarco 2002)

The wonderstruck voice in the poem is more concerned with her own discovery of her body's internal workings and "plush memory, concinnity and glee" therein than any specifics of a performance as seen externally. Likewise, whether or not beauty manifested in the performance space as seen by my beholders mattered not to me during *Response Ability*, as "beauty" was the score I followed with my internal senses.

Instead of considering the external effects or impact of my actions on the audience or the space beyond my body, I performed a solo of kinetic fascination with my musculoskeletal system. My choice to perform *Response Ability* in an art gallery worked further to encourage the dancing to be seen as a durational study of the body, by the body, irrespective of spatial and rhythmic compositional considerations.

Covering the gallery walls were over two hundred pages of journal entries I had written over a three month period of study in Japan. These encompassed my observations about Zen Buddhism, Japanese culture, martial arts, and the early development of my own improvisation practice. Signs throughout the gallery invited audience members to interact: "Please read the walls, and use the markers to add your own ideas to the pages;" or to enter into their own small physical explorations: "Please wiggle your

toes;” “Soften your belly;” “Forget that your skin is a barrier” (Sarco 2003). These instructions illustrated more facets of an improvisation practice that focused on sensing as primary for both audience and performer.

*“Simple, easy river water body, splashing into the floor and out again.*

*Whitewater body, surface slipping skin, pillow rocks.*

*Constantly twisting, spiraling, eddies with whirlpools continuing constantly—there is no end” (Journal October 7, 2002).*

*I read a bit of this journal entry from the wall and suddenly my body remembers the river, and I swish into the floor and out again, playing with the feeling of my limbs flashing, splashing, slipping over each other and the floor.*

*Response Ability* sought to encompass my own ability to respond to the feelings in me that pointed to *what felt good* to do. This was based in the idea that sensing was the necessary prerequisite for response. In my artist’s statement accompanying the performance I wrote, “*Response Ability* posits interaction through response as the primary purpose of our being” (Sarco 2003). I explored interaction through response primarily at the level of my own body.



If ecological practice includes an awareness of interrelationship, then

*Response Ability* was a practice at one level of this interrelationship.

*Response Ability* is the performative unification of presence, attention, and action. It is an offering of sensory reception and corporeal translation. It gives equal importance to the mind, the body, the space, and the moment. In turn, this practice affirms the equality and interdependence of all involved. The spleen is as important as the kneecap is as important as the witness is as important as the watermelon seed on the floor (Sarco 2003).

My intention was to practice an awareness of interrelationship within and around my moving body, and my experience of this interrelationship extended, by example, to include those events and people and organisms in the gallery. While the kind of awareness developed by my performance of *Response Ability* did not claim to be expansive toward the larger environment, it nonetheless manifested as a certain focused inquiry into the application of sensed impulses from the inner workings of the body onto the time and space of that gallery performance in August 2003 within a frame of democratized attention. As a practice of sensing, it revealed a willingness to tune in to the level of the immediate body, and to explore its proclivities for movement among its layers of flesh and fluid through motion that the audience was invited to witness through mobile interaction of their own.

## **7. Conclusion: Process as Practice**

Regarding sensing as a participatory process enables an improviser to engage more fully in practices that sharpen her skills of perception.

Improvisation in Body-Mind Centering workshops, in the movement practices of Hay, in classes by Parkinson, in Action Theater improvisation training and in my performance of *Response Ability* illustrate how perception can be exercised to expand one's awareness of the body and its responses to an environment. These methods also illustrate how developing a philosophy of sensing as an active process can lead a mover to claim his/her personal agency as a sensing, feeling and acting member of a larger world. As an ecological practice, engaging bodily perception through sensing brings to view the tangible and direct ways that humans and nonhuman members of an environment interact and affect one another.

Practicing perception requires engaging with sense at the level of the body and at the level of one's surroundings. In chapter two I discuss how improvisation practices that challenge conventional notions of space can also serve to expand one's awareness of ecological relationships.



## Chapter Two

### Spacing: Interactive Imaginations

How we conceive of and navigate a landscape spatially with our bodies determines the level and quality of our interactions and relationships with others, both human and nonhuman. Significantly for ecological thinking, different improvisation explorations stimulate different understandings, and this is most notable when dealing with different imagined spaces as starting points for moving. Before addressing the issue of improvising in outdoor locations in chapter five, in this chapter I look at different ways dancers and improvisers relate the moving body to the space contained within the dance studio/theater, and how those can enable practical applications of the understandings of sensing explored in chapter one. I argue that how one relates to space can comprise ecological practice when characterized by active sensing, extended awareness and a willingness to both change and be changed by interactions with space. To practice such a relationship with space both *observation* and *imagination* become necessary tools (Enghauser 2007; Sewall 1999). I examine three performance techniques that describe different ways of relating to space conceptually and physically, and so generate and shape different perceptions of space.

Henri Lefebvre posits social space as something which is produced, significantly, by the activities and intentions of those who use it (Lefebvre 1995, p. 131). His writing highlights the role of the user and producer of space, and the historical situations which must be acknowledged when grappling with spaces produced by neocapitalism or controlled by the bourgeoisie. Just as Deleuze and Guattari describe the societal impact upon space as “facialization” and “landscapification”, they confirm that the performance involved in perpetuating societal narratives is one which can be played with by first acknowledging the mechanisms at work to produce them, i.e. the “*abstract machine of faciality*” (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, p. 168). In dance improvisation, interacting with different definitions of space produces skills for acknowledging these structures, just as strategic performance practices within theatre spaces can highlight the socio-spatial forces at work there.

As perception brings us into awareness of our own bodies, it simultaneously enables us to consider and theorize our relations to others in the same space or environment. This practice of relating is at the heart of improvisation and ecology: ecological practices acknowledge biological, spatial and environmental relationships as interconnected, and improvisation is a practice of discovering, performing and negotiating

spatial relationships through movement. Beyond only sensing and creating space, improvisation offers the possibility to practice a kind of “radical openness” described by bell hooks (1990), which Edward Soja uses to define a new spatiality of “thirdspace” that, as an extension of Lefebvre’s intent, manifests “an endless series of theoretical and practical approximations, a critical and inquisitive nomadism in which journeying to new ground never ceases” (Soja 1996, p. 82). Improvised, interactive “spacings” provide the possibility for pointing out the critical capacities of moving practices.

Throughout this chapter I look at various ways that dance improvisation practices offer possible methods for sensuously engaging with space in order to bring about new understandings and richer possible relationships with others and one’s environment. In section one I introduce the idea of “extending oneself into space” as a relational practice advocated in the writings of Luce Irigaray and in the teachings of Ki Aikido. The following sections follow the development of my 2005 solo, *Here, There, Everywhere* as an exploration of different ways of relating to space.

Correlating the three scores in my solo to the performance practices of Rosas, William Forsythe’s *Improvisation Technologies*, and David Zambrano’s *Passing Through*, I examine different kinds of spatial awareness that these performing methods exercise and their potential

ecological implications. Throughout the chapter, Luce Irigaray's theoretical and touch-based ecological treatise offers a method by which to examine and compare these physical practices.

## **1. Touching Space**

Like the bodily flexibility that dance requires and hones, mental flexibility can be the first step to expanding our awareness of how we interact with space and through our bodies in ways that support experiential and ecological relationships.

Ki Aikido, the Japanese martial art whose name translates to “way of harmonizing energies,” trains its practitioners to “extend the mind” in order to make the body more coordinated and powerful. In an exercise called “Unbendable Arm” the student practices the principle of extending the mind in order to create an arm so strong that a partner cannot bend it. Rather than calling on sheer muscle and grit to create this, however, the Ki Aikido practitioner is asked instead to relax completely, and to “extend his mind” to some object—say, a tree—on the horizon, far away from the practice area. The sensei (teacher) might ask him to gently but clearly point his finger toward that tree and to cultivate an attitude of simple interest and curiosity. “Oh! What’s that there? Wow...look at that tree.”

Amazingly, when the pointer takes this attitude, his arm becomes utterly unbendable (Stoner 2004). By extending his mind out into space—by *extending his perception*, the martial artist is solid. This is simply one demonstration how an extended awareness of the surrounding space manifests in the physical body.

Unlike being absorbed in the tactile sensations of the skin (as in *Response Ability*), Ki Aikido's quieting of the mind and extension of consciousness offers a powerful tool for ecological empathy. Ki Aikido uses it as a principle for remaining strong: in considering something beyond ourselves, the body becomes coordinated. Likewise coordination is lost as soon as the body is felt as finite, defined by a barrier of skin.

In performing *Response Ability*, exterior space was not a particular concern to me. I used directions and focus in my palette of sensation and to some degree used the space in consideration of my audience, but I did not theorize external space into any particular pattern. Significantly, however, I did consider it to be external: outside of me. Like a blank canvas, I saw space as the given medium into which my dancing brought color. I did not realize that by neglecting to make explicit my relationship with space, I was, by default, considering my body's movements to be limited and separate from the world.



Extending the mind offers a powerful example of coordination through selflessness: as our mind extends toward that tree on the horizon, our sensory body becomes implicated within a larger web of relating, and thus becomes formidable, unbreakable in its coordination. Just as an early modern dance teacher of mine, Dianne Markham urged her students to find greater presence by projecting our awareness “to the fifth balcony” of the opera house we were presumably going to someday be performing in, so does Ki Aikido encourage its students to expand their presence through awareness. Likewise, the writers and improvisation practices introduced in chapter one including Abram and Hay seek to reconfigure a sense of body and self that is deeply implicated with the world around us. To do this, our notions of “space” need unpacking. In *The Fate of Place* Edward Casey traces the evolution of ideas about space and place in western thought, noting that with the rise of modernism, space steadily became known as a substance which is abstract, infinite, and contains points whose location to one another is only relative (Casey 1998, p. 175). According to Casey, these ideas steadily eclipsed the importance of places as located and bodily-specific phenomena. Writing in response to Aristotle and Merleau-Ponty’s ideas of inhabited space, Luce Irigaray’s writing points to the body *as* this place which necessarily anchors and gives reference to space (Casey 1998, p. 326). Chapter five discusses improvisation in relation to

geographic place by building on the notion set forth below: of the body as primary place in space.

Irigaray's writing offers touch as a metaphor for ethically relating to space through one's located environment. Irigaray discusses touch in relation to her project to bring about recognition of the sensual "geography of feminine pleasure"(1985, p. 90).

As Verena Conley points out in her close reading of Irigaray's post-structuralist viewpoints, Irigaray advocates individual agency as essential to her project (Conley 1997, p. 131). As Irigaray addresses an audience to deliver a paper regarding the impact and symbolism of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in 1986, she calls individuals into action; she speaks of "human realities that require rapid changes to which *you* can contribute"(Irigaray 1987, p. 221). Moreover, Irigaray locates the body as the compass by which one can access powers of contribution. She sees the sensitive, sensing body as remembering and expressing, through movement, a language of "real truth" that is key to empowering individuals to shake off the grip of authoritative, oppressive, so-called "truth" (1987, p. 214) which Irigaray associates with patriarchy. Irigaray argues that changes in how we relate to the body and soul are of paramount importance in realizing an ethics that can challenge and change current laws of

economic production and exchange (Conley 1997, p. 131). By bringing tactile movement and knowledge to the forefront of our awareness, dance improvisation offers an appropriate laboratory by which to apply such ethics to the body's movement in space.

Irigaray discusses how to use touch to provoke social and ecological change: by reclaiming the body as existing in dynamic relation to all that surrounds us.

Begin with what you feel, right here, right now. Our all will come. [...] Our whole body is moved...Our depth is the thickness of our body, our all touching itself. Where top and bottom, inside and outside, in front and behind, above and below are not separated, remote, out of touch. Our all intermingled. Without breaks or gaps (Irigaray 1985, pp. 212-213).

Here, Irigaray describes her vision for a collective bodily consciousness that is not separate from other objects or bodies, it is "*Our* whole body", joined through feeling, touch, and movement. Irigaray's writing can be taken as metaphorical or poetic, but this version of space can nonetheless be explored practically by performers whose art it is to reconsider the possibilities for bodies in space.

As a score for performance, Irigaray's proposal offers a very tangible sensuality of its own, productive insofar as it can change and broaden the

perception of the dancer, and possibly the audience, to effect a more dynamic sense of interconnection with the world outside the body, and a deeper sense of knowing an “other”.

In an effort to more critically locate the meaningful or ethical exchange with this often ambiguous other, Edward Casey puts forward an argument for “the surface” as the primary site, or place, of any space with which we interact. He argues that glancing at the varied textures and layouts of “the basic persisting surface of the environment” (Gibson 1986 in Casey 2003, p. 195) affords us opportunities for ethical response. According to Casey, our ability to perceive these surfaces can be described as intuitive; the glance is a preverbal kind of knowing (2003, p. 203), and Lefebvre remarks that the reading of texture “implies a meaning” to someone who lives and acts there (Lefebvre 1995, p. 132). Merleau Ponty refers to this as our “perceptual faith” (1968) and George Santayana calls it our “animal faith” (1923). For Casey an understanding of environmental devastation is as accessible as our willingness to see a deforested slope or to inhale polluted air. Our (ethical) responses to such situations can be as simply triggered if these surfaces can be seen to have “a face”, one which is dehumanized and represents an “interhuman” surface for relating (Casey 2003, p. 202). As such the surface becomes not only the location of seeing (or “glancing”),

but the location of ethical imperative and action in response to intensities of discord (2003, p. 204).

Our ability to respond to illness or wellness perceived is contained in our ability to glance repeatedly; and as on a plane of consistency, within this action is the stimulus to act. Deleuze and Guattari call the plane of consistency the “planomenon”, referring to a space in which situations can be both perceived and responded to in “*continuums of intensity*” (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, p. 70). Casey’s analysis requires willingly extending awareness through vision, touch or imagination, to the surface of “the environment” as other. He suggests that the deterritorialization of face and subsequent facialization of landscape (Deleuze and Guattari in Casey 2003, p. 202) enables the possibility of an “existential encounter” with landscape. When the face is no longer considered strictly human, writes Casey, it can “play a role in ecological ethics” (Casey 2003, p. 202).

Casey writes that a choice to “link vision with the lived world around me” creates the opportunity for exchange and ethical response (2003, p.205).

While remaining individual or “separate”, such an active practice of seeking connections to others creates the opportunity to generate knowledge and new experiences which can then be woven back into

actions of living. This is one of many productive paradoxes which, as we will see in chapter six, fuel the practice of improvisation.

Building on Irigaray's and Casey's proposition that to touch or glance at something brings us into a closer, knowing, relationship with it on physical and conceptual levels, touch-based imagery and imagery that presupposes interconnections between the body and the larger space can also enrich the experience of the improviser.

Following my 2003 performance of "Response Ability", which used touch as a way to sense and move the *interior* spaces of my body in improvisation, I worked to expand my performance attention to include Markham's fifth balcony in my onstage corporeal adventures. In 2004 I performed two solos entitled *Something* and *Nothing* which investigated how to externally perform a sense of metamorphosis originating from inside the body. But as my focus was more on interior bodily sensation, my interaction with space in these scores was fairly uncomplicated: I sensed changes within the interior spaces of my body and acted upon these changes in a way that invited an audience to see what I was doing.

*I'll widen and stretch to the ceiling the space in my upper right hip socket and thigh, and condense, crumple the space within my right foot and ankle...club foot.*

It was my practical attempt to expand and contract space *in* my body—to turn my dancing self inside out—that brought about the improvisation performance *Here, There, Everywhere* which I performed at PARTS in 2005. The solo, performed in three sections, was a response to the spatial performance techniques I learned from three sources while at PARTS. These include Rosas, the dance company of Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker, William Forsythe's Improvisation Technologies, and David Zambrano's *Passing Through* technique. These different methods of conceptualizing space propose dramatically different theorizations of the body in relation to its surroundings.

## **2. Here: Rosas Carves Rosas**

Dancing in a studio enables a dancer to focus on the “here”: on the simple and unadorned movement of the body in the space contained by the definition of “dance studio”. Watching Rosas performances between 2004-2006, I observed how the dancers' interaction with space created a

definitive and stylized mapping of space which becomes a landscape recognizable to both dancers and viewers.

Rosas is well known for their high quality performances of de Keersemaeker's exacting choreography in which dancers map and navigate complex spatial geometries; and while a focus on improvisation might make Rosas' performances seem an unlikely subject for observation, I watched the dancers to see how they chose to *perform themselves* in relation to the spatial and performative demands of the piece. If touching operates as a guiding principle in improvisation, Rosas' performative interactions with space represent a particular kind of tactile spatial knowledge.

In my experience, Rosas' dancing embodies a precise and sensuous way of touching space—almost like carving. This comes from the dancers' willing individual delineation of fixed geometric forms in the space. When I watched the company in 2004 perform *Bitches Brew/Tacoma Narrows*, and again when I saw them perform *Desh* and *Raga for the Rainy Season* in 2005, my attention was drawn to the performers' presence onstage. Did these dancers sense the liveness and weight of their movements? From a phenomenological perspective, I was interested in what way the dancers showed their experience of performing the choreography.



At that time I was intrigued by the words of a New York City dance critic who complained about the state of contemporary dance performance by writing, “How often in recent years have I bemoaned that I can’t see the person inside the dancing body? As Gertrude Stein said, “There’s no there there” (Kraus 2004). As a result of her observation, which she offered in contrast to a praiseful review of Deborah Hay’s dance performance “The Match”, I was keen to look for the “there there”, to be allowed to see the experiencing person behind each dance performer I studied. When I searched for this among Rosas dancers in performance, I saw concentration: a crisp, Apollonian execution of steps in linear and geometric space, punctuated by the Dionysian qualities de Keersemaecker incorporates: a whip of the head or a suspension, ending in a sudden stop. The strict choreography left little room for individual performers to play within the structure, yet this made the smaller windows of improvisational opportunity filled with crisp intention. While de Keersmaecker’s work has recently moved in a slightly different direction, seeking to blur the tightly choreographed aesthetic and highlight more individualistic qualities in performers (de Keersmaecker has incorporated whole sections of improvisation into such performances as *Bitches’ Brew*, *A Love Supreme*, and more recently *Zeitung*), a hallmark of earlier Rosas pieces is precise choreography often performed in canon or unison. The experience of the

performers of these pieces read firstly as a kind of forceful, slick, dedicated fierceness to explaining the precisely evolving shape of the dance in space. There was also a glittering cheekiness at times, a kind of seeming delight in the task of meeting these spatial (and temporal) challenges.

Partaking in two Rosas repertory workshops at PARTS enabled me to learn the choreographies from *Drumming* and *Achterland* and verified my observations about the standard of exactitude in de Keersmaecker's choreography. I experienced firsthand how these choreographies require the dancers to carve up space. Using tape, square and spiraling patterns are laid out across the floor and musical cues demand crossing the frames in specific measures of time. Sudden halts, jumps or skids punctuate these markings and verify the razor-sharp edges of their shapes. A tension, manifested by an erect spine, and a slightly tipped forward head, puts the body "on the brink" of a fall, a run, a change of direction, or a simple, punctuated drop of one hip. Starting from these postures, the dancer is required to "slice", "run", "cut" and "kung-fu kick" (Olivan 2005) through space. Every sequence of steps has a specific floor pathway to follow, and the dancer is asked to blaze this pathway with exactitude. My early impression of space being "carved up" understandably originated from observing the dancers' forceful movements and focused facial expressions as they executed de Keersmaecker's choreography.

*These Rosas dancers seem to operate like carving machines, architect-divas, marking out the space in time, nodding at each other to begin unison sections, relentlessly faithful to the incessant drive of the music and the bits of colored tape on the floor.*

As a style of touching and relating to space characterized by a clarity and definitiveness of bodily movement, this dancing represents a kind of knowing. In the movement style of Rosas, space is “known” once it becomes mapped in terms of distinct forms which dancers make clear through their physical delineation of these forms, thus bringing about a purposeful performance quality. This confidence suggests an assumption of concreteness and solidness of space – dancers navigate defined forms rather than interacting with a more changeable field of spatial possibilities. This might be described as “showing the doing,” or confidently delineating and then navigating space in performance for an audience.

Deleuze and Guattari describe the carving up of the world a product of “landscapification” and liken the act of naming things in terms of their usefulness for human ownership of consumption a practice of “facialization” (2003, p.172). The demarcation of space bespoke by Rosas’ movements read upon their faces as facializations of the theater landscape.

Together they dissect space and reterritorialize it for their own consumption within its new sculptural forms. The face is an important component of this act; the face belies the dancer's attention. It conveys to an extent her experience of performing and her relationship with the space surrounding her.

“Showing the doing” engenders space with a face; the dancer becomes signifier and representative of the qualities of *that corner* carved by a hip, or *that line* marked by a dead run. In one moment the dancers play with facializing space (in those moments of carving the dancer gives face to the space); next moment they become landscapified themselves (in those moments of relentless mapping the dancer becomes subject to the landscape that determines her movements). They play between being harried surveyors and willing masters, plotting and playing upon the landscapes they create. These landscapes are created and lived by the dancers; their movements chart a course of evocative perspectives and lay lines, and indicate a strangeness and familiarity with their settings. As audience we watch their wild and snappy geometric descriptions.

This showing of the doing in concrete space is contextualized by performing venues. The spatial obstacle courses in de Keersmaecker's choreography are not abstract or changing, they are relevant *here*, in the

studio or theater space. The expressions of enjoyment I witnessed from time to time, both in myself and in the Rosas dancers, might be explained in this way, as performing to the “here”, the specific place, time and audience of a performance. As learning the specifications of the choreography gives way to performing a piece in front of an audience, the attention of the dancers necessarily expands to include the public packed into the theater space. The heightened sense of awareness and extended focus invites the audience to look into these spatial stories, these landscape dramas of borders and codes and carved spaces.

*Elizabetta walks onto stage; her head bobs and she looks down slightly as she follows a plumb diagonal line to mid-downstage right. I have the feeling she is just getting from A to B in a quiet, orderly, and anticipatory way. This is the beginning of Raga for the Rainy Season. She faces forward, feet parallel, gaze up. She looks out into the audience, open, relaxed without looking as though she is trying to relax. Her gaze moves ever so slightly around the audience. Then her arm climbs upward, a solid line, and her left leg raises itself, knee bent, to her side. A quick flick of an elbow and the movement completes itself. Silence. Then it repeats, longer and with a variation that is more complicated. Her spacious attention out toward the audience holds us as we watch shoulders, torso, knees bending, floating, flicking, calming...*

Once sequences are mastered, executing choreography can give a dancer's energetic expressions a perfect platform on the stage. Affirming a familiar audience-performer relationship in dance, the specific spatial formations negotiated by de Keersmaecker's choreography gave a clear platform to the performers' presences. This "showing the doing" by dancing with immediate space can be a performance style both enjoyable to do and accessible to watch.

Curious how I might interact with space and how these interactions might bring about broader attitudes of interrelationship, I set about devising a solo that experimented with diverse spatial propositions. Another part of my motivation for beginning *Here, There, Everywhere* was to expand the audience's and my attention beyond the "here" in order to engage somehow with the unknown, unfamiliar, and often neglected "elsewhere". By negotiating space as in the genre of a Rosas performance, I also wanted to set up this style of performing as a contrast to the sections that followed.

When I created *Here, There, Everywhere* in 2005 [Appendix B, ch. 2], I wanted to address these issues of "here" and "elsewhere" by bringing awareness—both my own and the audience's—away from the immediacy and smallness of the studio or theater and farther out into the world. I

endeavored to do this by focusing my own awareness within three distinct performance scores. In the first section, “Here”, my score was to improvise through the space in a Rosas-like fashion, showing my carving skills. “What if my 75 trillion cells at once show you how together we are slick masters of time and space?” was my score.

*I am dicing, slicing, slipping, kung-fu-kicking and tiny-turning to delineate a stage space full of borders and contours. I am skirting along this imaginary line, zipping into a spiral. Here my thumb carves the edge of a triangle, now my left lower arm scrapes along the horizontal plane that parallels the movement of my left hip. This is specific, calculated, precise and confident. I am toying, telling, cutting and exalting in my exposé as a dancer performing exactitude with aplomb.*

By focusing my own attention on “this, here”, “this imaginary line” just beside my toe which “I am skirting along”, I sought to embody a quality to contrast my solo’s subsequent sections. As a starting point, I wanted to deliver something accessible to contemporary dance audiences in Brussels before drawing their attention somewhere else—a place I deemed beyond the common references of “here”-based performances.

This was the first step of my practical project to use performance as a means to expand spatial, and place-based, awareness. Beginning my solo with a clear demonstration of “here”, I experimented in navigating space with confidence. This provided a contrast for the following sections, which sought to call attention to specific places and “elsewhere” spaces.

Navigating space with confidence in the section called “Here”, I also enjoyed “showing the doing” of this simple, Rosas-like task. Placing this activity alongside my actions in the following sections, I also demonstrated that a dancer’s movement experience can be fundamentally derived from an altered concept of space.

### **3. There: Delving into New Spaces**

Following my exploration of improvising with the space I call “here”, that space which immediately surrounds a dancer in a studio or theater, I was interested in how I might also be able to “extend my mind” and extend an audience’s mind beyond the “here” and toward a consideration of other living things than the public attending a dance performance in Brussels. In order to experiment with how this might be possible, I observed how other acclaimed contemporary dancers negotiated space.



William Forsythe's work in improvisation offers an example of how an expanded and imaginative interaction with space can coax unfamiliar movement from a body, thus challenging one to move and think in new ways by requiring attention to just beyond what is known or comfortable: not here, but *there*.

As a spatial practice, dance offers the opportunity to conceptualize numerous and intimate spatial territories around a dancer's body.

Interacting with these territories as if they were real can stretch and strengthen a dancer's ability to move and to touch space in unfamiliar and unexpected ways. Learning Forsythe's improvisation technologies from Elizabeth Corbett in 2004 extended my understanding of spatial possibilities; it challenged my body to move and interact with space in new ways.

Until my 2004 encounter with Forsythe's improvisation methods I was experientially limited to exploring what movement could happen in a sea of what I considered to be "neutral" and "empty" dance studio space—the "blank canvas" that I described earlier in this chapter. Participating in the Forsythe improvisation technologies workshop, I realized that by creatively imagining spatial structures (such as folds, structures, points and lines) and dancing with these, new and previously improbable movement would arise.

Forsythe's technologies transformed the dance studio into a veritable playground of textures, peaks, loops, slides and possibilities. As a framework for practicing improvisation, Forsythe's technologies challenge a dancer to creatively interact with space, imagining the body in the space like a kid in a geometric adventure park. "Adventure" came from my ability to try anything as I both created and navigated an ever-changing sea of spatial structures.

Task-based, Forsythe improvisation technologies use a specific model of spatial points both around and within a dancer's body; this creates problems for the dancer to solve with instantaneous movement solutions. These solutions become the improvised performance. In order to describe the space around the body, Forsythe uses "the Laban cube", one of many tools developed by Rudolf Laban to describe and notate movement in space (Laban 1966, pp. 12-17; Newlove and Dalby 2004, pp. 28-38). The cube is an imagined frame that surrounds the body on six sides; it can be visualized as the size of one's kinesphere. Each facet of the cube contains nine points, and in a Forsythe improvisation the dancer chooses to approach various points with various specific parts of her body, using one of several approach methods. She might choose to take her left shoulder to the lower back-middle-right corner of the cube, and to approach that point in a curved, fast trajectory. Seen from the outside, the dancer's body looks as

though it is taken into a spin and a crouch, but to the dancer, she is only mobilizing herself in relation to the task concerning her left shoulder.

In other words, attempts and intentions are a fundamental part of the Forsythe technologies: *trying* to swivel the left rear quadrant of one's pelvis in an S-shape around the front left spatial point on the cube results in an interesting movement, regardless of whether the dancer actually achieves the execution of a perfect S-shape. The dancer's *effort* in applying himself to the task of exploring and problem solving comprises the improvisation practice.

*I am watching Karol improvise with the three Forsythe tasks "matching", "transporting" and "video scratching", which together make an interesting freeze-frame solo of forward and reverse dancing. He walks along, and freezes with his right arm mid-swing, held at an angle out in front of him. Breaking the freeze, he matches his left arm to his right, and then transports the matched pair of arms down to the floor, folding his legs underneath him like silk. Hardly any pause ensues before he has reversed or "video scratched" the motion of his legs, and with a little pop has bounced himself back to standing. He begins to move again, all except his left rear leg, which he seems to be transporting. We see his effort as he hobbles along, lugging the shape to another place in space. Before he*

*settles here he is off again, crouching and curling around to make a triangular shape with his elbow... maybe he is matching the triangle made in space by his armpit when he was standing.*

The tasks and variations on tasks that can make up a Forsythe improvisation are nearly endless. Because the body is continually challenged with unfamiliar spatial territories, the improvisation becomes an act of constantly defining oneself in relation to the hypothetical spatial environment. Dancers can copy, reverse, match, trace or repeat forms. A form can be taken from one's own body, other dancers' movements, or the architecture of materials surrounding the location of the dance. For example, a dancer might choose to improvise with the skills "dab", "match" and "negative space"; he could *dab* his body parts at points along the cube; he could *match* shapes or movements he sees himself make with one body part by echoing them with another body part; and he could freeze in a shape and step out of it, only to improvise with the *negative spaces* left by the memory of the shape he has just left. Shapes that appear in the space might originate from, or be echoed by, any conceivable body part, from elbow to earlobe to top of kneecap to back of tongue. As a result the improvisation requires and perpetuates an ever-changing spatial reality of near infinite possibility. As I practiced Forsythe's Improvisation Technologies I found my own body moving in totally new ways—and I

realized that while the actual space had not changed, my conception of it had. Thus, reconceptualizing space can bring about new physical experiences to a dancer.

While the dancer or director proposes this spatial reality, the dancer chooses, to some extent, his level of interaction with it—usually the pace of the task-based improvisations are quite quick, requiring the body to follow decisions made by the dancer in efficient and sometimes unexpected ways.

*Elizabeth Corbett has challenged us to really move to the driving club music she's put on, as we travel across the room dabbing, pricking, sliding to and turning upon the nine imaginary points that surround our feet on the horizontal plane of the floor. Our arms and torso are allowed to follow freely whatever our legs are doing—legs move manic, powerful; arms flow or flail. I imagine the rhythm pushes me through space, and the points on the floor challenge me to step on them in playful timing with the music. I dislike ballet, but pricking the floor with my toes, sliding and turning upon a point with muscular, choosy, alive feet brings me into ballet-style movements, and I begin to enjoy feeling like a Forsythe dancer as my body instinctively follows my physical decision-making, creating new movement combinations and scenarios. The coordination of my body increases with my level of confidence and so I invite the image of Elizabeth Corbett's style*

*into my body and imagine I've been in Frankfurt Ballet for ten years. I am flopping, flicking, flailing and frappè-ing into the space—nothing I would ever choose to do in my own improvisation practice—and as a result I surprise myself, over and over again.*

A dancer's readiness, confidence and willingness to try new spatial interactions largely determine the measure of her success in discovering new and surprising movement. In other words, a full-bodied commitment to physical decision-making comprises the strength of the improvisation as a practice that generates new movement.

The bodies of the dancers in the Forsythe Company are testament to requirements of this work. Forsythe dancers are not only flexible and strong, they are uniquely capable of maintaining various levels of tone in different parts of their body at once, and changing this tonal configuration quite rapidly as well (tone here is the level of tension or muscular intention in a body part at any given moment). As quickly as their imagined dancing spaces change, their bodies can adapt. This illustrates the key contribution of Forsythe's work to my understanding of ecological uses of space. By reimagining space, Forsythe's improvisation technologies challenge and mobilize bodily thinking in new ways, honing an ability to physically negotiate mentally constructed spaces around the body.

## Researching space through the lens of Forsythe's Improvisation

Technologies expanded my perception of what is possible with my body, because as I practiced the technologies I found myself moving in ways I had never moved. Rather than trying to copy a movement I had first seen demonstrated by a teacher or choreographer, the practice allowed me to compose my own spatial problems and apply myself to solving them. In this task, I was the one creating the problems and I was also the one witnessing the body's creative solutions to these problems, often being surprised by the outcomes.

Spinoza famously said “[we] know not what the body can do, or what can be deduced from mere contemplation of its nature...”(1677) and practicing Forsythe's technologies showed that what the mind can imagine, the body can try, and from that trial an unforeseen pathway, a creative solution, and a new sensual perception will emerge. Imagining new spatial possibilities can be among the first steps to enabling the body to interact with its environment in a different way, thereby stimulating new sensations and different perceptual experiences. Within practices of dance improvisation and ecology, this notion highlights the practitioner's imagination as a fundamental component of sensation. Because, as described in chapter one, sensing has profound effects on one's bodily perception of

relationship, this implies that imagination also has the power to affect this sense of relationship.

Dance phenomenologist Maxine Sheets-Johnstone explains her theory for how imagination and kinesthetic ability cooperate to produce a gesture from a preconceived spatial design. She takes an example of a dancer creating a circle in space with her arm in order to explain how “imaginative visual-kinetic forms are created by movement” (1979, p. 119). She emphasizes that the tactile impressions felt by the dancer as she generates the movement both inform and guide the dancer toward construction of the circular shape. Though her example is based upon a simple model of a dancer slowly tracing a familiar shape in space, it is still useful in examining the implications of Forsythe’s improvisation activities, which are generally performed much more quickly, and involve more complex spatial geometries. Her description supports the idea that a dancer can produce “an unfamiliar movement” by applying her body kinesthetically to create imagined patterns in space.

Although Sheets-Johnstone does not suggest per se that “new” sensual perceptions can emerge from dancing a preconceived spatial form, she acknowledges the concreteness of “kinetic impressions” which arise from a dancer’s attempt to trace a familiar form in space (1979, p. 118). Sheets-



Johnstone explains how a dancer can construct “imaginative space” (1979, p. 112) by dancing. Using the Forsythe work as an example, I propose that a dancer can also *dance by constructing imaginative space*. For instance, a dancer might know how to comfortably use her elbow to draw a circle in the space in front of her body, but a task that requires her to use her left scapula to slide around and downward—“like a ski jump” says Forsythe Improvisation Technologies teacher Ana Roman (2004)—off of the front left middle point on her Laban cube, would have less predictable results, bringing about an entirely “new” bodily sensation in movement. Sheets-Johnstone examines the usefulness of these sensations to a phenomenological analysis of dance as a revelation of force and imagined space. She points out that “spatial *texture*” (Sheets 1966, p.125) becomes apparent through the “created form” of a dance, which is always “expressive of a pure phenomenon of feeling” (Sheets 1966, pp.127-8). The total illusion of force which underlies the various tensional, linear, areal and projectional components of a dancer’s movement bespeak a highly individualized and expressive form shown in the various styles and qualities of different dancers or techniques. The shapes and textures performed by a dancer attain a “quasi-visual reality” for those watching the dance, revealing the slides and slopes of Forsythe’s improvisations or the sharp angles of de Keersmaecker’s choreography. The dancer’s “actual and

concrete kinaesthetic impressions support the creation and apprehension of” imagined spaces (Sheets 1966, p. 116-117).

All of the dancers discussed in this thesis create an imagined space within which to move, whether that imagination is explicit or assumed. In addition to Rosas’ performances and Forsythe’s improvisation work, Hay’s dance pieces offer another example of a dance that operates by constructing an imagination about space. When Hay performs her 1989 score “I imagine every cell in my body at once invites being seen not being fixed in my fabulously unique three-dimensional body. I imagine every cell in my body perceives the three-dimensional body as a sleight of hand” (Hay 2000, p. 103), she is also conceptually reconfiguring the spaces within her body toward an unknown end, and her movement responses to this situation create the dance. David Zambrano, whose work I will discuss in section three of this chapter, offers another example of one who constructs imaginative space as a prelude to dancing. Each practitioner creates a conceptualization of space that contextualizes and determines his or her movement, demonstrating the highly influential relationship imagined space can have on a moving body.

These imagined spaces are influential because they are intentional; imagined spaces are active spaces—that is, they are not default blank

canvases or oceans of air like the ones I once imagined around me as I danced. Rather, these spatial imaginations become like realities that offer specific yet generous opportunities for moving. Furthermore, a dancer who imagines *touching* that spatial reality with his body invests in an image that dynamically connects his body to its surroundings and offers him a different set of sense data with which to interpret a situation. When a practitioner pays attention to conceptualizing a spatial reality, he takes an active role in creating the conditions for distinct and unusual movement events to occur. Such unexpected movement can offer the opportunity to bypass old movement patterns and generate new sensations.

While there is no guarantee that “new sensations” will produce “expanded awareness”, my encounter of Forsythe’s improvisation technologies documented in this section describes my own sense of expanded physical possibilities generated by that practice. For me, these physical sensations affected my perception of my relationship with space in a way that simple theory could not, and created the opportunity for me to experience a dynamic, palpably different and extended somatic relationship with, and experience of, space.

If new knowledge can originate from new movement, and new movement can originate from engaging with new concepts of space, is it also then

possible that new knowledge might emerge from engaging mentally with unexpected concepts of space? This was my proposition in performing section two of *Here, There, Everywhere*.

In making my solo I shaped the second section in contrast to the first, and performed it in a way that brought my attention completely to another place in space. After performing section one during which I concerned myself with the pathways of lines or spirals mapped onto the dance floor, in section two, called “There”, I sought to take my attention elsewhere. I created my own interpretation of Ki Aikido’s principle of “extending the mind”, and attempted to practice this quite literally by verbally calling attention to objects and events happening outside the theater. As explained earlier, extending the mind is a practice in which one drops thought process and stretches awareness to and beyond the visible horizon, bringing about a relaxed, physically coordinated body. For my purposes, “extending the mind” translates more accurately as extending awareness; it therefore becomes an ecological practice because it is a conscious effort to acknowledge one’s place within the wider environment surrounding the body.

*I begin the second section by walking to the far edge of the theater and opening a door to the outside. The door opens onto green bushes and trees*

*growing just next to the theater, near the railroad tracks that runs behind the Rosas building. I walk back to downstage center, talking into a microphone, calling attention to places outside the theater: “There is a banana turning brown in the bottom of a fruit basket in Buenos Aires; there is a strand of wool caught in the crack of a leather sandal in Istanbul; there is a chemical perfume leaking into the air of a cleaning closet in Beijing; there is a scab drying up on the face of a woman in Darfur...” My voice cracks a bit as I speak, after dancing so heavily in the first section. I relax, bringing my mind’s eye to each image, sending my imagination to Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Beijing, Darfur and all the messy associations these places bring. As I speak the open door allows sounds, breeze and light in from the outside. I can hear an ice cream van’s music trailing in... “There is a tooth falling out of the mouth of a porpoise off the coast of Ecuador...”*

The idea was to extend my mind—and the public’s mind—to happenings in other miniature landscapes of the world through the images in the monologue. Meanwhile my international images were chosen to bring attention to forgotten things, things in process: drying up, rotting, blowing, or leaking substances, processes. Marvin Carlson affirms the usefulness of language to creating alternative landscapes in theatre. He notes that language shares “multiple and constantly shifting referentiality” (Carlson

2002, p. 155) which can evoke different landscapes. In opening the door to the outside and listing my scenes of disintegration, I established landscape as a previously unacknowledged character, as another actor in my performance (Carlson 2002, p. 145).

My score for evoking these landscapes was to speak of them as if I was there, watching something happen, extending my mind as in Ki Aikido to each of these small images of decay. The image with which I ended each “There” section was this: “There is a feather of a female blackbird—the female blackbird is actually brown, not black, and she is larger than the male—there is a tail feather from a female blackbird blowing down Van Volxemlaan.” Van Volxemlaan is the name of the street on which the Rosas/PARTS buildings are located. After offering images from faraway places, I spoke of an image that was realistically outdoors and very close to the performance space as a way of inviting the happenings of the outdoors into a theater, and to invite the theater-based performance to have some affect on people’s awareness of the “other”, the “elsewhere”, or the outdoors.

As a practice of theorizing space, “There” represented my effort to bring a Ki Aikido practice to bear on a performance situation in order to bring about an imaginative acknowledgement of exterior landscapes. I was

“extending my mind” in performance by describing events in places that were removed from the “here” of the performance space. I orchestrated this in part as a contrast to the immediacy of my spatial involvement within the first section, of my solo, “Here”. Rather than negotiating space with my body for the express benefit of the watching public present in the theater, I displaced my attention elsewhere, reconceiving my imagined performance space to include locations beyond the visible theater.

I have used examples from my study of Forsythe technique and my own performance practice to illustrate how certain spatial ideas can inspire new movement and new thoughts. While “new” notions do not automatically translate to “ecological” ones, the capacity to think and practice unusual ways of relating to space comprised an important step in developing an improvisation process seeking to expand awareness beyond common notions of self and other.

Given my earlier assertion that “what the mind can imagine the body can try and from that trial a new pathway or a creative and sensual perception will emerge”, in my performance of *Here, There, Everywhere* I practiced imagining different spaces than the theater. As a practice this imagination enabled me to engage mentally with expanded concepts of space, inviting through imagery, an extended notion of space for myself and the public.

#### **4. Everywhere: “Passing Through” Me and You**

Developed by Zambrano himself, *Passing Through* is a game, a framework, and theory, which understands each dancer, the music, and the space to be a realm of movement that is all passing through each other. Taught as a score to be practiced by a large group of dancers, *Passing Through* brings improvisers together at high speeds in limited space to see what creative escape patterns can be generated. To navigate this moving crowd safely, Zambrano emphasizes a constantly circulating awareness. In whatever maneuver, run or balance a dancer performs, he must be equally aware of the outside space as the shapes his own body is making, and always ready to dissolve and adjust his own activity to allow for another person or moment to pass through him—or for him to pass through it (Zambrano 2005). By training to move in spirals, in stillnesses that take their balance from a continual readiness to move, and in running, rolling and jumping in every direction, the dancer can guide herself creatively through the changing pattern of movement among others.

If Forsythe’s Improvisation Technologies invited me to consider “elsewhere” spaces, then Zambrano’s work enabled me to practice the possibility of physically moving through both the “Here” and the “There”



by exploring my potential to practice awareness of “Everywhere”.

Influenced by this possibility, I named the third section of my solo “Everywhere” and used its score as an experiment in extending my body beyond its familiar physical limits and toward the exchange-based paradigm of moving “in-between” advocated by Luce Irigaray.

*Passing Through* imparts a set of improvisation skills to its dancers, enabling them to lead themselves safely through a complex and ever-changing spatial reality. The “spatial reality” of *Passing Through* is not entirely conceptual—it is legitimately composed of the moving bodies of the thirty to forty dancers running, jumping, rolling and diving around each other in a confined area for a period of anywhere from twenty to forty-five minutes [Appendix B, ch. 3]. This situation alone creates most of the obstacle courses needed for a challenging improvisation, and Zambrano trains dancers to move through this shifting jungle of bodies and music in a way that is safe, fluid and daring.

The dancers practice an awareness that passes through “everywhere” space, moving constantly between the here *and* the there, between one’s immediate space and the movement of the whole group at any moment. By engaging a focus that constantly shifts between expansive and specific, a

*Passing Through* dancer can safely dance with both the self and the other, or to use Zambrano's terms, both "me" and "you".

"Passing through me and you" is a mantra that sums up Zambrano's consideration of "the other" in performance. In this case the "me" is the individual dancer, and the "you" includes other dancers in the space and the audience (Zambrano 2005), or even the wider environment. Practicing *Passing Through* speaks volumes about the body's capacity to sense and perceive changing environments and to respond safely and creatively to new situations. Through training, the body becomes supple and able to use spirals to find safe ways over, under, through and around obstacles and changing spatial patterns within the game.

This constantly moving awareness of a changing environment is useful as an ecological practice that emphasizes the movement *between* people as key to understanding nonhierarchical relationship. Like *Passing Through's* incorporation of "everywhere" space, Irigaray's spatial imaginations describe a model that can be interpreted as similar to Zambrano's in its nonhierarchical scope. Reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's assertion that inside and outside of the body are inseparable (1962, p. 407), continuous, Irigaray writes about an integrated way of imagining the body's relationship to space; she sees this spatial model as different from the

exploitative, opposition-based, penetrative, transactional spatial model she equates with patriarchy and which she argues currently dominates contemporary thought. In contrast to this model, Irigaray writes about a possibility for space which she characterizes as inherently “feminine”. This space is more horizontal, experiential, unfolding, exchange-based and mutually pleasurable than the first model, and for Irigaray, must be embraced if change is to happen.

We have so much space to share. Our horizon will never stop expanding; we are always open. [...] We can never complete the circuit, explore our periphery: we have so many dimensions. [...] Don't make yourself erect, you'll leave us. The sky isn't up there, it's between us (1985, p. 213).

Irigaray's vision of a horizontally expansive plane of awareness and feeling can be likened to the curving movement and multidimensional focus which *Passing Through* requires of its improvisers. Because improvising among forty people demands such keen attention and a soft, supple movement quality, moments in which any person danced suddenly in a straight line were immediately obvious as moments of near danger or injury. “Don't make yourself erect, you'll leave us,” urges Irigaray, and Zambrano too would say that running a straight line in *Passing Through* risks losing awareness of the others in the space:

As soon as you make a straight line you have missed the bus, amigo; you are out to lunch. If you are running in a straight line then you are immediately forgetting the curve, and if you forget

the curve you are forgetting everybody else, and whack! —you will hit somebody or something (2005).

*A Passing Through* improvisation likewise represents a model where experiential exchange through physical interaction comprises the performance practice. As an embodied ecological practice, *Passing Through* gives form to Irigaray’s spatial propositions, offering a way of exercising interactive, non-fragmented spatial awareness.

Wishing to explore this interactive awareness via a solo, I created the “Everywhere” section of *Here, There, Everywhere* as a way of challenging my body to move through unfamiliar spatial scenarios without the aid of a group of other bodies to interact with. Furthermore, by doing this in combination with the first two sections, I wanted to expand the proposed scope of my dancing beyond just the immediate studio or theatre.

Directly in response to my list of international images preceding it, the third section of my solo demanded full commitment to moving my inner and outer spaces between one another and beyond recognition. My score for “Everywhere” was “What if every cell in my body at once had the potential to be surprised—*mastered* by time and space—in ways that thwart any trace of familiar movement patterning?” In order to do this, I hurled my body through space in opposite directions, imagining that each cell in

my body was capable of rebelling against any sensation of the known. The score sought to bring about a new, unfamiliar performance of my body in space, for myself and others. Challenging the idea that I was confident moving “here” or in immediate and recognizable patterns, I sought instead to extend myself to an exterior world through imagery, and then to allow the effects of that unknown, exterior world challenge my body in unprecedented ways. The score for this final section of hurling, throwing, and defamiliarizing my body in space lasted until I was completely exhausted.

While I have often used the phrase “extend my mind” or “extend my self” in describing the scores for “There” and “Everywhere”, this final section consisted of realizing these ideals by extending my *body* into challenging and unfamiliar physical situations. Part of this practice included discovering how my body could encounter and safely deal with unorthodox movements; this increased my resilience and capacity for all kinds of physical situations.

As an application of Zambrano’s ideas of passing through spaces with awareness, “Everywhere” gave me the opportunity to practice relating to space in solo whilst also challenging my notions of what was possible for my body in space. Like Irigaray’s suggestion that “We have so much space

to share. Our horizon will never stop expanding; we are always open. By imagining myself hurling my interior spaces into the external space and inviting external spaces into me, I physicalized the idea of moving everywhere, blurring the boundaries between body and “exterior” space.

Together, Irigaray’s and Zambrano’s ideas enabled me to practically understand the capacity that the body has for moving in unfamiliar ways, but also for moving in relation to any number of “shared spaces.” As an ecological principle, this idea of shared spaces came forward as I began to develop my practice of *Twig Dances*. While in “Everywhere” I sought to move past my body’s concrete and familiar movements in order to suggest that habitual uses of space are not always necessary, this idea later evolved into the practice of inserting myself into the imagined space created by a plant’s morphology, which I will discuss in chapter six.

To summarize, the scores in *Here, There, Everywhere* investigated different ways of relating to the world through dance improvisation performance. Spatially, I wanted to allow unknown, unacknowledged spaces into my body in performance, and to draw attention to “other” spaces than the theater by opening the door, and by describing small scenes taking place in faraway places. To foil these experiences of expanded awareness against an expression of immediate awareness; I presented the

first section “Here” as a representation of the “masterful” style of Rosas that expresses a confident knowledge of the immediate space of the dance studio/theater. *Here, There, Everywhere* was a practical investigation into a different way of interacting with space. Like Irigaray’s proposition, I sought in the third section, “Everywhere”, to move my “whole body” at once, including “top and bottom, inside and outside, in front and behind, above and below...Our all intermingled” (1985, pp. 212-213). Even as I extended my mind to faraway episodes in space in section two, “There”, and extended my body to be challenged by space in section three, “Everywhere”, I used the solo as a way to “intermingle” space—to, through my awareness, make equally relevant spaces “here”, spaces “there” and spaces “everywhere”.

## **5. Conclusion: Sensing Beyond the Self**

Sensing leads to exploration and discovery of space (Zambrano 2005). Spatial propositions in dance improvisation can be used to extend one’s awareness beyond the self; they represent opportunities to meet and discover the unknown or “the other” with greater fitness, coordination, and consciousness. Such attentiveness toward space and body in an environment or place can have various ecological implications, such as in the practice of *Twig Dances* which I discuss in chapter five.

In the way that notions of place or social space influence our cultural actions, these also determine our movements in dance performance. The relative neutrality of a dance studio enables pure investigation of the body's interactions with this "empty space" and invites dancers to use imaginative conceptualizations of space to create innovative movements. As a microcosmic study of the multiple ways spatial scores can affect bodily movements, studio-based dance improvisation reveals the impact of spatial imaginations upon the improviser's experience. Dancing these forms bring about a tactile sensibility of space: Rosas practice mastery, Forsythe's dancers find discovery, Zambrano's improvisers come to know agency in changing context. *Here, There, Everywhere* represented an exploration of these different methods within one performance which sought to create a shared landscape of space, conceptually and practically located in the bodied place of the Rosas Performance Space in Brussels, for audience and performer.

Interactive imaginations with space generate and affirm a variety of perceptions of space, supporting Lefebvre's idea that representational spaces, "which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate", are significantly produced by those bodies who "live" them (Lefebvre 1995, p. 39). Through improvisation, users of representational space perform



critical and imaginative nomadisms that map spatial territories as crucially reworkable and affirm our capacity to reflect on the effects of our own spatial practices. Such spatial imaginations can point to new discourses about body and place or environment; they can reflect a concept of space, such as Casey's or Irigaray's, which is more fully shared with others.

Practicing along the spectrum of spatial scores in improvisation, a dancer affirms an ability to choose and practice different relationships to space.

The same is true for time.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Timing: Sensing Emergence**

If space provides the physical and conceptual context for movements, our experience of time measures how the movement itself occurs within that space (Tuan 1977, pp. 118-122), marking the changes and transformations that take place in any performance. Calling these changes and transformations events of “emergence” brings attention to their significance within a larger individual and environmental context of time, and sensing these changes in the present moment through improvisation is an act of ecological research.

“Transformation” is a key element of temporality, and provides a link between improvisation and the idea of emergence. Emergence is a term used to describe the phenomena of unpredictable patterns and events which arise in physical and biological domains from an organized yet nonhierarchical (Crutchfield 2008) mass of components. Emergence has come to refer to the notion that organizational intelligence in certain situations exists beyond the sum of its parts, i.e. flocking in birds, and as a new concept which itself has only re-

emerged in the last twenty years along associated ideas in systems theory (Corning 2002, p. 21), is perhaps seen as a conceptual response to the fragmentation and deconstructive theories of postmodernism. To varying degrees emergent transformation occurs through time; evolution is one process of emergence. Whereas the ability of herding or flocking activities to emerge in a group of cows or ducks might be instantaneous in the right situation, the tendency of people to flock might not develop quite so quickly. The transformations and unexpected events that take place within an improvisation performance, both from the perspective of the practitioner and of the audience, can be said to constitute an example of emergence: a whole experience whose effect is more consequential than the sum of its parts (in this case, the parts would include the dancers, the audience, the location, the sound, the light, etc., while the whole would involve a more complex account of the movements, timing, and energies exchanged through performance, and the changes they effect). Therefore, the ability of dance improvisation practice to bring about transformations and a sensitivity to time might be described as a phenomenon of emergence.

Ecologist Joanna Macy writes, “Both the progressive destruction of our world and our capacity to slow down and stop that destruction can

be understood as a function of our experience of time (1991, p. 206). Through our bodily perception we form a working understanding of time and negotiate our actions within time, both in dance improvisation and with our environment on an ecological level. Using improvisation as a form of research and experimentation in perception a dancer can form a working understanding of time and begin to negotiate interactions with the environment in a way that reflects this understanding.

Performative perceptions of time happen in the present moment. The phenomenological understanding of time is as inhabited through the perceiving body; impressions of past, present and future are synthesized internally. The sensing body described in chapter one is active only in the present moment; its actions are influenced by sedimentations of the past or ideas about the future. As Sheets-Johnstone writes,

Man [...] does not *have* a future since he *is* his future in the mode of not being it; his future is not yet, but is outlined upon the present out of which he moves toward the future as to a goal (1966, pp. 16-17).

Through implicit, pre-reflective experience one senses the effects of temporality; yet through explicit reflection it is possible to examine

our performed actions in light of individual and cultural constructions of temporality.

Using memory, sense and imagination together we construct a mental map or understanding of something called “time”, which is made as reference to the changes and transformations that we witness. Clock time and calendar time measure these changes, but do not offer guidance about what time itself *is*, nor how to bring ourselves into a fuller sense of relationship with the complex effects of time: history, politics, hopes, bodies, thoughts, matter, space, nature, culture. So how do we choose to negotiate ideas of past, present and future when we move our bodies into action? Like Macy and Sheets-Johnstone, I propose that the time-related concepts we invest in color our experience of the present moment, often explaining why we act as we do. Furthermore I propose that a deep sensual engagement of the body with physical circumstances in the present moment is an essential step toward creating the conditions for a pre-reflective awareness of “ecological” relationships.

In this chapter I present key dance improvisation practices which offer a way to develop and hone a sense of timing that values an expanded awareness of the present moment and the body’s capacity to respond

to it. Such a sense of timing can be seen to represent a wider comprehension of one's individual and collective roles within an environment. Improvisation practices represent opportunities to hone one's multidirectional sensitivity to the present moment, and thereby instill full agency in the body's ability to respond appropriately to the circumstances that become evident through such awareness.

I argue that in the context of timing, the end achieved by one's response does not determine the "ecological" appropriateness of the action. Rather, the *way* in which one engages with the present moment can be said to comprise the response itself. Ways of engaging with the present moment that begin with deepening one's sense of relationship with all things would therefore constitute an ecological practice. In this situation, one's action-responses to a present situation arise out of a sense of relationship with the others who share that time and place.

Even as a bodily sense of the present moment is a key focus of dance improvisation practices, a mover may also conceptualize past, present and future, imagining how these ideas might work together to create a framework for present agency and action. For example, Charles Darwin's work supports the idea that change and transformation on

many levels contribute to a timeline of evolution that effects all species on earth. While this image of evolutionary time is quite linear, it also proposes that individuals and groups have available to them a near infinite number of choices for change within each moment. Such conceptual models of time can help to inspire further commitment to bringing the sensing body to act in the present moment.

Improvisation practice focuses on the present as a time in which to simultaneously sense a situation, make decisions and act. This sensibility can be likened to the skills required to respond appropriately to the global environmental crisis as it immediately presents itself. As an improvisation skill, “timing” refers to the performer’s ability to produce movements which relate in an intelligible way to the overall chronological development of the performance. In an ecological context, timing might be considered as actions which support and sustain the integrated health of environmental elements as they stand at any given moment, as understood by a percipient. Stopping to catch a baby crow that has fallen into the road and is flapping helplessly could be an example of well-timed action in response to a situation. By placing the crow back in the hedge where his parents can look after him until he can fully fly one is, in a timely way, acting out of a sense of relationship with and

responsibility to that creature. The fact that the elements of a context are constantly changing leaves the definitions of “support and sustain” crucially up to individual perception and interpretation. Becoming aware of the socio-cultural influences on perception and interpretation of time is one step toward timely improvisational engagement.

In this chapter I look at popular contemporary notions of time and chronology, reflecting on how these notions underlie our current trends in global commerce and affect our relationship to environment. As a contrast to time-oriented concepts, I examine the notion of the present as a time for action, looking at intuition as a process-oriented means for sensing and appropriately responding “in time”. Using examples from the work of improviser Kirstie Simson and from my own group improvisation performance I argue that these processes can be useful exercises for understanding possibilities for timely ecological action.

### **1. Thinking Time: Capitalism, Globalization and Postmodernism**

Known for fracturing the objective reality which previous ideologies endorsed, postmodernism brought with it the idea that a sense of time, like most other ideas, concepts or opinions, can be subjective. This



notion of subjective experiences of time can be seen as having three interpretations and bearings on one's ecological relationships. On one hand, felt through the body, subjective experiences of time can usefully explain a heightened, pre-reflective awareness of the present moment such as that which can come through performance for the dancer, or the epoché as suspension of judgment, for the phenomenologist. Alternatively, conceiving of time as "only" subjective can isolate an individual, compromising his sense of integration with his environment and its historical and temporal development. A third interpretation might recognize the reliance of time-based discourses on socio-cultural and linguistic contexts *and* point to ways this can inform individual and environmentally-sensitive experiences of time. This project is possible, I argue, through improvisation practices.

Max Oelschlaeger, editor of *Postmodern Environmental Ethics*, holds that two kinds of postmodern thinkers are discernible: "deconstructive postmodernists" and "affirmative postmodernists" (1995, pp. 6-7), where the former seeks to decry the validity of metanarratives, and the latter to contextualize the languages of these narratives into socio-historical situations in order that more informed and ethical futures may be worked on. Oelschlaeger holds that the affirmative

postmodernists contribute to a project for “reconstructive postmodern environmental ethics” (1995, p. 7), which is critical of systematic ethical systems and also recognizes the centeredness of such discourses on language. Discourses around the harm done to “the environment” by postmodern relativism or the usefulness of postmodernism’s focus on power inequities have also been played out (Soulé and Lease 1995; Worster 1993; Zimmerman 1994; Smith 2001). As Abram (1995) points out, the potential for Merleau-Ponty’s work is to re-language the world by providing a *gestural* framework for engaging with the non-human; by relocating perception of “the flesh” as the means by which we exchange information with the world we avoid a hierarchy of information transmission. Such a gesture-based framework for engagement supports research into temporality through the movement language of improvisation, supported by the antiauthoritarian insights of postmodernism.

In *Postmodernism and the Environmental Crisis*, Arran Gare traces the effects of postmodernism, as a reaction against modernism, on Western culture’s sense of meaning and historical sense of purpose, and on our attitudes toward the environment. As a reaction to modernism, Gare says that postmodernism has since caused the proliferation of belief in the nihilistic idea that “the world process is a

process into nothingness”(1995, p. 5), and that modernist progress was a myth of the twentieth century. Gare describes a viewpoint in which the actions of the present have no relevant or consequential end, and so are validated as means for the sake of means.

From one point of view, “means for the sake of means” justifies acting in the here and now through excessive spending, instant gratification and luxury for those who can afford it. This is reflected in the global economy and the drive to consume mass quantities despite the effect it has on others or the environment. Equally, “means for the sake of means” when applied consciously could be interpreted as a guide for bringing about positive social, environmental and economic change through fair and just processes. Gare aligns this thinking with process philosophy, an emerging “theory of the world as a creative process of becoming” (1995, p. 124), an *emergent* process of which we humans are also a part (see also Lovelock 1995; Whitehead 1969, 1997; Bergson 1983).

Gare’s observations shed light on the roots of some of the most pervasive thought processes of the last century, those which have justified rampant capitalism, globalization, mass commodity fetishism, and the exploitation of natural and human resources. His

critique of postmodernism is as an intellectual and cultural movement which responds to the environmental crisis by remaining wholly indifferent, non-judgmental and “cool” to the hegemonic effects of industrial society (Gare 1995, p. 34). Gare’s analysis is useful in its identification of historical and conceptual elements—including modernism, Marxism and poststructuralism—which offer various supports to and perspectives on our global economy, but it also fails to acknowledge the contribution postmodernism has made to questioning knowledge and power structures, rethinking enlightenment and establishing non-traditional foundations for diverse practices in art and environmentalism.

Tom Jagtenberg and David McKie, for example, argue that the malleability characterizing postmodernity has been influenced in recent years by the growing environmental movement, and as such postmodernism has the potential to give space to the ideals compatible with ecological movements. Included in Jagtenberg and McKie’s list of recommendations for how this can be accomplished in cultural studies is to “[extend] temporal frames to situate humans as part, albeit an exceptional part, of longer evolutionary processes” (1997, p. 262).

Postmodernism is not an isolated force implicated in environmental devastation; capitalism fundamentally shaped modernism and postmodernism. David Harvey maps how the economic foundations of postmodernism, evolving from the modernist and Fordian assembly-line structures, include development of increasingly diversified and “roundabout” production techniques, the cultivation of service industries which enable unlimited opportunities for purchase and the evolution of a “throwaway” consumer culture (1990, pp. 285-286). Drawing on Albert Toffler’s *Future Shock*, and Georg Simmel’s *The Philosophy of Money*, Harvey discusses how the volatility of a consumer culture based on fleeting trends and the “instant obsolescence” of goods creates an “[accelerated] pace of consumption” (1990, p. 285). These values also feed “a temporariness in the structure of both public and personal value systems”, make it very difficult to make long-term future plans, and cultivate certain psychological responses in people (Harvey 1990, p. 286).

An explosion of writing in the last fifty years deals with such changes in spatio-temporal understandings with the rise of postmodernism.

Baudrillard’s discussions of simulacra, Virilio’s discussions of speed, Haraway’s discussion of machinic and cyborg entities all concern responses to the value systems emerging from postmodern economies.

In western grocery stores, commodities of regional origin (French cheeses, Kenyan coffee, Dutch tomatoes) are brought together in space and time in such a way as to mask the reality of the environments, labor, transport and social processes which produce them (Harvey 1990, p. 300), supporting a culture in which food, images and experiences are infinitely transferable and commodifiable. Economically, the condition of postmodernity mobilizes enormous media pressure to consume; at the same time the movement of postmodernism tells us that we can recognize and critically resist these mechanisms in creative practice. This entails keeping sight of radical paradigms for operating in relation to space and time.

These operations might include locating places as the formative spaces of “bio-regional narratives” for environmental ethics (Cheney 1989), or measuring health in terms of the locality of the body.

Barbara Adam studies how our actions affect health on bodily and environmental levels. She notes that bodily health is linked to biological/environmental and circadian rhythms in time and suggests ways of looking at time that support “active participation in the creation of the future” (Adam 1994, p. 127). She writes,

recognizing time running out as our creation, temporal time as present-creating becoming, and both as fundamental to

our lives enables us to review the mutual implication of time and health and gives us choice for action” (1994, p. 54).

Adam describes the notion of time within the context of the environmental effects of globalization, describing how “invariably, the time-frame of the perceived danger is out of sync with the time-frame for action” (1994, p. 132) when pressing environmental dangers are responded to with a slow program of discussions among global leaders. She also notes that the notion of time as a global phenomenon is a double-edged sword that at once highlights the immediacy and reality of interdependence; while abstraction of time can also bring about loss of consequence and enable “processes of pollution” (1994, p. 147).

Like the postmodern art maxim “art for art’s sake” or the offer by the credit card company to the consumer who wants more than he can have: “buy now, pay later”, these sayings contain implicit assumptions about loss of consequences through naming interiorities and exteriorities of space and time. “Later” and “other” share the same unprivileged position in this framework justifying instant gratification.

Historically in western thought including classicism, modernism and postmodernism and currently in widespread capitalism, the

environment or “nature” is counted as “other”, and seen as available for exploitation. This exploitation is possible because hierarchical, ownership-based societies commonly define “the environment” as a thing, rather than an integral part of the self (see Berleant 1992, Devall and Sessions 1985, Evernden 1989, Fox 1990, Merchant 1992, Plumwood 2001, Worster 1994, Zimmerman 1994). Gabriella Giannachi and Nigel Stewart describe various angles of this viewpoint in *Performing Nature: Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*.

Featured in the section “Environment: Immersiveness and Interactivity”, they discuss artists whose aim it is to critique any idea of nature as “outside of” culture or humans, by claiming instead that humans are as immersed in and connected to the environment as any other animal or plant. Giannachi and Stewart quote Arnold Berleant:

‘the’ environment objectifies environment; it turns it into an entity that we can [...] deal with as if it were outside of ourselves[...] ‘The’ environment [is] one of the last survivors of the mind-body dualism [...] For there is no outside the world. There is no outside. [...] Person and environment are continuous (Berleant in Giannachi and Stewart 2005, p. 49).

They continue, “[it] may, then, be tautologous to speak of an “immersive environment’ if the environment, is, by definition, immersive...” (2005, p. 49). Given this inseparability between humans and environment, Giannachi and Stewart discuss art which



reflects on the theme of this thesis: that through utilizing the body's innate sense capacity, one can develop a practical and ecological relationship with one's environment. They discuss art made by artists who share the view that it is possible to know environment *as* environment through "the body's motility, and revalue language as that which arises from and *completes* this...pregiven kinaesthetic experience of space through time" (2005, p. 36). In this way they underscore the importance of the body's kinesthetic and proprioceptive experience to developing a relationship with "the environment". This experience or feeling, I argue, is what links and pervades space and time, providing immediate bodily access to an environment that is understood to be, as Giannachi and Stewart write, "the symbiotic interactivity between its sensible and semipermeable moving parts" (2005, p. 36). I propose that the here and now can be seen as the only practical point of access to this environment.

The idea of continuity and integral connection between humans and environment is key in most ecological thinking and is well documented (see Fox 1995, pp. 225-241). As Gare articulates, the absence of continuity is a fundamental characteristic of postmodern thinking; he blames the environmental crisis on this sense of discontinuity. In his analysis of postmodernism's consideration of the

environment, Gare argues that postmodern thought has permitted individuals to adopt a seemingly unlimited flexibility of opinion with regards to most cultural productions, and “the environment” was subsequently considered to be just another cultural production.

Postmodernism’s so-called “discontinuity” developed out of a rebellion against the monolithic notion of “progress” characteristic of modernism. Modernist ideas of progress were generally bound up in one national or racial group’s domination of another, relying on a hierarchical worldview of peoples and countries, yet a shift to postmodernism brought a rethinking of power relations.

Unpredictably, this useful fragmentation of traditional power structures coincided with the rise of a different form of power: the economic force of globalization.

Globalization has been a main contributor to environmental degradation as multinational corporations assume control of the international market and set economic standards in ways that disable nations’ capacities to enforce environmental legislation. The hyper-mobility of goods and people, made possible by the ready availability of fuels, has created greater gaps between rich and poor of one geographic area while bringing “the affluent of the world into greater

contact”. In effect, says Gare, “time has conquered space” (1995, p. 6).

As a political concept, postmodernism usefully questioned the imminence of time as a force for modernist expansion and progress. By fragmenting meaning and championing subjectivity, postmodernism has challenged collective cultural meta-narratives of superiority. As Gare points out, postmodernism’s success in championing subjective individualist practices has meant a failure to secure the environment a clear and respected position in human thought and economic activity, and this is an acknowledged gap which in which recommendations for future academic work have been made (Jagtenberg and McKie 1997, pp. 261-262). However, the lack of a universally agreed consideration of the environment has extended into postmodern art and dance practices which, true to the rules of subjectivity, create their own rules for production. Discourses in community art, social practice art, dialogical art, littoral art and new genre public art attest to this shift in production values, just as many practices in contemporary dance define themselves in terms of a historical tradition which has not traditionally considered the significance of location to performance.

Dancer and writer Eleanor Bauer describes the effects of globalization when she discusses the mobility of contemporary dancers among European countries. Made possible by the ready availability of fuels, bodies have become the transportable goods of the dance industry. In an essay about the transnational Brussels dance community (2007) she describes how increasing numbers of professional dancers are now normally required to travel long distances to participate in projects located in many different cities across Europe because it is “easier to traffic people across borders than subsidies” (Bauer 2007, p. 1).

This hyper-mobility, according to Bauer, enables and encourages these dance artists to make work that is not necessarily geared toward any particular location or place-based community. Such fragmentation can be seen as freeing: if artists cross borders to make work then perhaps such work will be less tied to the specifications and expectations of the familiar locale left behind. PARTS itself sits as an example of an international school which has brought in teachers and students from all over the world to participate in the research of dance, shifting norms and traditions through the phenomenon of collaboration and exchange, and so in some ways has created its own value system (Laermans 2004). Yet curiously, most international PARTS graduates stay in Belgium or Europe to work, rather than

returning to their home countries, indicating that this value system has its own magnetism; the recognition valued most by the fifty members of the so-called “Brussels dance community” whom Bauer interviewed was not that of critics or the unknown public, but instead “the recognition of their immediate peers and collaborators” (2007, p. 3).

In alignment with Gare’s proposition that “time has conquered space”, in Bauer’s analysis, time is more important than located space for the creation of contemporary dance in Europe. She notes that a dancer’s ability to work depends more on their availability and ability than on their “location”, because location is seen as easily changed and even irrelevant to the outcome of a choreography. Recent investigations into internet-based choreographic practice also speak to this question, as in the work of Santkin, Ingvartsen and Brutmann (2009), and Engdahl (2010).

The contribution of postmodernist thinking to the rise of interdisciplinarity, international exchange and collaborative processes in the arts is notable, and has enabled dance, to bridge cultural and disciplinary divides. Though intercultural performance is not without its power games, as chapter five notes, as a force for disseminating

ideas and ways of interacting with the body in space and time, dance offers a powerful mode of communication. To do this, dance must travel.

Bauer however, questions the usefulness of traveling to making contemporary dance, when the performances made normally fail to address questions of place-specific social or cultural difference. She highlights in her analysis the overwhelmingly urban locations of most European dance commissions:

So we travel very far to make work inside of empty rooms that are not so different from the empty rooms in the city we just left behind, [...] but one thing you know for sure is that the view outside the window is different. And how does all that is outside that window change what is made? [...] Do we care where we work or not? Can we think critically about the relevance of our presence in one place or another? Shall we challenge ourselves to include what is outside the window? (2006, p. 3)

As Bauer implies, the work which results from making performances in these environments may often be irrelevant to people outside the sphere of this self-perpetuating, exclusive and largely urban “community”, and most European contemporary dance made for these venues do not claim to appeal to diverse or marginalized groups. As it places itself within a self-referential sphere, rehearsing in a mobile network of studio spaces with a pool of transnational performers, and

presents to a select network of enthusiasts, Bauer's observations suggest that European contemporary dance may also be showing the signs of a kind of globalization of its own.

The gift of political postmodernism is in its assignment of personal agency. This encourages an individual to subjectively experience the world and create her own response to it. James Proctor cites this as a necessary tension:

To base environmental ethics on anything less than the modernist/postmodernist tension is to close the doors of environmental concern to some of the most important intellectual pulses beating in our collective hearts. Environmental concern can certainly thrive in this context; we will not lose our ability to speak our truths. Yet perhaps we will all be reminded to listen as well (Proctor 2001, p. 238).

An ethical and sense-based understanding of the world must also be open-ended. Or as David Wood says, as he explains how eco-phenomenology might bridge contentious discourses between naturalism and phenomenology, "*We need a model of the whole as something that will inevitably escape our model of it*" (Wood 2003, p. 217, emphasis in original).

According to Wood "eco-phenomenology is the pursuit of the relationalities of worldly engagement, both human and those of other

creatures” (2003, p. 213). Proposing that rhythm can negotiate liminology, Wood outlines ways in which one’s attention to temporal phenomena help to open up a space for reflection on the change and the constancy of the cosmos, as well as its seasons and periodic subtleties. Central to his purpose is to propose stages whereby one can enter into a more nuanced attention and enriched relationship with the contents of time. An alternative to naturalism, eco-phenomenology promises a way to engage with temporality that allows the practitioner to encounter nature more fully, with less fixity, and to develop phronesis, or the capacity to respond ethically in situations of uncertainty, through sensitivity to relationality. Wood suggests that eco-phenomenology’s contribution to the debate between deep ecology and other disciplines is that it offers management of boundaries; it creates an openness between intentionality and causality (Wood 2003, p. 231) whereby an individual can respond to the situation at hand. This “openness” is the key that guards against the concretization of boundaries or of ideas in the natural sciences, and keeps a space for agency in one’s access to nature.

I propose further that as a maker of rhythms, the temporally-attentive improviser exercises an ability to sense, form *and push* these rhythmic



boundaries. Participants in a group improvisation performance become tuned to how their weight manifests in time, and their ability to manipulate a sense of time through a rhythmic soundscape. Improvising with attention to rhythm mediates liminality and brings agency to the fore.

Contemporary dance practices make good use of personal agency, as they create their own rules for production. As dance artists do this, they also shoulder the responsibility to see their work in relation to a larger chronology of global and ecological development. Like any other industry, contemporary dance is being increasingly called upon to weigh the environmental impact of all aspects of its production processes, including its contribution to what Charles Jencks calls the consumption patterns of the postmodern para-class: the “cognitariat” which relies on productions issued by costly global information networks (Jencks 1989, p. 44; see also Leake and Woods 2009), yet contributes to the proliferation of certain forms of knowledge. How dance practitioners regard themselves and their work in relation to the future will largely determine their rationalizations for actions in the present.

Through improvisation and theory, time can be sensed as well as crafted. Every day we perceive the passage of time and subjectively experience its elongation and fragmentation in relation to the quality of our attentions and distractions. Through exercises in dance improvisation we expand our bodily sensitivity to time and to rhythm, enabling us to further craft our ability to perceive time and to sculpt it; this can lead to moving with an informed awareness of context. As Elizabeth Grosz articulates, the nature of our understanding of the past and our belief in the future come together in how we act in the present to facilitate change. As change is the inevitable product of time, dance improvisation practices provide tools to increase one's ability to perceive and shape change through time by aligning action with perception.

Ali East, in her paper "Making Dance as if the World Mattered" (2001) discusses the possibilities for "eco-choreography" as an aspect of dance which utilizes or demonstrates an alliance with ecological processes such as self-actualization, inter-relatedness and transformation or change (2001, p. 31). She highlights improvisation performance as one such practice "whose process and final form most fits with ecological theory" (2001, p. 34).

During engagement in the improvisational act *ego involvement is suspended* and impulse and perception happen at the same moment in one proprioceptive thought/action. This heightened sense of consciousness or alert attention involves the self as author-determiner-responder (Reedy 1990). In other words, the self in relation with self, others and environment (East 2001, p. 34, italics in original, underline mine).

This “moment” to which East refers is the present: that constantly renewing temporality to which improvisers seek to attune themselves. A practice of synchronizing perception with action via “heightened consciousness” and “alertness” requires an earnest effort to assimilate and transform complex information. In an improvisation, information about spacing, timing, rhythm, group dynamics, audience response, visual composition must be internalized and processed. This internalization and processing takes place through the practice of an alert attention that might be called ecological. As one pays attention, the quality of one’s attention evolves, changing in subtle ways that affect the dancing.

East also posits that because the performance of improvisation involves a form which is “spontaneously evolving” and characterized by an event in which both performer and audience witness the emergence of this evolution, improvisation performance exhibits certain principles of ecological theory. She uses ideas of art critic

Suzi Gablik (1991) to describe this phenomenon of co-creativity; she proposes that ecological art is “that which exhibits a relationship with its environment, between its participants and with its spectators—art which is about *transformation* rather than transaction” (Gablik in East 2001, p. 33).\*

The improvisation work I will introduce shortly offers examples of practices that emphasize sensitivity to time and to group awareness. They illustrate East’s idea of “transformation rather than transaction” as a principle in improvisation practices that seek to cultivate sensitivity to emergence and transforming phenomena through time. First, however, I wish to unpack the idea of “transformation” by looking at Elizabeth Grosz’s philosophical take on evolution.

## **2. Grosz and Simson: Time and Transformation**

Under the Darwinian model of “evolution,” time and natural selection choose the most desirable qualities of a species, eventually producing an organism which has transformed or adapted in ways that allow it to flourish. Evolutionary theories can offer insight into how dance improvisations practice transformational modes of attention; these theories articulate a way of considering the body as capable of

performing progressive, revolutionary evolution. Elizabeth Grosz examines the element of time as a force for social, political, biological and physical change by comparing the ideas of Charles Darwin, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson and Luce Irigaray, among others (Grosz 2004, 2005). Her project is to provide a possible picture of the future of feminism, a map for moving forward in a way that overcomes the injustices and limitations of the past via reconsidering the capacities of a life force that exists always in the present.

Improviser Kirstie Simson's project is similarly to access this life force in the present; her teaching and performing work to cultivate the body's capacity to act fully in the now. Building from a foundation of sensing within the body, Simson encourages very basic principles of connecting to gravity and levity by imagining the body huge, light, willing and ready to "Go for it!" (Simson 2005) in any improvisational situation. From simple developmental movement patterns such as rocking, supporting, lengthening and swinging, Simson guides her improvisers into a warmup that builds up to technical feats of partnering. Having developed a relaxed but energized bodily state through the warmup, these partnering patterns utilize this strength of energetic belief and sense of lightness. Whether working with others or improvising alone, Simson's work

encourages feeling within the body as singular and complete; her working technique requires no complex conceptualizations of space or the body in order to move. Rather, her words during classes encourage release into the body's proclivities toward touch and movement. By saying things like, "the body loves touch, enjoys being tackled, rocked and supported" (2005), the bodies of class participants relax more fully into the enjoyment of sensitive physical activity.

For Simson, the body is all-inclusive performer, conceiver, doer, and there is very little importance placed upon any conceptual framework external to the physicalized word of sense. Even Simson's approach to space, which is traditionally theorized as separate from objects, bodies and the like, involves an extension of the mind out into space, thereby somehow re-imagining the self as larger than the limits of the skin. The result of this action is that the perceived self expands, but also that the physical body is capable of accomplishing more—landing an impossible jump, smoothly rolling into an unfeasible fall, expanding extra inches at the last moment in order to be caught by a partner who is also reaching energetically and physically toward you—through a delightful abolishment of bodily barriers which Ki-Aikido calls "extending the mind". Simson's work offers an example of a practice that evokes a will toward transformation via one's bodily

sensitivity to an “inner flow” or “life force” (Simson 2007a, 2007b) in the present.

According to Nietzsche, at its core life force is “will”; it is “a form of self-overcoming,” a physical and philosophical force justifying a world without divine plan, but “a world of emergent order” (Grosz 2004, p. 10), in which individuals are always determining and discovering their own wills to power. Grosz likens Nietzsche’s philosophy of becoming to Darwin’s affirmation of the inventiveness of life demonstrated in his 1859 *Origin of Species*. Grosz is interested in arguments evidencing life’s active ability to transform itself, to become resourceful and emergent toward a possible future which may be unrecognizable to the present. Dance improvisation shares this goal. Where the project of dance improvisation is to allow actions in the present to emerge, revealing themselves not as inevitable configurations of past habits but as perhaps *surprising* events within a chronology, its larger project is to remain committed to *practicing* a sensitivity and a response ability toward and between bodies in an ever-changing environment.

*In the studio, we are bodies moving among bodies. With Kirstie’s instruction to “pay attention to the energies of the people around you,*

*notice the energies as you pass them” I am newly noticing bodies as energy rather than people. I see Marisa as quick-stepping energy, and not just my familiar friend. “Notice the way the energy changes,” says Kirstie. “Notice your capacity to change, and enjoy changing the energy. Play with your ability to change.” As these words sink in, I notice the room becomes more lively, the landscape more unpredictable to navigate, challenging my ability to change and be changed. My own body now feels light with the possibility to alter my direction, speed or level...and a sense of playfulness permeates the group. We are surprising ourselves and each other, and being surprised.*

This element of surprise, the encounter of the unexpected or extraordinary, is a lynchpin to successful improvisation; it represents that which is unforeseen but somehow also fosters amazement or delight, and this combination of wonder and unexpectedness constitutes an improvisation encounter which can be regarded as transformational or encouragingly challenging. Such surprise repeats as a theme throughout Grosz’s analytical readings about time. Rather than marking “progress” as a formula to be carried out, Grosz calls instead for a common understanding of creative individual agency that focuses on people’s ability to affect, experiment with and negotiate



themselves within a constantly evolving environment. Grosz's "progression" manifests as the ability to accommodate surprise as the unexpected, even when, as Nietzsche writes, the unexpected may render the present transformed:

The untimely is that which is strong enough, active enough, to withstand the drive of the present to similarity, resemblance, or recognition, for the untimely brings with it the difference that portends the future. The overman is the one who welcomes difference, the future, and its rewriting and transformation of the present, the one who is strong enough to seek his own erasure as man (Grosz 2004, p. 11).

Improvisation shares this goal to expand the present by welcoming the unknown and investigating transformation.

As a method of finding the body's sense of the present time, Simson's improvisation workshops build principles that enable the body itself to "tune" into others and physical forces as a way to expand and develop its capacity for joy in moving. "Joy" is a term Simson herself uses (2007b) as a way of describing the feeling that dancing brings when an improvisation is "humming", or characterized by an expanded feeling of attentive, vibrant relationship between bodies and the earth. Rather than building skills through exercises and repetition which might prepare a dancer for a performance setting, Simson's classes operate instead like one long, accelerating practice of attention-in-

action. Her warm-up requires the same open, relaxed and deepening attention upon which the whole session builds, and she describes this attention as essentially a practice of tuning in to the relationship between the dancing body and the earth (2007b). She describes the momentum generated by this careful practice, and its importance to her work; like a circulating force of motivation, tuning is essential to her “going somewhere” in her improvisation. She describes what happens when she doesn’t take time to warm up or tune in:

If I just start moving, I might be—I mean—I’ll be able to move, but I might injure myself easily, I won’t find a kind of quality of infinity which I like to find... So that process for me is really communing with the earth. And then I have that, when I start to move I’m with that —that’s where that cycling happens, it happens with the earth. And then that thing that you say about with performance—when I get very nervous, that’s when I lose that. I’m, I’m shot. There’s no circulating of ideas, there’s no circulating of energies and you know what I mean? I just bump into a brick wall (Simson 2007b).

For Simson, tuning in is an active practice, a process of taking time to sense the body’s relationship to the earth and the energies circulating in relationship with it. Rather than quantifying what these energies are or do, psychologically tuning in brings one into a more intentional relationship with the planet and its diverse and energetic life forms as they are sensed within the present moment, cultivating in the

practitioner a sensitivity toward, and a sense of involvement in, emergent events.

This practice of developing a conscious relationship to the space and time one inhabits is an active one; it demands paying attention to the feelings and sensations that develop, arise and transform one's body in movement in each moment. Central to Simson's improvisation practice is an ethos of appropriate response that is more felt than mandated.

On a physical level improvisation offers a fundamental starting point for opening up awareness and inviting transformation. For Simson, this kind of transformation is part of an ethos she brings to all her classes and improvisations. It is born of careful and simultaneous "listening" while moving the body on the earth, and a particular willingness to change as "our own physical sensitivity and sensibility [also starts] changing" (Simson 2007b).

Change is the inevitable product of time, yet our attitude toward change influences our practice of engaging with time. In seeking to perform or remain a conduit for "the unrecognizable", or Nietzschean future which will override the present's drive toward similarity (Grosz

2004, p. 11), dedicated improvisers must simultaneously be ready to shed what might be familiar and comfortable to them in the form of their own body's movement. Noticing the habits of one's body often collide with the practical intention to invite and perform the unfamiliar when performing improvisation.

Instead of getting mired in one's habits of moving, Simson encourages dancers to sense the changing environment of dancers moving in the studio, and to respond to these unexpected situations with physical and emotional integrity, and a Ki Aikido-like principle of extended lightness. In addition to simply welcoming the unknown, the ethically-aware improviser actively uses those indicators of lightness, joy, "Hurray!" and surprise that accompany these moments to gauge her successful encounter of unexpected circumstances. While making one's dancing a practice of surprise-seeking might be one way to describe improvisation training, thrill-seeking alone will not bring about ecological awareness. One must meet unexpected circumstances with a sense of responsibility. Simson's classes cultivate this responsibility by working in contact situations between people. Thirty people improvising in a small space together brings about opportunities for many surprises. And because a dancer cannot

manufacture a continual experience of real surprise, she must instead aim to improve her *fitness*, or ability to accommodate surprise.

Grosz explains how Darwin's ideas can be useful to understanding how one might best encounter a continually changing present:

Fitness carries with it the notion of an openness to changing environments; it is not necessarily the best adapted to a fixed and unchanging context. [...] Fitness must be understood as an openness to the unknown, the capacity to withstand the unexpected as well as the predictable (2004, p. 47).

Here, “response ability” or “the ability to respond” becomes a definition of fitness in biological and evolutionary terms. Rather than supporting the notion that the rich and powerful members of our society deserve their positions because of their “fitness” to the present cultural, social, physical and economic environment, a deeper reading of Darwin suggests that the capacity to encounter change—to negotiate any number of circumstances and situations through time—will determine an organism's evolutionary health. This capacity or ability to respond is determined not by the passive events of circumstance, but by the engaged and active body.

According to Grosz, our fitness and ability to change explain biological as well as cultural transformation. While focusing on

biology as a window through which to explain how these transformations already take place, Grosz continually locates the *active self/the active body* as the site and host of these transformations. Rather than being sedentary puppets of genomic forces, the ingenuity of our bodies in action determines both cultural and biological transformations through time.

Similarly, the active body is what carries an improvisation.

Particularly in Kirstie Simson's classes, one must take the initiative to practice an expanded ethos of sensing in every moment, *actively* expanding one's bodily sensibilities in practical, physical situations.

For example, Simson instructs her students to feel the earth supporting us, and to sense "the tremendous source of energy" in that acknowledgement (Simson 2005). The image of the earth supporting us is like Simson's ethos of mutual support which enables dancers to make physical contact in non-harming, helpful and even challenging ways. By developing this ethos through her voice, her instructions, and in her physical manner, Simson's classes became an environment in which to practice mutual trust. Rather than providing "mutual trust" and "support" as ideals to work toward, having this ethos implicit in the improvisation instructions enables such practices to take shape in the present.

Improvising with Simson I recognized my bodily ability to actively sense energy and participate in exchanges of energy *now*. Previous to encountering Simson's work, when improvising in a studio "space," I by default imagined bodies as making forms, shapes and patterns, and this brought about a feeling of independence but also disconnectedness from anyone else or anything else in the space. But Simson encouraged us to actively experience movement as energy, and to respond to it in each moment. Improvising with this idea, my body found that *exchange of energy* (between people, the environment, etc.) is constant, both consciously and unconsciously while dancing. When actively, consciously acknowledged in the present, this exchange can be utilized to a fuller potential, building toward energies that characterize emergent phenomena.

*I am alone and I swoop too fast, suddenly finding myself headed for a crash into the floor—oops!—my body tenses. But just as I fall I notice someone across the studio reaching for me. It gives me the energy I need to pull myself back from falling and I transform this topple into a turn.*

Using my intention to actively participate in the sea of movement around me gave me a sense of agency and capability; rather than counting familiar movement as safe, my attitude of reveling in the capacity of this body to relate easily *in the present* to physical forces enabled me to safely explore unfamiliar movement. Welcoming the unknown fearlessly is fundamental to Simson's approach and is the basis of healthy transformation, according to Grosz, who discusses how welcoming the unknown must be a key goal in progressive politics including ecological thinking (2004). Likewise in Simson's classes, students' ability to *transform* fear of the unknown into a kind of joy in the unknown is a key skill that enables them to perform more confidently in the present moment. By developing an ethos of appropriate response to the unknowns of moving bodies, Simson's classes offer a way to practice response ability toward others in improvisation. Furthermore, when a group of improvisers sense, share and practice this ethos, an *emergent* phenomenon results; the heightened sensibility toward one another and increased capacity to respond brings about a group improvisation of great sensitivity, strength and playfulness.

Participation is key; while change, transformation and alteration are products of time, bringing consciousness to processes of change



enables active decision-making. The idea of transformation versus reproduction points to the idea of “routes” versus “roots” which I will discuss in chapter four. Comparing Nietzsche’s ideas to Darwin’s, Grosz describes a version of self that favors transformation over reproduction as its goal:

Life is still bound to the forward movement of temporality, but this movement is not that of conformity to one’s nature or position, but welcomes what transforms and adds to one’s nature and position. Life is not equally expressed in all its varied forms, as Darwin believed, but is most expressed in a life that makes activity its goal, that seeks to overcome itself and its present by welcoming whatever the future may hold (2004, p. 11).

The initiative to *seek* transformation, to be actively interested in overcoming conformity, is the participation which improvisation makes possible. Paying attention to the upsurging of a vast and unpredictable life force and striving to be moved by this force in ways that are sensitive to the surrounding sea of forces (bodies, organisms, weather patterns, gravity, etc.) evidences a practice that seeks progressively transformative relationships within an ecology of life.

Clearly, degeneration is also a product of time: matter, life, the body will inevitably transform into any number of permutations of the known present. But as Grosz makes clear, the level to which a body and a society can bring about constructive, freedom-enhancing

transformation is the project to which we must apply ourselves in the present with regards to the future (2004, p. 12). By looking at biological and evolutionary theories, Grosz focuses on the juggernaut of time upon matter, without losing sight of the myriad forces at work to bring about change. In fact, she writes in reference to Henri Bergson's ideas that the force of life is to further itself, to "prolong" itself by unpredictably growing and changing outside of currently known parameters (Bergson 1983, pp. 46-47). She considers the philosophical and scientific work of Bergson in light of her own reflection on time as a force for change:

Matter continually unmakes itself insofar as the principle of entropy regulates it; life is a struggle to provisionally remake matter, through prolonging the present into an unforeseeable future, endowing matter with a virtuality only life can bring it. Life becomes the way that matter, as energy, prolongs itself: living beings become the way that the energy of the universe is redistributed outside its predictable limits (2004, p. 219).

As matter, humans inevitably participate in transformation, according to Grosz. However, according to Bergson it is the human situation to be able to actively seek certain kinds of transformation by negotiating newness using intellect, instinct and most importantly intuition.

As a process that bypasses logic to access a more deep-seated sense of appropriate response, intuition is invaluable to improvisation and to

being in the present. Grosz describes the distinction between intellect, instinct and intuition, analyzing how they are useful to a body navigating the present with reference to past experiences. She discusses intuition as a “directedness” by which one encounters the unknown:

Intuition is not an exploration of the unknown (this is the task of intellect, to render the unknown known or knowable), but a finding of oneself in the unknown [...] Intuition is not the reconciliation of the contrary impulses of instinct and intellect; it is the generation of a new series of impulses which may help modify our relations to the world (2004, p. 240).

As a basis for action and practice, this description is valuable to improvisation and performance which draws heavily on such a semi-conscious bodily process in decision-making (Mackey 2006). Where Grosz discusses the usefulness of “other ways of knowing” to the project of reconceiving a subject’s relation to the world, it brings to mind the idea that intuition, this new form of decision-making that rests more fully in the body’s capacity to sense and negotiate the unknown, might have a greater role to play.

As a possible route toward this sensitive negotiation, Grosz articulates Irigaray’s goal, which is first to recognize the limitations of the

current and past models of science, math and cosmology to provide adequate space to unpredictable, emergent energies:

linked to this recognition, is the necessity, in the future, of providing other ways of knowing, other ontologies and epistemologies that enable the subject's relation to the world, to space and to time, to be conceptualized in different terms. Irigaray makes it clear that a transformation of ontology, our conceptions of what is, entails a transformation in our conceptions of epistemology, how we know, in the ways in which we understand space and time, which in turn transform our conceptions of matter, subjectivity and politics (Grosz 1995, p. 173).

Therefore, Grosz suggests, if we can alter the way we understand space and time then we can transform and evolve our own bodily performance as it moves within the material, subjective and political.

Improvisation offers a way to do the reverse: to utilize intuition more fully in our physical negotiations with newness, thereby developing our *active* capacity to interact with matter and energy here and now.

Grosz and Irigaray describe a project for the future, yet improvisation offers a dive into the same project in the here and now. As Simson describes her process, it is a physical development that arises from a non-intellectual base. No epistemological framework fuels her dances except for a sensed cycling of energy that she terms as "intuitive."

Simson likens this practice of tuning to the building of energies “in shamanic dances and tribal dances: “They build—they start to build something—and then they just Kapow!, they just really let it go...[and it comes from more of an intuitive place of] being connected to the earth” (Simson 2007b). “Connected to the earth” is the sensation that feeds and explains the propellant force behind the improvisation that occurs in Simson’s workshops. Rather than a stuck or heavy feeling, “connected to the earth” is a range of movement sensations between buoyancy and support.

Simson often refers to animals to help describe what she means by being connected to the earth in a more intuitive way. For instance she might bounce giddily around the room in an exaggerated up-up-up, on-her-toes, eyes-wide-stressed kind of way to demonstrate what she does not want us to do. In contrast she offers that we can learn about our bodies and movement by relaxing our weight into the earth whilst playing; tackling each other; deepening into our pelvises while keeping a soft integrity in our alert, animal-like heads; or stretching in a long and relaxed way like some kind of big wild cat (Simson 2007a). Through these relaxed moments of warming up her words keep us cycling our awareness: Simson guides the class toward sensing an intuitive “inner flow” that is behind the quality of our moving, and

which has tremendous potential to move in many different ways (Simson 2007a). To have most all the students moving by sensing this internal force, rather than directing their bodies toward pleasing configurations of movement, is what seems to bring about a quality of strength and softness in the dancing that occurs in her workshops. Accidents and collisions rarely happen when fully present inside this type of sensing, and injuries or painful movement patterns can even begin to heal.

Bergson, Wood, Irigaray and Grosz offer suggestions about how a new type of knowing must necessarily contribute in an emergent cosmology of time and evolution, yet Simson's improvisation workshops offer the direct experience of a physical practice using intuition, sensed through the whole body, whilst moving. That this intuition resides in each of us but can be teased out, honed and sharpened, is the strength of Simson's process—it works less like a system or cosmology and more like a deep physical attention to the moving body, applied by each individual.

Grosz and Simson respectively offer theoretical and practical methods of understanding the relationship of the body to time. Both focus on transformation as an inevitable force of time, and posit a kind of

progressive transformation toward political freedom or freedom of movement respectively, as an implicit goal. Both see time as an ongoing and powerful life force which causes change and transformation. Both highly value individuals' capacity to sense and expand their own physical agency through time, by sensing, responding to and acknowledging transformation in body and environment through time, and highlight the unknown as a way of ushering in new ways of moving and relating to the world. Both Grosz and Simson offer these ideas as a way forward from patterns (such as those identified by Gare) that bring about ecological disaster.

These understandings of time are based in a practice of individual agency within the present. Rather than seeking (or ignoring) solutions to present problems in the future, Grosz and Simson offer ways to address environmental or corporeal imbalance through a practice of sensing the possibilities—and acting on them—in the present. By taking these notions into performance, improvisation offers a setting in which to practice sensing the emergent, transformative qualities of time in relation to an audience.

### **3. Rhubarb Jam: Rhythm as Movement.**

By improvising with musicians as well as dancers in the ensemble Rhubarb Jam I learned to sense and craft time emerging as rhythm in performance, and I began to move from solo work to making group connections in performance [Appendix B, ch. 1]. Three musicians and three dancers (including myself), formed Rhubarb Jam in 2005 as an inquiry into how dance and music improvisation might combine as a performance form. As a group we worked with timing to create a sense of wholeness and interest throughout the performance, thus also demonstrating an intuitive understanding of agency in relation to the entire performance. This required each member of the ensemble to extend their awareness to the actions of all others in the group. In an ecological framework such awareness could extend to movements of other organisms, geological events and weather patterns that surround one. Like the tracker who readily senses changes in weather, terrain and animal sounds, group improvisations encourage the formation of sensitivities that enable one to realize more fully the implications of their actions within a sphere of palpable, multilayered interconnections. How does one performer's gaze affect another's rhythm? How does a pause remain empty or pregnant within the context of a whole group of contributing performers? How can a decision to follow an emerging rhythm at one point, or contrast a rhythm at another point bring clarity and surprise to an improvisation



performance? These are some questions which only the practice of improvisation can seek to explore.

Working within Rhubarb Jam for two years we developed our ability to actively, and “intuitively” listen to one another through the rhythms we made as a group. Four methods of doing this included: cultivating connections, awareness of changes, offering an event, and including the audience. These four projects relate to David Wood’s four strands of an eco-phenomenological engagement with time; these describe how we connect to our temporal environment by understanding how “temporal complexity is articulated and how it changes the way we see” (Wood 2003, p. 213) and act. By attending to the rhythms produced by emergent phenomena: things coming together, forming and dissolving boundaries, making and breaking alliances, or coordinating interests, argues Wood, we can make use of an eco-phenomenology which does not reduce nature to purely causal, deterministic processes. Similarly in group improvisation, one can employ practices which both strengthen listening and recognitions of rhythm, and exercise responsiveness to these. Rhubarb Jam rehearsals enabled us to identify and steer away from our tendencies and habits that detracted from a cohesive performance; we could then begin to

practice cultivating time-sensitive skills toward a more engaging, evolving, surprising and satisfying jam.

*How can anyone characterize a “successful” improvisation, especially when working with a group? The fun part is that everyone’s idea of successful is going to be different, but in Rhubarb Jam we all seem to share a genuine interest in what is exciting. And usually what is exciting to all of us in the group resonates with the audience as well. Richard watched our rehearsal and commented on how we are listening to each other more lately—there is less “noodling around” where one person wiggles aimlessly (musically or in movement) until they find another event to hook into—there is more careful attention to each movement or sound, giving it full weight and clarity in the performance space and allowing it to develop before moving to the next thing. Like when Luc on bass guitar begins our set by softly playing a slow, deep and simple bluesy rhythm, it provides a kind of humus into which to plant the next thing: Benjamin’s hunched-over, Gollum-esque character that dodders slowly into the space as if searching for something. Because we all stay out of the frame allowing space for each of those events to be seen, when Audrey’s high, soft saxophone squeaks enter they seem to make sense,*

*broadening and enriching the event that is already taking place rather than detracting from it.*

First, because my previous improvisation work had been mostly solo until that point, learning to **cultivate connections** between the whole group in Rhubarb Jam expanded my awareness to include the possibilities of multiple and complex performance events. Using live music and rhythm as key elements of our improvisation enabled us to focus particularly on the way *events* unfold through a time-based performance. We could then work to see each event as an offering that might be expanded upon or developed or not. All these decisions were made individually, and silently during performance; development, cohesion, etc. were not mandates but common goals. We all also tried to stay actively involved in watching and *listening* to the performance, whether we were participating or not. David Wood discusses listening as implicit to a process of engaging with an eco-phenomenological experience of time. Because time is invisible, he reasons, only temporal engagement with objects reveals those processes, which cannot be grasped in one quick glance. Eco-phenomenology requires a “participatory engagement” with grounded life in order to discern “sources of renewal, transformation and

resistance” (Wood 2003, p. 215). Implicit in Wood’s discussion is the willingness to be changed by such engagements.

Practicing sensing time in this way we could become aware of the emerging durational picture of the group performance; rather than focusing on our own part we could watch to see how trios, duets and solos began, developed and concluded or spun into other configurations. In this way we learned that no matter what degree of movement or sound someone was making, all contributed to the impact of the performance over time.

We see contribution as a movement and a sound—the sound moves through spacetime and through our bodies as we hear it, enlivening us with a feeling; the movement moves through spacetime and through our bodies as we watch it, also enlivening us. Both sound and movement have palpable rhythmic weight and tonal intensity, and so Rhubarb Jam determined to focus together on sensing these qualities rather than hearing sound as “music” or movement as “dance”. In the Rhubarb Jam performance in Rosas Performance Space [Appendix B, ch. 1], a middle portion of the piece illustrates this concept. While the three musicians are engaged in a musically complex improvisational

rift, the dancers bounce up and down, creating a visual “base-note” effect that counters the variety of the sound.

Second, increasing our **awareness of changes** enabled us to distinguish and respond to events within a performance timeline.

Improvising, we noticed our capacity for infinite change within an improvisation set and we also began to notice our tendencies to change in predictable ways, or in similar rhythms. So we began to focus on varying our rates of change while making changes, thereby broadening our range of rhythmic possibilities for offering contrast.

Similarly for Wood, an “acknowledgement of the unexpected”, or “the interruptions and breakdown of temporal horizons” provide a necessary wake-up point for the eco-phenomenological observer who seeks continuity in his temporal experience (Wood 2003, p. 217). By making space for the unexpected, the eco-phenomenological researcher guards against holisms.

*In a set of ten minutes we time the various phases the improvisation goes through, and find that we normally change a theme or pattern that we are making every two minutes, making a rather predictable set containing five regularly spaced changes. Lisa suggests that we all work on paying attention to the possibility that the rates of change*

*might also be surprising, so that an event or theme might last two seconds or nine minutes—and that we can boldly choose to offer or support such circumstances inside the improvisation.*

We would practice this readiness by responding immediately to two claps—emitted by any performer at any time—to totally reconfigure the stage and its action. The exercise helped us familiarize ourselves with our capacity for an enormous range of possible changes, and reinforced our sense of constant readiness to accommodate change at any moment.

Third, “**offering an event**” is what we called our practice of staying aware of what was happening in the performance space while simultaneously suggesting a change. We hereby sought to boldly propose new sound or movement through changes that did not negate the events of the past or present. Thus we introduced an idea in the performance without apologizing for it. “To offer” something means that implicitly you are sharing it with someone else, presumably the group as well as the audience. This term helped to focus our attention on the weight and importance of each of our actions within the bigger picture of the performance. It also helped us to clarify exactly how each movement or sound event might be interpreted by the whole

group. This practice included acknowledging the coordinated rhythms within the “environment” of the performance. As Wood notes, eco-phenomenological study of time requires understanding and working with such rhythmic temporal forces, not as “causal mechanisms” but as periodic and energetic processes of emergence (Wood 2003, p. 216-7). By thinking of one’s movements in terms of their impact on others as part of an emergent environmental network of patterns, “offering an event” became a practice of taking responsibility for one’s *new* rhythms and maintaining awareness of the effect they have on others.

**Including the audience** by performing *to* them is a fourth skill we developed in Rhubarb Jam, one which can be correlated to the necessity of seeking transparency in our actions as performers on both the stage of contemporary dance and the world stage, through the performers’ heightened attention time brought about through performance. Rather than performing our music or dance toward the other members of the group or ourselves, we practiced projecting our actions in order to share them with the audience, inviting them to see and hear us. This practice reinforced our sensitivity to the whole picture by acknowledging the effect our performance was having on the people in that larger sphere. As David Wood notes, moments in which “the infinite [is sensed] in the finite” can comprise an

experience of intensification. Eco-phenomenology leaves room for such experiences signaled by depth in a momentary encounter, complexifying our experiences of time (Wood 2003, p. 216).

Performance can be one such complex experience of time, requiring specific attention paid to the audience experience. Maintaining a sense of how chronological actions within the improvisation developed during a particular set was part of including the audience.

Like Grosz's elucidation of Darwin's proposition that in each instant is the possible birth of a new event from the configuration of circumstances thrown up by the past, Rhubarb Jam practiced staying present in each moment to the possibility that anything could happen, while also holding onto the thread of events which had occurred already within that set, and the resonance of those movements and music. Meanwhile we were each continually practicing response ability and readiness: at any moment we must be ready to enter the space offering support in the form of another voice to change, propose, or develop an event in the box. We practiced a number of ecologically valuable skills such as awareness of connections by "listening" to the whole group; individual responsibility as manifested in the practice of "offering an event"; readiness and capacity to change by scores such as "Total Change"; and transparency in our actions as



we strived to include the audience in our performance awareness. In addition to these guiding tools, we ultimately used intuition to choose our actions in performance.

*I am making choices about how to move, but I don't know where this is going or how to finish...I only try to stay present NOW. Now I am silent, standing calm on the edge of the square of light, waiting for something to happen. Now I am perking my ears as Audrey enters the downstage left corner of the square and breathes a long, slow, high note on her saxophone...It seems to last an entire breath, and then she is suddenly playing speedy scales, sliding up and down a jumble of notes in rapid and repeating succession, and now I am tumbling out of the dark, into the square of light, feeling only the corners of my body illuminated and bouyant in a square and blunt yellow-toy-Tonka-truck kind of way...Now I am continuing, and together we are building our quirky rhythm...Now Audrey has stopped still and I am faced with what to do with this silence and I am looking at her, s l o w l y unfolding my body from its quirky and crumpled position...She is now paused, and I can see in her shoulders a readiness to play—together we can feel one another's attention toward the other in the space...Now a huge blast comes from the sax: "BLONKX!" and I explode at exactly the same moment, as if we had each initiated the*

*change. I leap, limbs clawing, toward her, landing in a half-crumpled heap...*

Work with Rhubarb Jam shows how it is possible to develop skills for moving in space and time in relation to a wider circle of participants to create an “intuitively” developed performance. Improvised rather than planned, the performance developed as a rhythmically emergent event, not mandated by authority but guided by a common sensibility toward temporal and emergent processes.

#### **4. Time: Sensible or Senseless?**

The notion that our experience of time can be sensed, crafted and played with through rhythm and movement is an essential factor that motivates improvisation. Our perception of time is caught, drawn out, jiggled or extended in music and rhythmically-alive dancing, and our ideas of time affect our ability to sense and participate in emergent performance events. As my work with Rhubarb Jam illustrates, developing a legible improvisation performance for an audience necessitates paying special attention to the rhythmic contribution of each element of a performance, and sensitively accommodating it within a group. These time-oriented practices helped to cultivate

connections and build awareness between members of the ensemble, facilitating the emergence of an improvisation performance.

Improvisation's focus on the present offers a way forward from the ecologically threatening views of time sanctioned by globalization. Coinciding with the rise of globalization, postmodernism also invites readings of creative ambiguity, where the name implies a kind of impossible post-present (Jencks 1986, p. 65). "Postmodernism" points not only to the possibilities of the present and our potential for disrupting and evading its conventions through performance (Kaye 1994, p. 3), but to the emergence and transience of cultural paradigms in general. Grosz in her readings of Darwin and Bergson, and Simson in her improvising, show that the time for this change and transformation to occur is ever in the present. By continually investing oneself bodily in the improvisatory process of sensing and articulating the relationship between oneself and others in time and space, a practice of keen observation, intuitive ability and refined awareness can emerge. As Darwin contends, these transformations occur within and beyond the individual or his environment—as one changes, both are transformed and continue to develop, contributing to a participatory, emergent phenomenon which is greater than the sum of its parts, and embodied in Merleau-Ponty's intra-ontology of

perception. Sensing the realities and potentialities of the present is a process that brings one into active participation in this emergence.

Significantly, improvisation itself is an emergent phenomenon. As a practice that evolves, transforms and participates in its own process, improvisation is a direct method for engaging with the realities and potentialities of the present.

Developing sensitivity to body, then space, then time, chapters one through three show how our ideas of the building blocks of dance can be used to shape our improvised actions in the world. Chapter four looks at how making scores for improvisation offers further opportunities to organize theoretical and practical relationships to an environment.



## Chapter Four

### Structuring: Roots and Routes

Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the deadline: to dismantle in order to build ‘A SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART’ [...]

EVERY HUMAN BEING IS AN ARTIST who—from his state of freedom—the position of freedom that he experiences at first-hand—learns to determine the other positions of the TOTAL ART WORK OF THE FUTURE SOCIAL ORDER (Joseph Beuys in Tisdall 1973, capitals in original).

The structures which organize the body in space and time within an improvisation score can be likened to the theoretical structures which undergird our social, spatial and temporal engagement with the world. In this chapter I explore how clarifying relationships to improvisational structures can help to ignite personal agency and bring about the conditions for the “state of freedom” that is experienced first-hand, and which makes possible transversal flows, de-facialization, and a-signification. I explain how improvisation, in Deleuze and Guattari’s terminology can function to “dismantle the repressive effects of senile systems” as in Joseph Beuys’ statement. I consider how some structures can be useful to cultivating personal agency in improvisation, and argue that ecological awareness

stems from this personal agency, offering examples of several improvisation, dance and learning methods which illustrate this. I propose that a disciplined, flexible and perceptive engagement with theory and structure is essential to the project of improvising, and a balance of these elements is equally necessary to any project of ecological thinking.

Sociologists Macnaghten and Urry (1998) describe how social discourse conditions our perceptions of “nature”. As forms of philosophy, social discourse and improvisation scores can provoke and shape different assumptions, perceptions, experiences and knowledges of an environment. By becoming aware of the processes by which this takes place an improviser enables his own movements to take place in critical relationship to these forces. In the same way Macnaghten and Urry discuss how the societal opinions of nature become reified through everyday discourses (1998, p. 3), Guattari insists that mental ecology must be preserved by confronting the totalizing effects of integrated world capitalism in daily life. Evading “capitalist subjectivity” requires engendering ecological praxes which operate in social and neighborly interactions to embrace heterogenesis and “enable the singular the exceptional, the rare, to coexist with a State structure” (2000, pp. 50-51).

Building a definition of a practical ecology that does not promote fixed ideologies and meta-narratives, a sense of personal agency, as a means to pursue singularity, is essential to cultivating an ecological approach to performance structures. This personal agency is defined by two properties: first, a *responsibility* to the happenings of the present moment, and second, a *freedom* to extend oneself beyond the prescriptions of the present moment. As Joseph Beuys encouraged people to be creative at every level of the social order, and as Guattari advocates resisting hierarchy through transversal (a term I will describe in more depth in following chapters) practices of social organization, both manifestos call the individual to move uniquely in relation to power structures. As such, I propose that an ecologically motivated improviser must operate similarly, creatively re-envisioning “routes” in one’s role or possible roles within a situation, *while also respecting* the “roots” or rootedness of the physical body.

“Roots” and “routes” refer to the contrasting images of the tree and rhizome as models for philosophical structures discussed by Deleuze and Guattari. I liken the “roots” of causal thought and biological hierarchy to the way in which classical ballet is taught and practiced. I discuss the “routes” of Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic thought processes in terms of their manifestations in the theatrical techniques developed by Jan Ritsema.



As Maturana and Varela explain (1999), structures such as cosmologies, philosophies or techniques manifest as real through our practiced belief in them. They exist as theories, ideals toward which we can hold ourselves during practical pursuits. When and how we *use* these structures influences how prescriptively, freely, or skillfully we conduct ourselves at every level in our lives. In order to examine how improvisers can use structures to improve relationships and to extend skills in movement, I look at two models of conceptual structures in the form of “the tree” and “the rhizome”, commenting on ways in which they have been usefully applied to dance contexts in my experience.

Whereas some philosophers see their role as creators of concepts (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 5) dancers may equally be understood to be creators of propositions for practice. Particularly in Europe there has been a surge of interest in the last fifteen years in the theoretical basis for dance performance processes (Cvejic 2005). Whilst many dance artists shun the label “conceptual” there is nonetheless a flourishing genre of contemporary dance which seeds itself in the soil of contemporary philosophies, for example choreographer Jerome Bel whose early work has been heavily influenced by writings of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes. Even high-profile dance companies such as those of William

Forsythe, Pina Bausch, Meg Stuart or Xavier le Roy engage actively with theory by employing dramaturges to help them develop and frame their work conceptually (Milz, n.d.). However, dance theorist Bojana Cvejic argues that despite its widespread use amidst the contemporary dancers of the 1990s “conceptual dance” is a misleading term that fails to address the complexities of methods and ideas employed by these so-called “conceptual” performance-makers (2005). With philosophy occupied in the construction of mental concepts and dance proposing a similar but wider array of corporeal, spatial, and temporal constructions through its devised scores for moving the flesh, it seems befitting to look closely at just how philosophy and dance might support and challenge one another.

### **1. Relating, Creating: Structures in Philosophy and Dance**

As a guide toward understanding how improvisation can be a practice of ecology, and how ideas about ecology can be sourced from improvisation techniques, it is useful to note how dance and philosophy in general might relate. Andre LePecki points out the exciting multiple levels of productive collaboration that already exist between dance and philosophy, and calls for further experimentation and illumination of the “mutant production of enunciation” (Guattari in LePecki 2006) that both disciplines generate. LePecki also suggests that not only is dance influenced by known

philosophies, it generates its own knowledges that express inherent, unique and relevant contributions to the questions and projects of contemporary philosophies.

Before such dialogical and intertwined modes of composition (where dance philosophizes and philosophy dances), the new imperative for theory is to play along with both: imaginatively, creatively, intelligently, and ethically (LePecki 2009 p. 19).

LePecki proposes that the role of theory is to move in the interstitial spaces between the constructs of dance and the constructs of philosophy, unifying and challenging both acts through associative dialogue, pointing out the contributions of each to a widening pool of knowledges. While chapters one, two and three point to such particular and basic issues within improvisation practices as sense, space and time, this chapter examines the ways in which practitioners organize their relationship to any philosophical structure which links an improvisation together. Responding to LePecki's challenge, I propose that "to play along with" modes of dancing philosophy and philosophizing dance in ways that are imaginative, creative, intelligent, ethical, —and, I add, potentially ecological—will require a certain kind of engagement with the act of theorizing and structuring. Toward this end, I propose that a disciplined, flexible and perceptive engagement with structure is essential to the project of improvising, and a balance of these elements is equally necessary to any ecological practice.

## **2. Discipline: The Tree**

The tree as metaphor for knowledge is a philosophical structure which has received criticism, notably by Deleuze and Guattari in their influential 1987 text *A Thousand Plateaus*, where they criticize the way it has been used as a model for evolution and human hierarchies. Before I discuss their contention with trees and promotion of rhizomes as philosophical structures further in the following section, I wish to look at how the structure of the tree might be a useful metaphor for the aspect of philosophical engagement I have just described that involves discipline, and how such discipline is useful to a project of ecological awareness.

Discipline in dance is commonly found in a dancer's practice of technique, which could be described as training toward a technical movement ecology. The goal of cultivating efficiently skillful movement has been the project of most dancers through the history of modern dance, and my improvisation practice today shows evidence of ten years of conservatory training that includes instruction in Horton, Graham, Taylor, Limon, Nikolais/Louis, Cunningham, Alexander Technique, "release" techniques and various styles of ballet.

Few of these techniques purport to train a dancer into achieving a “mechanical ecology of movement”; rather, ease in movement is encouraged as long as it supports the stylistic requirements of the various forms. For example, Limon, Horton, Graham, Taylor, Nikolais/Louis and Cunningham techniques mostly comprise systems of exercises designed to strengthen dancers in the interest of performing more exactly the aesthetic demands of these choreographers’ works. These bodywork methods all originate from early American modern dance, and comprise a system of movements which generally share the basic characteristics of a ballet class: a class contains exercises that isolate movements of the legs, torso, arms and head before developing these patterns into locomoting combinations and finally, incorporating jumping. Slightly different emphases in moving are found in Alexander, Feldenkrais, somatic work and “release” techniques. These train by encouraging the body towards “nonrestricted” movement that bypasses the tensions of habitual movement patterns and encourages ease and mobility in the joints, yet these methods also work toward their own kind of ideals.

The majority of dance techniques emphasize movement that is easy, well-supported, functional, confident and healthy. My own discovery in studying these various methods is that a dancer’s attitude toward the movement she performs is of primary importance in determining the degree

to which her movement exhibits these qualities. The work of Mabel Todd supports this notion that attitude is crucial to the success, ease and “intelligence” of one’s movement. In *The Thinking Body* Todd explains the physiological importance of “attitude”, in terms of thoughts and emotional behavior, to the ways in which a person responds physically to a situation.

Physiologically, various stimuli prepare the muscles for their responses. These stimuli being both internal and external, must be correlated. This involves psychological factors affecting the response [...]. The correlation of visceral, psychic and peripheral stimuli, underlying muscular response, involves the whole of a man. [...] We now realize that in the physical economy of the individual the many systems should be working in balance and unison and that thinking is a very part of their activity. We realize that function preceded structure, thinking preceded mind, the verb preceded the noun, doing was experienced before the thing done. Everything moves, and in the pattern of movement, Life [sic] is objectified (Todd 1937, pp. 2-3).

Todd details how thought patterns manifest in movement patterns and how these patterns facilitate or impede neuromuscular functionality or the “physical economy” of an individual. She writes that maintaining ease through minimal strain while moving is fundamental: “The human being is a composite of balanced forces. To maintain structural support with the least strain on the several parts is a problem of bodily adjustment to external forces, primarily mechanical” (1937, p. 7). She continues to explain that “through balance man conserves nervous energy and thus

directly benefits all his activities, mental as well as physical” (1937, p. 7), suggesting that balance is a necessary component to easy or graceful movement. As a mechanical principle of dance technique, Todd names “balance” as one ideal. Doing this, Todd begins to create a value system or structure to qualify movement.

Todd also maintains that adaptability is another essential component of bodily intelligence: “the intelligence of an individual may be determined by the speed with which he orients himself to a new situation” (Williams in Todd 1937, p. 2). For my purposes in defining “ecology” as it relates to the actions of the human body, useful are findings that cite personal attitude as central to the healthy functioning of bodily movement.

Bodyworker Deane Juhane also discusses the importance of attitude in relation to adaptability and to physical health, highlighting that an attitude of interest and “will”, which I liken to a “sense of personal agency”, is essential to any quest for health.

...the conscious exercise of our own perceptions and our own will is a decisive factor in our relationship with the laws of nature. *It is categorically impossible to passively receive an adequate sense of reality.* Any conception that is not constantly rediscovered or reconfirmed by the efforts of our own participation and scrutiny cannot continue to be actively true for us...This passiveness itself is the seed of our destruction (Juhane 1998, p. 17, emphasis mine).

Such discussions of “health”, “intelligence”, “conscious exercise” and “ease” in movement seem to support the idea that a healthy body is one which can adapt easily to various situations in order to move without injury or tension, but also can act with a degree of self-motivated agency toward inquiring into his own means, and the most useful methods of action. “The most useful” is defined by those practitioners who study the relationship between patterns of moving, functional alignment and pain (see Todd 1937, Faust 1998; Feldenkrais 1949, 1972, 1992; Alexander 1923, 1932; Egoscue 1992, 2000, 2004), but it can just as readily be defined by the researcher of movement who inquires seriously into his own movement habits and their effects upon his body. In many cases, the observation of an experienced movement practitioner can help foster the self-reflective bodily consciousness needed to identify and begin to change such habits.

Practicing fluidity in movement is one way of working toward adaptability, a quality celebrated by Deleuze and Guattari in “How to Make Yourself a Body without Organs”, or BwO (2003 pp. 149-66). Deleuze and Guattari propose the BwO as a key instrument in resisting regimes of signification such as the subject, significance, and the organism (2003, p. 159).

Opposing the finitude implied by these notions they propose a different idea of a body which articulates and experiments through nomadism,



dismantling “the organism” and “opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity [...] measured with the craft of a surveyor” (2003, p. 160). The BwO is capable of multiple diverse connections and seeks them. For the dancer, the BwO is a released body, manifested in the physical tone of relaxed readiness. The BwO finds its limitations in functional alignment: the dancer’s body can only become as “dismantled” as its health and physicality allows.

Evident in my move from the established conservatory environment of my first intensive technical training school, North Carolina School of the Arts, or NCSA, to Hollins University in Virginia—where I studied with dancers from New York City influenced by Skinner Release technique—was an increased emphasis on fluidity through the joints to promote ease in movement. The “release” training at Hollins came as a surprise to my NCSA body, which was well versed in the arts of holding specific and even contradictory shapes. Suddenly I was being asked to slip through space rather than carve through it; I was invited to ripple and reverberate movements through my whole body rather than devour space with majestic leaps and low, curving runs. This broadened my movement vocabulary, and enabled me to adapt to a greater variety of movement structures and to develop a stronger, more fluid body.

I also came in contact with Frey Faust, who is developing an original technique for training dancers to move. His “Axis Syllabus” is a curriculum not based on ballet, or any derivation of or reaction to the lineage of modern dance. The work emphasizes precise anatomical relationships for maximally functional movement, whilst also utilizing swings, ripples, undulations and rolling on the “landing pads” of the body in order to enjoy dancing with maximum freedom. He promotes his technique as a way of moving the body in a maximally anatomically functional—and therefore a “healthy”, enjoyable, and “liberating” way.

It is liberating to be able to channel the pull of gravity—falling in a safe and efficient manner in order to use momentum’s kinetic energy to rebound from the floor and expand into space. I maintain that this is the very first thing to learn (Faust 1998, p. 12).

The Axis Syllabus represents one structured technique with “liberation” in movement as its goal. Even so, its principles require dedicated study from pupils, and (as in any technique) with prolonged study its influences become evident in the movements of the students who bear significant the traces of the technique.

This was clear to me at PARTS, where the technical regime is twofold: classical ballet classes and release technique-based contemporary classes,

with a slight emphasis on the latter comprise the scheduled time allotted. On the whole, ballet teachers provide vocabulary and movement information that focus on clarity and accuracy of line, direction, and musicality. Ballet at PARTS is normally taught in such a way as to bolster or enforce the information about directional release taught in the contemporary classes, but also offers a rigorous consistency to the shape of the training schedule: ballet is explored through a specific vocabulary which through repeated practice and deepening exploration, becomes an increasingly recognizable common language among dancers. Particularly the dancers of PARTS and the bulk of contemporary dance-makers employed or influenced by Europe's top contemporary dance companies, learn to operate in relation to the lexicon of movements which ballet offers. In many ways, ballet technique operates as the disciplinary tree-form for contemporary dancers seeking to navigate the changeable waters of contemporary technique.

Whether the basic premises of these techniques can be judged "ecological" is not wholly useful to my inquiry into dance improvisation, because dance improvisation is not a practice of striving toward fixed technical standards. Rather, the study of movement techniques offers the improviser another opportunity in which to apply himself to the imaginative propositions of a form. Because techniques rely on imagery, imitation and metaphorical

means of transmitting goals, values and significance of movements, they also represent ideological structures. What became clear to me as I studied these techniques is that my own practice as an improviser could inform my approach to learning these movement forms. More accurately, finding a Guattarian “ecological” approach toward moving according to technical traditions necessitated clarifying and deepening my own relationship to structures in a way that affirmed movement toward my own resingularization.

Certain codified techniques such as classical ballet represent a clear model or structure with which to engage, and engagement with these “tree-like” structures can expand one’s awareness of relationship, and by extension, certain mental ecologies.

Improvisers can use structures to measure their own progress in relation to certain goals. The tree form is one structure which is said to represent certain notions of progress or evolution. Classical ballet technique might be described as another such structure. In order to examine the potential similarities of these two structures and their usefulness in enabling a practitioner to engage ecological sensibilities, I will discuss the characteristics of the arborescent form as it is reviewed in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who, in their rejection of psychoanalysis and

capitalism, brand the tree form as an expression of causal hierarchy to be subverted by the actions of the BwO. While the BwO comprises an important concept in a-signification and resingularization, I also suggest that the tree-form as hierarchical also represents a useful aspect of classical techniques, which is the clarity and simplicity expressed in their value systems.

As a model, the outline of a tree can be seen to represent a rooted structure which supports branches growing outward from a central node of connection. A tree grows by building its body fractally; roots, branches, twigs and leaves generally follow similar, species-specific patterns of division and growth. As looked upon from an outside point of view, this fractally-oriented tree can be said to represent growth which is directionally determined by its preceding neighbors, or a hierarchy of “ancestors” that manifest in the thicker branches producing the thinner twigs which grow into thick branches that produce more twigs and so on. Deleuze and Guattari complain, “The tree and root inspire a sad image of thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a centered or segmented higher unity” (2003, p. 16). Roots are described as growing in ways similar to branches, where both are reliant on the central processing unit of the trunk in order to reproduce. Seen this way, Deleuze and Guattari liken

trees to computer systems which “grant all power to a memory or central organ” (2003, p. 16).

While my understanding of tree biology includes the idea that trees do not function with the aid of a command center, Deleuze and Guattari use this general reference to arboreal structures as a model or likeness for the hierarchical systems they wish to criticize. For their purposes, arborescent systems are self-powered reproductive systems whose productions resemble and receive information from more centralized nodes of the system; for example, twigs resemble and receive nutrients from their larger progenitors, branches. Deleuze and Guattari explain:

If we consider the set, branches-roots, the trunk plays the role of *opposed segment* for one of the subsets running from bottom to top: this kind of segment is a “link dipole,” in contrast to the “unit dipoles” formed by spokes radiating from a single center. [...] Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems with centers of significance and subjectification, central automata like organized memories. In the corresponding models, an element only receives information from a higher unit, and only receives a subjective affection along preestablished paths. This is evident in current problems in information science and computer science, which still cling to the oldest models of thought in that they grant all power to a memory or central organ (2003, p. 16).

Deleuze and Guattari call these tree-systems “centered systems”, likening them to systems that endorse “dictatorial power” (2003, p. 17) because, they say, information in trees travels through “preestablished paths”,

presumably those of xylem and phloem within the trunk. Of course Deleuze and Guattari are not faulting trees themselves as the inventors of hierarchical power structures. Rather, the writers are drawing a metaphor for the vertical patterns of communication that proliferate among hierarchical modes of relating, particularly as found in models of psychoanalysis and capitalism, which Deleuze and Guattari reject in *A Thousand Plateaus*. They then draw attention to the fact that elements of an arborescent system which are at the far ends of the communication channels (say, the leaves), do not as a rule communicate with each other but instead receive all their information (sap, perhaps) from the same tree to which they also give their energy (chlorophyll and its products). Thus, seen as a simplified structure of hierarchy and exchange, the arboreal form represents a pattern of certain established pathways of information. Deleuze and Guattari explain this as prelude to their own proposition for a “rhizomatic” philosophical structure, one which they propose as an alternative to hierarchical thinking and acting.

Even if we take this tree structure to be as hierarchically command-oriented as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari—that is, as a system which proposes clear directions and patterns for growth to all its parts—then, what the tree structure lacks in adaptability and ingenuity it imparts in clarity and continuity. As a model that explains the phylogeny of a species or form

(Cracraft and Donoghue 2004; Tudge 2000), the tree structure can be quite useful as a representation of ballet technique. Because ballet has historically developed as a vocabulary of coordinated body parts moving stylistically in relation to spatial directions, the tree form can be said to offer a map for these central and branching aims of the technique. Likewise, toward naming the qualitative options and directional particularities of movement in space, ballet offers a very specific language. For example, qualitative options in ballet include the actions to “cut”, “melt”, “strike” or “stretch”, respectively translated from the French terms *coupé*, *fondue*, *battement*, and *tendu*. Directional particularities include “to the front”, “crossed”, “open”, and “to the side” among others, respectively translated from the French ballet terms *en face*, *croisée*, *effacée*, and *à la seconde*. Learning this language can form and influence dance technique and improvisation, enabling a dancer to expand into a broader range of movement qualities and to define his movement in comparison or contrast to this language.

*“Jump up! Higher! Jump! JUMP!!” Janet is yelling at us all over the piano music, and the room feels heavy with the effort of thirty tired bodies heaving themselves into the air during small jumps. “Stop, stop, stop” she commands, and the heaving and crashing grinds to a halt. “Jumping is supposed to be **fun**. If you’re not enjoying yourself, then you’re doing*



*something wrong. If your dancing is functional, then **it will feel good.***

*Remember when you were a little kid and you'd jump just because it felt good? Because it was fun? Try it."*

*Pushing on the barre I boi-oi-oing myself into the air. I feel light, buoyant, alive and a bit naughty for not caring about whether my feet are pointing or not. "That's it, Malaika!" calls Janet. "Your feet are working beautifully and you're jumping high!" I feel like I'm on a trampoline as I tombée pas de bourrée, pas de chat and leap. It feels like fun instead of work.*

The classical ballet I learned at PARTS gave me a greater sense of clarity in my movement and an awareness of how ballet structures the body's relationship to space and time. The specific conventions of this movement tradition enabled me to challenge my body's capacity to move.

As a structure, Deleuze and Guattari's tree form could easily represent classical ballet technique. A student of ballet generally learns the form from an accomplished "ballet master" or "ballet mistress", and this represents one of the hierarchies within ballet. Notwithstanding certain stylistic and pedagogical differences in the field, ballet technique across the globe generally adheres to narrow specifications of acceptability.

Measures of quality in ballet are clear and commonly understood: a ballet student works to achieve longer balances, higher degrees of coordination between upper and lower body, higher “kicks” or *battements*, faster and more precise footwork, greater numbers of sequential pirouettes, and higher jumps. Linear divisions of space further establish clarity in ballet; for example, Checchetti’s sixteen classical body positions use a square and its corners as clear bodily reference points. Furthermore, toward an understanding of ballet timing, a codified use of classical music as meter for all ballet steps enables the student to strive toward the additional goal of musicality in dancing. These “branches” of skill rest on fundamental principles of balance, strength, flexibility and coordination, as well as spatial and rhythmic awareness.

My acquaintance with ballet not only represented a learning curve of what is possible when one applies oneself to the study of any codified technique, it also helped me understand how I can choose to apply my body to any structure. I found that navigating the structure of ballet technique can be a practice akin to navigating the requirements of any improvisation score, and can be useful in developing awareness of the learning process.

By learning from a series of three ballet teachers at PARTS, I developed an understanding of my own ability to: be mistaken about the functionality of

my bodily sensations (Farr 2004), exactly obey the teacher's and the music's instruction in order to be accurate and precise when dancing (Corbett 2005), and expand and stretch my body in ways that both felt good and were functional toward achieving the goals of classical ballet (Panetta 2006). These stages of my learning represent a progression from initial uncertainty about my sensory role in dancing to a complete obedience to the prescriptions of the classical form, and finally a new sensory relationship to the steps and leaps of ballet, one in which my sensing established a more functional and enjoyable relationship to form. As a practice of applying myself to a structure, this progression also demonstrates three modes of structural interaction: from ignorance, to obedience, to playful enjoyment and freedom. Because the tree-form of ballet is concrete, it enables me to climb it, defining my own relation to it as I move.

From Farr, Corbett and Panetta I learned that although the structure of ballet technique exemplifies a hard-nosed arboreal form, such a structure enables the opportunity for an investigation into ways of moving beyond what is familiar to an individual. How we apply ourselves to movement structures determines our ability to experience them as both tools for learning and launchpads for going beyond the limitations of these structures—in other words, seeking new ways of knowing. This is the

paradox of using structures. A dancer's operation of her body in relation to such a form is affected by her sense of personal agency in moving, and in her willing assimilation of the teachers' advice in combination with her own sensory intelligence. Ballet's clear structures test the capacities of one's physicality and agency insofar as he is also ready to be changed by such a process. As a hierarchical, "arboreal" structure, ballet offered me the opportunity to expand my movement abilities and to become aware of how I chose to move in relation to its principles.

Looked at as an arboreal structure, ballet offers a system of support that include "roots"—principles of alignment, balance, rhythmic accuracy, spatial precision and buoyant verticality—to which a dancer must continually refer in his movement. While extensive training in such rooted structures could be seen as limiting in certain improvisation contexts where non-stylistic movement is sought, studying rooted techniques of moving can also provide the clarity of contrast needed to define a dancer's sense of relationship to the structure.

If awareness of relationship is fundamental to ecological practice, then a dancer's awareness of her relationship to any structure she uses in performance can likewise be an opportunity to practice ecological responsiveness. This process of distancing subject from structure can be

described in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a-signification. By seeing oneself in relation to classical technique through a chosen mode of practice, the dyadic relationship of teacher to student, or form to dancer, becomes destabilized, and "ballet dancer" can break from the connotations of translation and reference normally associated with it (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, p. 131). Drawing on the use of Deleuze and Guattari's conjunction "and", this repositioning of dancer in relation to technique demonstrates the semiotics of Deleuze and Guattari that evade binary logic (2003, p. 25). Herein lies the possibility for new relationships: dancer *and* technique *and* body *and* performance—these terms assemble upon the practicing Body without Organs of the dance student. Making her movement an assemblage, her body becomes surface upon which heterogeneous systems or forms can meet. By consciously choosing her relationship to training the dancer moves between finitudes, and retains singularity, creative agency that is not reducible to a predetermined outcome.

"Rooted" technical structures are not the only scores capable of enhancing a dancer's awareness of movement and her relationship to her surroundings; as much as arboreal models and ideologies, the rhizome structure offers another set of tactics for making connections and

establishing performance patterns that can be practiced by an individual in relationship to his or her body and environment.

### **3. Rhizome: Reason for Routes**

As an alternative theoretical structure, the rhizome offers a supposedly nonhierarchical model for interaction among people and ideas. Derived from observations about the horizontally-oriented growth patterns of rhizomes, “rhizomatic thinking” proposes that one can make connections or assemblages between disparate concepts and identities by reaching out across a “plane of consistency” (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, p. xii), whilst also sending roots down or shoots up from any of its network of strata. As a strategic model for performance, the rhizome represents a framework for seeking and forging new thoughts and relationships across unpoliced mental, physical and social territories, to reterritorialize ideas according to their singular use by the artist. How one engages with this framework determines its usefulness to ecological practice.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari express their dislike for the tree form in a prelude to singing the praises of rhizomatic grass.

To these centered systems, the authors contrast acentered systems, finite networks of automata in which communication runs from any neighbor to any other, the stems or channels do not preexist, and all individuals are interchangeable, defined

only by their *state* at a given moment—such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronized without a central agency (2003, p. 17).

Deleuze and Guattari use grass as a model for their preferred system of relating, one in which individuals possess agency, initiative, and freedom to connect with “any neighbor”, and to build and transform channels for communication out into any direction. This kind of ideal relating, termed “rhizomatic” by Deleuze and Guattari, has been recently used by dance makers and dance theorists as a manifesto, model or structure by which to perform and improvise. Rhizomatic thinking/moving/acting represents adherence to another set of objectives, different from those of classical ballet, but still idealized. A case study of my performance work with Jan Ritsema provides evidence for this.

As a theater-maker, Jan Ritsema works not with improvisation as such, but towards improvisation (2005). In the month-long intensive workshop I participated in with him and six other PARTS students, we created a performance from our weeks of conversations, highlighting the idea that what is special, alive in performance is the associative interest that sparks our unself-conscious conversations, like the ones we have in everyday class. What was important was not producing theater, not selling something to the audience, or giving or taking, forcing or forming some

purpose-built theater machine. In rehearsal we talked freely, allowing spontaneous association and rhizomatic thought patterns that pointed in infinite surprising directions. We noticed what interests us and rose to meet that feeling of un-forced delight through improvisation.

Ritsema articulates some of his aspirations in a lecture presented to dance researchers in Holland in 2004. During the lecture he posits performance as a potential practice of Deleuzian grass, an opportunity to connect to any range of “potentialities” through moving and acting, wherein the power of “*between*” is valued over the certainty of a “fortress” representing an established position or idea. This is a kind of manifesto for rhizomatic performance, one which creates and takes place within a border zone, one in which the performers establish a situation of “*in-between* [...] at all conceivable levels of the performance” (Ritsema 2004, p. 6). Ritsema’s rhizomatic performance offers the promise of a formula for nonhierarchical action; but as a practice useful toward expanding one’s sense of interrelationship within an ecological context, its offerings depend, as in ballet, upon the level of personal agency one practices while engaging with its formula. When practiced with an awareness of both individual freedom and responsibility, Ritsema’s theatrical rhizome-structure can be particularly useful toward affirming interrelationships, particularly the unexpected and unfamiliar assemblages made possible by thinking in



unregulated flows. “The border zone is a no-man’s-land of potentialities. There, things and opinions are not yet set in stone, things and opinions are able to become, to become many things” (Ritsema 2004, p. 6).

By theoretically enabling a performer to connect with idiosyncratic ideas, impulses or thoughts, Ritsema encourages the cultivation of freedom from any fixed identity and a performance aesthetic that is “toward grass” (2005). This performance practice emphasizes the possibility that one might relate more freely to all things or any thing; as a physical and imaginative practice, this aligns itself with the requisites of an ecological practice, or the act of becoming Deleuze and Guattari’s BwO. Vastly different from the classical ballet model of a structure with clear physical goals, rhizomatic performance suggests the performer can transmute into and out of any conceivable state, movement, mood or concept in the interest of being “*in-between*” identities and definitions.

In performance, while using a collage of prewritten text as material, Ritsema’s method of practicing performing was to listen to the way we perform informal conversation, and invite that quality into our recitation so that it seemed improvisational. A field of total freedom in choosing what is

performed from one moment to the next was the goal: improvisation is the feeling the performance sought to create (Ritsema 2005).

*We talk, respond, muse, conjecture, argue about basically nothing. Mikael and I have a heated disagreement, if that's what you can call it... the original lines of three scripts are all jumbled up, but we utter them as if thinking and feeling them for the first time, not premeditated or packaged but imagined and felt—believed. We must “let it be light” and imagine an unplanned interjection hovering on the periphery of each interchange.*

Ritsema aligned this mode of performing with an anti-capitalist movement; rather than “selling” a line, he asked the actor to speak the line as an “exchange”. He wished to value, as Deleuze and Guattari propose, exchange instead of money, territory instead of land, and activity instead of work (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, pp. 443-444). Ritsema wished to destabilize the common components of a contemporary performance, namely those that make it complicit and popular within the standards of a market economy.

By destabilizing the means, we also deprive them of a hierarchy. It no longer concerns how beautiful or how ugly,

how virtuosic, moving or human the set, the dance, the dancer, or the story was, but how effective their use was in creating the border zone that the performance intends to be (Ritsema 2004, p. 6).

Ritsema's advice on how to achieve this kind of performing is spelled out in an instruction he calls "The Lesson":

don't take it in  
share it  
don't take it for yourself  
just present it  
[...]  
don't isolate yourself from the rest  
there is not such a thing as a hierarchy between you,  
it is, And the chair, And the table, And the wall  
try to be one of them  
[...]  
in the presence of all the other things  
try it, say it  
move it, just move it, you, the space, us, the things (2004, p. 4).

In this passage Ritsema urges a performer to think and move herself as if in infinitely equal and "different" relation to "anything else", and for this reason it stands as a useful imagination to employ toward a practice of ecology. If an individual seeks to move herself simply, differently and equally within "the presence of all the other things", improvisations of a certain quality will arise. As a kind of equalizing proposition, this idea of interrelationship proposes that an individual might create any number of transversal "routes" for relating to the

myriad and equally important “things”, “space” and “us” that coexist.

I found Ritsema’s ideas useful to determining ecological practices of improvisation insofar as they articulated such a set of routes toward supposedly nonhierarchical ideals which had previously sat inchoate in my mind. He translated Deleuze and Guattari into one version of performance practice, doable with text and in a theatre setting.

Toward dancing he also made several assertions, particularly in his 2002 collaboration with Jonathan Burrows, *Weak Dance, Strong Questions*, namely that one can dance in a way that avoids representation or certainty (Ritsema 2004, p. 8). Instead of asserting the goals of the dance, Burrows and Ritsema ask questions, and in doing so point to their intentions. In a text discussing their dance performance they write,

Is it that we try to dance in a way in which every movement contains the possibility of all directions?

[...]

Is it the seeming contradiction in this factory-of-movements-not-to-produce-specific-products which connects it more to nature, more to a landscape that creates the enjoyment of a profound purposelessness in which, again, it is fearless to travel? (Ritsema 2004, p. 10).

Clearly, the goals of Ritsema’s many performance projects are similarly oriented; his qualitative valuation of performance methods

refer to Deleuzian, rhizomatic ideals that find freedom and enjoyment in a kind of “profound purposelessness” that is (problematically) equated here with “nature” and enables infinite possibility. At every level of his operation, even in his style of discussing his ideas about improvisation, he performed in such a “rhizomatic” and often obtuse way.

*Jan Ritsema is discussing the aspiring possibility of improvisation without rules. I squint at him, dubious, curious. He is talking excitedly, we are trying to follow his nonlinear patterns. Free improvisation, he calls it. All improvisation now, he says, exists under rules of intentionality, connectivity, meaning, narrative. He is interested in pursuing action which is not steeped in the poison of capitalist buying and selling. Not advertising, promoting or parading. Only communicating without intention or agenda. The conversation is contradictory and inconclusive; he circles back on himself and ends up saying that “of course you have rules, you need rules. All improvisations have rules.” And isn’t rhizomatic performance his capitalist product? What rules are to be followed in an improvisation with no rules? But this paradox is perhaps the intention, the answer, the celebrated rhizomatic in-between. Celebratory senselessness? My brain feels adrift, but not liberated.*

Instead of offering a method toward relational engagement with all things, Ritsema's performance methods manifested as a stylistic trend, one where the elliptical nature of a performance rendered it nearly inscrutable as a cognizable event. In some ways this rhizomatic "style" could be said to be creating its own hierarchical ideology. For example, an excerpt from a 2005 collaborative theater performance co-produced by Ritsema with Sandy Williams, demonstrates the inconclusive and unpredictable progression of spoken text. I quote this passage because of its relatively succinct demonstration of a stream of ideas which exemplify rhizomatic associations, noting that even when absorbed in context of the whole live performance, these lines fail to deliver conclusions or explicit narratives.

**Sandy:**

He took her hands in his hands and exceeded the philosophical determination of the possibility of the possible, and by the same token exceeded the classical opposition of the possible and the impossible.

Dear Jan: I can say what I say. I can't say what I don't say. I can't say what I do. I can do what I do.

**Jan:**

Dear Sandy: What she did what she did what she did.

Dear Leonard: What is at stake is the question, not what is missing (Ritsema and Williams 2005, p. 7).

Using repetition and repositioning of words, the performers move toward the a-signification discussed by Deleuze and Guattari. They demonstrate the mobility of meanings in contexts and lead a freer use of words that can deterritorialize and reterritorialize according to their performance, or *use*.

I was able to observe Ritsema's work as a student of his theater workshop and as audience member of his performances. I found that while rhizomatic thought exemplifies some of the values of ecological awareness including openness to the limitless potential of a moment for action and association, it also remains systematic in its approach. As a style, rhizomatic performance practices create sliding associations and random intersections of ideas in performers who cultivate mental landscapes of omnipresent contingencies.

Ritsema taught and advocated "rhizomatic thought" as his method of seeking freedom from fixed "systems" that often precondition performance by enforcing implicit valuations and patterns toward which an improvisation subconsciously strives (Ritsema 2004, p. 1). Instead, Ritsema uses rhizomatic performance qualities as work toward realizing a "meta-system" (2004, p. 7) which is always

incomplete and inconsistent, and therefore capable of initiating subversive and “free” activities which affirm the equal importance of all things, including the transitions between them. He writes, “No hierarchy in the use of the (performative) means, the objects and subjects” (2004, p. 7). These techniques offer some modes for experimentation, particularly toward the idea of finding the “freedom” to experiment with unusual encounters, and performance modes which describe multiple singularities—individual and multiple uniqueness. Without reducing the power of the word or act, Ritsema encouraged us to deliver each gesture or line with a certain even passion. The opportunity to express “the power to act” should not be taken lightly, or used predictably.

It is not easy to be a free man, to flee the plague, organize encounters, increase the power to act, to be moved by joy, to multiply the affects which express or encompass a maximum of affirmation. To make the body a power which is not reducible to the organism, to make thought a power which is not reducible to consciousness. So far Deleuze (Ritsema 2004, p. 4).

In line with my definition of personal agency, Ritsema’s discussion of freedom is as defined by “the power to act”. As a method for extending awareness to include oneself in direct relation to other living things on earth, the rhizome is a structure that offers nearly unlimited possibilities for imaginative association among elements. Insofar as one approaches any structure, a strong sense of personal



agency must serve to navigate him or her through the confines and stylistic expectations of that structure.

An “ecological” approach to structural navigation must practice both freedom to relate differently to the dominant paradigm and responsibility to relate realistically to the physical. Deleuze and Guattari advise practitioners to stay aware of the dominant paradigm while seeking new relations to it: “mimic the strata” (2003, p. 160). They describe knowing structures as “surfaces” and “strata” in order to enable a body to practice its deterritorializations with respect to the sets of rules which impact upon it. “It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO” (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, p. 161). This implies recognizing prescriptive modes of technique and theory in order to go beyond them and discover a singular means of relating to body, space and time in performance.

If Beuys challenges individuals to be “creative at every level”, then this also requires cutting across the prescriptions of any method, model or structure to create a singular approach to relationship. Rather than a license to delude oneself with copious imaginations, I

propose that such “creativity” must take place while rooted in a felt or perception-based sense of the body in a physical reality. This is the challenge and the pertinence of dance improvisation practices as a way to be “creative at every level”— creative singularity must always be evident in the body’s physical actions. Thus, both routes and roots necessarily comprise a practice of knowing and relating to the environment through the body. Rhizomatic performance and classical ballet technique offer respective examples of these.

Both methods beg the question of how to engage with them, not as hegemonic prescriptions but as practices potentially helpful to building a greater sense of ecological awareness. The challenges and opportunities that structures present are how to engage with them in ways that move beyond the practice of bureaucratic or technocratic reproduction of a technique or form.

#### **4. Beyond the Technocratic in Technique and Theory**

In this chapter’s introduction I proposed “that a disciplined, flexible and perceptive engagement with theory and structure is essential to the project of improvising, and a balance of these elements is equally necessary to any project of expanding human awareness of the living world.” It remains to be determined how such engagement might be actively realized by a

practitioner of dance improvisation. This section describes possible characteristics of structural engagement that an ecologically-motivated improviser might employ. I look at my own work in relation to the writing of Paul Shepard, who argues that ecological awareness is a fundamentally unstructured action.

Within my own practice of improvisation, I have sought both “roots” and “routes” by which to engage with structural models for performance. These two terms help me visualize how I might work towards an “ecological” relationship with theories, structures, forms or rules. Deleuze and Guattari’s BwO is, after all, still a body. It does not disappear entirely when disassociated from its viscera, but becomes more willing to participate in assemblages. Likewise, rules or standards of some sort are always necessary to a performance. Even if a rule is that there will be no rules, or “we will start at eight o’clock and finish at nine”, parameters contextualize improvisation. Likewise, one must guard against the possibility of being consumed by the parameters of the structure; attention to one’s personal agency flows in relation to the demands of the structure can be termed the “routes” toward awareness beyond that which a structure provides.

Toward this end I propose that a model which advocates both “routes” and “roots” is not reducible to either an arborescent form or a rhizomatic one. It could be useful for ecological projects to instead talk about “the rhizome in the tree” or “the tree in the rhizome” in order to elucidate that both modes of structuring thought are incomplete without elements of the other; to binarize the two models is not sufficient to explain how relationships form and grow.

For example, “roots” are often only sustained by other, more itinerant structures. *Philidris* ants, for example, act like mobile roots for their host plants, bringing nutritious insect debris to decompose among the plant’s root system, feeding the host plant *Dischidia* vital nutrients. Even *Dischidia* grows its roots within its hollow leaves, thereby providing nursery space for the ants while benefiting from their fertilizer (Moffett 1999, pp. 128-131), and *Cecropia obtusa* offers food to *Azteca* ants which nest within it and provide protection (Heil and McKey 2003). The far-reaching underground structures of mycorrhizae fungus family collect and deliver necessary minerals to tree roots, produce chemicals which protect the tree from pathogens and are fed by excess carbohydrates produced by the tree (Wong, n.d.). Additionally, mycorrhizae fungus are thought to protect many trees threatened by calcium loss brought about by acid rain. By enhancing a tree’s calcium uptake the fungus also ensures its own

survival, demonstrating a further symbiotic relationship (Faversham House Group 2002). Seen from an expanded biological perspective, even the oak tree's reproductive methods employ the unpredictable and therefore arguably rhizomatic services of wind, flooding, squirrels and birds to scatter its acorns widely. Once acorn is separated from tree it does not "only [receive] information from a higher unit" (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, p. 16), because beyond its genetic structure, the "information" and nutrients vital to its survival come through all manner of ubiquitous and nonhierarchical units; soil, sunlight, water, weather patterns, etc. influence the direction and quality of the tree's growth.

Indeed, it seems pertinent to any project of enhancing ecological awareness that a practitioner operates with the premise that *ecological practice does not have a fixed ideology*. This is another way of describing the freedom and responsibility inherent in any sense of personal agency. Paul Shepard provides useful insight to why ideology might hamper ecological practices.

Shepard offers cautionary notes against creating and "trying on" multiple ideologies, or taking for granted one's own capacity for adopting theoretical paradigms. He points out that life on earth offers a very different certainty to the whimsical theories entertained by philosophers, and warns that any ideology can be a hindrance to observing the actual

interactions between humans and the environment. I tested these observations by investigating the presence and effects of ideologies among contemporary dancers and dance makers in Europe during my years at PARTS. I observed that when dancers make structures into ideologies they inhibit their ability to exercise personal agency.

A certain belief in self- and ideological- malleability underlies much of the contemporary dance performed in Europe in recent years. As awareness practices of the body, dance practices propose, create and develop theoretical and practical relationships with the body, space and others. Many contemporary dance improvisation practices, like Forsythe's improvisation technologies, take this opportunity to reinvent spatial paradigms as malleable and pliant, bringing about a practice that challenges the body in a series of imaginative ways. Ritsema's rhizomatic performance approach takes similar liberties with text and ideas within a theater performance. Influenced by both Ritsema and Forsythe, the PARTS learning curriculum offers one example of a contemporary dance training program that values bodies and minds flexible enough to accommodate diverse performance practices.

Writing in the later part of the twentieth century, Shepard's writing targets the malleability of our understandings of cultural, spatial and ideological

structures as a key factor in our ability to disregard the wellbeing of the biosphere. Shepard argues that our ability to freely sculpt ideas can be dangerous when it enables us to delude ourselves that we are separate from nature. Like a dancer's ability to freely sculpt space, Shepard suggests that the ability to shape ideological structures also comes with the responsibility to acknowledge the effects which those shapings can have on a wider circle of people and organisms. This "ability to shape" space or ideology is evidenced in the curriculum at PARTS, one of Europe's premier educational programs for contemporary dance. In the following paragraphs I address the political implications of bodily, spatial, and ideological pliancy: its potential effects upon wider circles of interrelated organisms and its prerequisite of privilege.

The tendency to shape bodies, spaces or thoughts into forms which fit into our ideologies can be thought of in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "determinate form[s] of expression" controlled by "assemblages of power [that] impose signifiante and subjectification" (2010, p. 200).

Deleuze and Guattari propose that the "faciality machine" is responsible for the "decoding of the body and an overcoding of the face", resulting in "the landscapification of all worlds and milieus" (2010, p. 201). Through a process that can, at times force "flows into signifiante and subjectifications, into knots of arborescence", the machine can also

produce “positive deterritorializations and creative flight” (2010, p. 210). Eco-phenomenologist Edward Casey (2003) sees this as the potential to extend the body *into* and *as* landscape. Where facialization and landscapification represent a removal of faces and lands from their “natural”, ontological origin, Deleuze and Guattari propose that removing the tags of signifiacance from these surfaces brings about opportunities for “deterritorializing” them in new and productive ways (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, p. 172). If those ways are productively linked to a *sense* of the world’s surfaces *as they appear*, reterritorializations initiated by BwOs can act through the eco-phenomenological methods advocated by Casey (2003, pp. 202-203). As Casey points out, Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “facialization does not stop at the limits of the body: it includes the full environment, the landscape in which that body is emplaced” (Casey 2003, p. 202), endorsing an ethics of shared environmental implication similar to my own sense of “bodyscape” articulated in early improvisations. However, if reterritorializations become further assemblages of power imposing signifiacance and subjectification, potentially “ecological” ideas will succumb to the same “modern cultural relativism” described by Shepard.

With a life spent researching what editor Florence Shepard calls “the ‘history of ecological ideas’”(1999, p. 99), Paul Shepard’s work deals with



human perception of and relationship to nature, and encompasses sociological, biological, anthropological, and even art historical perspectives on these themes. Importantly for my purposes, he describes how humanity's tendency to conceptualize nature has enabled us as a species to ignore certain fundamental aspects of our own reality.

In the essay "The Conflict of Ideology and Ecology" (1977), Paul Shepard "provides a critique of what [he] called 'modern existential cultural relativism'" (Shepard, F. 1999, p. 103), or the tendency of twentieth-century thought to reduce environmental issues to concepts or ideals. In a critique that echoes my own review of the PARTS curriculum, Shepard argues that academic thought has reduced reality to "'paradigms', 'models', 'schemata'" (1977, p. 161), enabling "a worldwide devastation of ecosystems on the grounds that people are related to the natural world" (1977, p. 161) only through these artificial and conceptual means. Shepard writes that cultural acceptance of different ecological worldviews between people or societies ultimately reduces the environment to something infinitely malleable according to one's cultural tradition, preference or whim.

Shepard discusses how, because "the environment" is commonly seen as a culturally-relative notion, humans act (mistakenly) as if we can afford to

ignore it—or pay less attention to it by reconsidering and reconfiguring it yet again in relation to our endlessly reconfigured selves. Shepard argues that unlimited ideological malleability is a myth because it fails to recognize the factual nature of the biosphere: “The myth holds all those elements constituting the self or group as equally detachable: politics, social role, “lifestyle,” gender, and relationships in a wider ecological context” (1999, p. 160). The notion that ecology itself—or consideration of the environment—is an “ideology”, or a notion capable of being subscribed or adhered to—is a symptom of our gravely mistaken sense of our place in the world as the self-justified creators of our “cultural evolution”, says Shepard (1999, p. 166). Shepard’s criticism of academia is similar to Arran Gare’s remarks about postmodernism and globalization, and Guattari’s targeting of “Integrated World Capitalism”. All illuminate these institutions as structures that influence the way we operate in the world.

Environmental advocate Al Gore similarly chastises many politicians for being overly flexible in their attitudes toward global warming. While it is true that systems which enforce compliance with even “functional” rigid policies in the extreme could verge on the oppressive, Gore echoes Gare’s argument that too much postmodern relativism in a political realm can justify noncommittal policies that fail to address the real environmental

crisis (Gore 2007). While ideologies are useful to affirming our sense of choice, how they ultimately manifest in the physical world of bodies, gravity, weather and land determines their ability to contribute to the well-being of the biosphere.

Gore, like Shepard, names human impassiveness in the face of the environmental crisis as a serious contributor to our present state of global warming. He calls attention to the idea that each member of society is responsible on some level for contributing to the thinking, actions and consumer practices that affect the global climate. This includes performers who are integral contributors to this environmental condition, not only as members of a consumerist society but *also as progenitors of the beliefs and philosophies that validate their own work*. Because dance is an art form in which beliefs, structures and methods of making form the basis of its practice, it is in a unique position to value modes of exchange which propagate ecological awareness.

My experience at PARTS brought to light how I could use improvisation to be influenced by or conscious of dominant ideological structures. By studying at PARTS, I conditioned my body to accommodate an array of theoretical structures. This experience motivated me to find a sense of

personal agency and brought about an awareness of my own capacity to act in relation to structures.

The training regime at PARTS cultivates pliancy in its students. A varied schedule of teachers, coupled with afternoon workshops introducing vastly different corporeal tasks in repertory, improvisation or composition, made for a highly demanding and often disorienting physical and somatic experience.

*I don't know who me is anymore—I am a blank canvas for the paint of people with bold ideas—except the paint doesn't stick for long. Perhaps better, my body is a television screen, animated from 0800 to 2200 with various programs:*

*first yoga, and I am muscles and bones aligned with breathing;*

*then I'm all heavy heelbones, ropes, pulleys, weights and levers in*

*David Hernandez's body-world;*

*next I'm Libby Farr's sensual ballerina, sweeping through space, floating my head, swiveling my hips and disengaging my ballerina thighs as I muscle through to point my stellar, sexy foot;*

*lunch—I lay on the floor and don't know what to do with myself...I have an hour and fifteen minutes to be my own body...maybe something*

*wants to be stretched, but more likely everything has been already...never mind, have some food and it's time for what's next;*

*it's the Forsythe show, where the world is a geometric jungle gym we navigate via our new language of "dab", "circle", "slide", "prick", "copy" and "reverse";*

*finally comes half an hour where this television-body remembers that it does like a hot shower and a tuna sandwich, but it prefers not to be rushed;*

*the improvisation jam begins at 1900h, but what dancing comes out when so much is possible? The tired dance might surface, so might the Forsythe dance, the Hernandez dance, the Farr dance, the yoga dance... Every movement I make I can sense traces of its recent origin, all so fresh in my flesh. Who is this body? What beneath these programs? This body am confused, am a chancer, faker, imitator. She am tired.*

Without a grounded understanding of my own bodily project in moving, I came to feel like an overly flexible facility for others' structures, ideas and forms, and with this loss of a sense of personal purpose my dancing felt empty. Acknowledging my choice and responsibility was necessary in order to negotiate the relationship of my self to the myriad techniques, ideologies and structures which dancing at PARTS proposed. I located ecology as a focal point in my practice to ground my activities at PARTS,

and used improvisation as a method by which to test the boundaries of the structures I was daily in contact with.

*Here is another tombe pas de bourre in yet another ballet class. But yet here I am, feeling the possibilities for choice within this simple movement. Whaaaah! Hurrah! In each second I choose to breathe and bend and stretch to encompass my maximum creativity and full body potential in dancing this step. My head lifts, my eyes look, my legs find more space suddenly.*

Though the pliancy promoted at PARTS was useful to the school's program of dance development and training, I learned that my own health depended on not blindly following this program, but in developing my own agenda and flows within its structure. As a result, I began to explore and further cultivate the relationship between my dancing body and the larger environment. This jump in my thinking enabled me to realize that the usefulness of the "pliancy" encouraged at PARTS depended on my own accountability to choose my level of pliancy. For my purposes, I define this accountability as an imminent capacity to respond appropriately to situations *without sacrificing the basic health or form of one's self* (or one's body). Taking this new understanding of accountability into my approach to learning through the program at PARTS enabled me to

cultivate a new quality in my dancing. Being, as Beuys encouraged, “creative at every level”, I chose to creatively configure my approach to dancing in order to uphold the basic health of my body. In this way I grounded my ideologically ecological project in the physical reality of anatomical health and functionality.

This marked a fundamental realization in my quest to negotiate structures in an “ecological” way. Both the functionality that ballet teaches and the flexibility that rhizomatic thought advocates are necessary characteristics of any ecological project in structural negotiation. Neglecting the health of my body, sensible in its energy levels, pains and comforts, relates to neglecting the health of the planet, an oversight which humans are now coming to terms with as we grapple with how to address global warming. The challenge for me at PARTS was to take on a demanding schedule without losing my improvisational ability to engage with my body and the larger environment in healthy and life-sustaining ways. Toward this end, I began to practice “improvisational research”—or, dancing with a sense of agency and curiosity—when taking technique classes, a methodology recently investigated by Claire Wooten in her paper “Navigating Liminal Space in the Feminist Ballet Class” (2009). I also began to create a performance which exercised my active relationship to structures in improvisation.

At the same time as it seeks the unknown, improvisation is often practiced as a series of problems, scores or structures which are performed with a mind to achieve results to a standard. “Known” activities also inevitably feature in improvisation in the form of familiar movement vocabulary and gestures that arise from the muscle memory of any performer. Given these factors, how is it possible for an improviser to use structures to both challenge and strengthen performance skills, and to go beyond the known—investigating the potential that improvisation offers?

Improvisation techniques and dance techniques can be created, practiced and learned, and structures form the basis for learning these techniques. Even when structures are designed to help access “new” activities (as in improvisational structures or rhizomatic models) these structures can also act as strictures unless a practitioner exercises her will to challenge herself within and in relation to this structure.

In the first four chapters I have given examples of various improvisation practices which correspond to contemporary philosophies that advocate the importance of “new” and “ecological” ways of relating to the world. I locate the potential for ecological relationships in comparative analysis of philosophers and practitioners such as Abram/Rudstrom, Merleau-



Ponty/Hay, Deleuze and Guattari/Forsythe, Irigaray/Zambrano, and Grosz/Simson. Because acting with awareness of relationship is central to both participatory ecology and practices of improvisation, what remains to be determined is the *likelihood that*, or the *conditions under which* an individual using the structures and scores of movement and improvisation techniques will stimulate a measurable degree of positive change in his understanding of relationship.

Maturana and Varela articulate the evolving nature of individual knowledge in their loop-shaped map that describes how understanding is produced (1992, p. 16). They establish knowing as a nonhierarchical process that begins and ends with the individual's daily experience of phenomena through observations and actions. As such, an improviser's activity of relating to a structure is as fundamental to his development of "knowledge" as are his actions and discoveries when improvising within that structure.

Therefore I propose that the attitudes necessary for a practical, ecological relationship to structure include a *recognition of personal agency*, and a readiness to fully investigate new and expanded understandings of relationship—in other words, a *willingness to change and be changed*.

Personal agency includes recognizing one's "roots": the bodily faculties,

techniques, abilities and languages at one's disposal; willingness to change includes the ability to view or use these roots in new ways, in order to make "routes" toward as-yet-unknown ways of relating to the world. For my purposes, personal agency is acting by being aware; it entails not diminishing one's perception in order to learn something or be part of something such as a technique, tradition or structure. Personal agency involves a commitment to not give up intuition and all the other sensibilities of the body in order to learn, use or study a formal proposition. Because a tendency when learning a form is for a student to forget innate intelligence and blindly follow the directives or prescriptives of the structure, utilizing embodied knowledge with scholarly doubt and keen perception throughout the study process enables a student to learn in a more realistic and self-reliant way. Furthermore, through "a willingness to change and be changed" a student is ready to not only experience education firsthand, but also to propose original methods of relating and comprehending the world through models or structures.

In my own dance practice I have engaged with movement and improvisation techniques thoroughly enough to learn them, and have practiced ways of using these techniques that facilitate my own active sense of learning, playing and route-making. Both such "rooted" structures

and such “routed” practices featured in my 2006 improvisation performance *In Praise of Compost*.

*In Praise of Compost* offers an example of my practical research into how to engage with and go beyond improvisation and movement structures. In making a performance to finalize and comment on my time at PARTS, I composed a solo with the intention to further bring my own and an audience’s attention to the biosphere that surrounds the PARTS building. On a basic sensory level, this included bringing the performance location outdoors and into the garden of the PARTS building. On a structural level, this included creating and engaging with a series of improvisation scores that proposed concrete and abstract propositions for moving. As an experiment in consolidating and moving past certain performance techniques I had studied at PARTS, the solo represents my own effort to bring together both the “roots” of contemporary dance performance (such as composition, improvisation scores, dance technique, etc.) and the “routes” of my own ecological intentions (such as expanding sensibilities, bringing attention to the non-human and faraway, pointing out and experiencing instances of interconnection, etc.). The performance represented an experiment in creating and engaging with improvisation structures in ways useful to cultivating ecological awareness.

By using song and text in conjunction with improvisation techniques from Jan Ritsema, Deborah Hay, David Zambrano, Kirstie Simson and myself I composed a score which sought to draw connections between the practical, physical actions of inhabitants of the PARTS building and the state of the larger environment [Appendix C, pp. 4-6].

*Audience walks into the studio. As I stand in a trash can I have dragged in from the hallway of PARTS, I pull out items that have been thrown into it, delivering a string of names of companies who were the top ten contributors to the campaign to re-elect President George Bush. Incidentally, named companies are makers of nearly all the products—Lay's potato chips, Cote d'Or chocolate bars, Coca-cola—whose wrappers I empty from the bin. As I speak, I circulate my attention through all the audience who gather around the bin in this installation-style performance in studio five at PARTS. I pass through them with my awareness, practicing inviting being seen, practicing including instead of controlling as I sing a song composed by Karen Wimhurst (2005),*

*Everybody  
needs somebody  
else to love.  
Everybody*

*needs somebody*

*else*

*to love.*

*Shout it out*

*Shout it out above from heaven*

*Needs somebody to love*

*needs somebody to love*

*needs somebody to love.*

*I see many people I recognize, people I know well and respect.*

In Chrysa Parkinson's classes (2005) she invites dancers to practice "including instead of controlling" as they extend their awareness in movement. As I sang a song about love in *In Praise* I practiced extending my own awareness in this way, and by "passing through" in order to include body, audience and environment. Next I danced with the garbage I had just extracted from the bin as a way of studying and calling attention to its concrete physical properties. Finding my own playful way of moving in response to each object, I engaged in a 'What if?' score.

*I dance the dance of the potato chip wrapper, crumpled, crunchy, metallic and thinly plasticky: "What if my whole body at once dances the unique*

*dance of this object, no matter what?" is my score. I am crinkling, folding, turning myself inside out like the splayed, ripped bag. Tilting on edge and then veering off course to catch myself, I think of Kirstie Simson's challenge to feel the earth beneath me; there is more volume in my dancing trials this way.*

*And then I stop and sing:*

*Shout it out*

*shout it out above from heaven*

*Shout it out*

*shout it out above from heaven*

*Crazy to love*

*crazy to love*

*crazy to love.*

These *Love Fragments* composed by Karen Wimhurst in 2005 during a music and dance collaboration residency at Dartington comprised two of four total which I sang during the first section of *In Praise*. I sang them intermittently as I made my way around the studio, improvising first with a squashed Coca-cola can, then a crumpled potato chip wrapper.

Using scores gave my improvisation structure; in the singing sections of *In Praise* I challenged myself to rhythmic and qualitative accuracy. Singing the “Love Fragments” songs, I focused on staying in time with Julian Bosuma, the pianist who accompanied me for these nuanced and practiced moments. As I performed these scores I noticed myself both attending to the technical demands of the music but also confronting the audience with my presence as I sang, hoping to impart some message of mutual responsibility. Again, with my gaze I “passed through” them, *and* I “included rather than controlled” them, *and* I “invited being seen” singing and dancing there and then. *And, ... and, ... and.* Ritsema, Zambrano, Parkinson and Hay contributed to my structures for relating to the audience. Meanwhile I exercised my own means of relating, via personal agency, to the act of performing by composing these scores in support of my own “ecological” enquiries. I also implicated myself—my body—among the participants in the globalized economy; I performed a kind of dispersal of my own image, revealing the sources of my vestments.

*I move to a corner of the studio near the piano, and begin to take off my clothes, reading from the label of each item the country of its origin.*

*“Mexico”: my pants. “Bangladesh,”: my shirt. “Bangladesh”: my bra.*

*“Bangladesh”: my underwear. I am surprised: I didn’t count on this high*

*Bangladeshi-product presence (I only made sure that all my clothes had tags), but it makes my point.*

*As I stand naked, having acknowledged and shed the garments that implicate myself among everyone else in the global commodity market, I silently ask the question “What if 65 trillion cells at once float apart into multiple directions?” I am performing the possibility of a slow explosion, a peaceful dispersal of my self into space.*

Engaging with scores of undressing, reading and dispersing, I performed *In Praise* as a series of scores relevant to bringing my own and the audience’s attention to a broader spectrum of consequence and relationship.

*... I stop, composing myself, literally. I soberly dress, and go pick up an apple core from the scattered garbage. “Compostable,” I say, and jog out the open door, gesturing for the audience to follow.*

*I am shaking at this point from having danced so intensely. Outside I chuck the apple core on the compost heap before running to the lime flower tree. I take the lunging jump required to reach the lowest branch on it; I hang for a moment, mustering my oomph and haul myself up, bracing and balancing my weight and thinking all the while of the tree-climbing score,*



*“Feel the tree beneath me” as I climb up, up, higher still to the highest branches that will support me. I can hear gasps and astonished comments from the crowd gathered below. I stand for a moment at the top, breathing, looking out over the city around me and at the garden below. Pigeons and wind move around us on this March evening, but the crowd below is still, watching. Carefully moving one bodily limb at a time, I climb down the tree, dangling from the lowest branch before dropping down onto the grass, again at the level of the audience. I head over to a hole dug in the ground, where Richard is waiting with a shovel and a sapling. “This tree,” I explain, “is a horse chestnut tree.” It will grow to be very big, and one day it will ask to be climbed.” Together we plant it, and everyone watches. I bring out an envelope of crocosmail monbretia seeds, and invite people to sprinkle a handful around the fresh soil at the base of the tiny tree. About a dozen hands come forward, cupped, and I tap some seeds into each palm. “Thank you,” I say. “That’s the end.” The applause that follows sounds heartfelt but seems displaced... My performance has bled into an action, and it is no longer clear how my score is operating to enable me to perform; I am simply planting a tree. There is nothing “performative” or “affected” about this action. We are actually planting a tree. The biosphere is actually benefitting. There is no score for how to do this, except dig the hole deep enough, sprinkle the dirt finely, and ask people to help. My studio imaginations move into growing realities.*

Bringing my own actions out of a score scenario and into hands-on gardening at the end of the performance marked a change in my reliance on performance structures. Throughout the solo previous to that point I relied on a series of scores to justify my own body's relationship to the audience, other objects, and to the environment in order to spark my own and others' capacity to expand awareness of interconnection. My use of and departure from the scores I used involved remaining present throughout the performance in my sensing body, negotiating what was actually happening in myself and in the performance space with what my ideals were for each scored section. This grounded a sense of personal agency through and beyond the structure of the solo.

##### **5. "Creativity at Every Level" of the Canopy**

Like Joseph Beuys proclaimed and members of the biotic community exemplify, creativity "at every level" of the forest from roots to rhizomes includes a commitment to both accurately assess and creatively imagine the possibilities for one's role within any given structure. Working in a way that exercises individual freedom and responsibility, one can explore structural propositions for moving or thinking with a greater degree of personal agency, and can use this agency to exercise ecological awareness.

To do this in improvisation one can choose to develop a non-structural, or improvised, relationship with structure.

In a political context such as the one described by Gore (2007), the ability to choose one's actions (political or physical) is a privilege which can be marked by a commitment to broaden one's awareness to include the effects of one's actions on the environment, or it can be marked by disregard for the health of the biosphere and oblivious compliance with the modes of production and exchange that form the global economy of integrated world capitalism.

In dance improvisation, "creativity at every level" involves clarifying one's relationship to the structures a dancer employs in order to learn or research movement propositions, whether they be the technical and kinetic propositions of various teachers of classical ballet or the conceptual, rhizomatic propositions of theater practices such as Jan Ritsema's. Both kinds of structures formulate a model relationship between elements of body, space and time, and by engaging with these models one runs the risk of being constrained by their propositions, while also having the opportunity to challenge and assert oneself in relation to such a structural proposal. By delineating my own experience learning the exacting regimen of ballet technique I explained how clear structural forms can be useful to

providing standards against which one can challenge themselves and expand their capacities to move in precise ways.

At PARTS, the highly demanding structure of the class schedule challenged me to further assert my own agenda of researching practices of ecology through my own body during the program of study. In that instance, my bodily sensations and messages of health and functionality comprised the “roots” of my moving, and my imaginations toward how I might link dance improvisation practices with ecological practices comprised the “routes” of the thinking which motivated my relationship to the school. Such was my application of ecological principles as I understood them with regards to my situation; these principles included acknowledging the “facts” of the situation, i.e. my body’s bones and muscles moving in relation to flat floors, gravity, hard surfaces, other bodies, teachers’ propositions etc., while also re-envisioning my own role within that situation, i.e. as an individual with potential to broaden my own awareness of interconnectivity through engagement with dancing. These “roots” of technique and “routes” of personal agency were both useful to me in composing my solo *In Praise of Compost* in which I engaged with various improvisation scores as an experiment in challenging and extending my own awareness to include the living environment surrounding the PARTS building.

Finally, the quality of one's "ecological" engagement with structures must not be reduced to definitions in concrete terms, but must always instead represent a practice of seeking new understandings or ways of knowing.

As I discussed earlier, *how we apply ourselves* to movement and conceptual structures determines how we experience them as both tools for learning and launchpads for going beyond the limitations of these structures and seeking new ways of knowing.

In the introduction to Guattari's *The Three Ecologies*, the translators emphasize the experience-based nature of new knowledge and "ecological practices" as activated by responding to others, or "events":

The objective of the new ecological practices that Guattari outlines is to 'activate isolated and repressed singularities that are turning around on themselves'. It isn't a question of exchanging one model or way of life for another, but of 'respond[ing] to the event as the potential bearer of new constellations of Universes of reference' (1995, p. 18). The paradox is this: although these Universes are not pre-established reference points or models, with their discovery one realizes they were always already there, but only a singular event could activate them (Pindar and Sutton 1990, p. 9).

As this quote points out, ecological practice works by responding to an event as a new reference point full of potential. Within this chapter, the "event", or "other" is represented by the term "structure". In chapters one, two and three the "other" has been represented by body, space and time

respectively, and each chapter included an exploration of how dance improvisation offers potentially ecological ways of confronting that other. Whatever its form, by coming up against this force of “other” we are able to experience more fully who we are and how we can relate in multiple ways to the wider sphere of “others” who share our habitat. In chapter five I look at how improvisation can act as a dynamic research process of engaging with these others through acknowledging place.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Observing Politics of Placement**

Learning and performing dance improvisation can provide opportunities to interact with people in various contexts and facilitate a more direct experience of interconnectedness between humans and their located environment on biological and physical levels, but also on social and cultural levels. Taking a step back from my discussion of structuring in chapter four, this chapter discusses how improvisation practices can enable one to observe how the individual act of dancing relates to the cultural and political contexts of a larger group of witnesses, participants, or collaborators within a particular location. Where chapter two discusses use of imaginative interpretations of space, this chapter analyzes the place-based improvisational activities of the TWIG Project as it traveled from England to China. By responding to a place, improvisation offers a method by which “ecological” performance can be evaluated in terms of its effect upon an immediate, specific, as well as a wider circle of others. This chapter examines how the notion of site-specificity operates within my practice, describing how I have used improvisation as a methodology for



located responsive activities with people in a variety of socio-cultural contexts.

When performing, improvisers can take into account the sociocultural and political situations of their audience and implement various practices to communicate across inevitable rifts. In this case, “performing” improvisation takes on several meanings: performing dance improvisation for a watching audience, using improvisation as a tool for facilitating group learning, and practicing improvisational principles in everyday life. These three kinds of performance are ways that improvisation can be used to understand and challenge the dominant paradigms that undermine personal agency. TWIG Project offers an example of how improvisation can function as a tool for performing, learning, and relating in the political context of place.

### **1. The TWIG Project in China**

The TWIG Project offered a means by which to test scores and notions of improvisation in different settings. As well as operating as a principle by which to travel, improvisation provided a means to implementing Guattari’s tripartite notion of ecology: natural ecology in the form of planting trees and promoting an active relationship with our local environment, mental ecology in the form of cultivating singularity and a-

signification through resisting familiar and culturally-endorsed systems of aesthetic value, and social ecology in the form of organizing ourselves transversally, working outside customary channels of communication.

TWIG began in May 2006. At the invitation of Vitamin Creative Space gallery in Guangzhou, China, co-founder Richard Sarco-Thomas and I set out from England to create “an ecological art project” with the Ruyang community in Guangdong province. This was the first step to testing the usefulness of improvisation performance as a practice in the world. Having determined it would be contradictory to burn extra fossil fuel taking a flight to China for ecological purposes, we decided to travel over land, hitchhiking from England to Poland and then taking trains through Belarus, Russia and Mongolia into China. We also decided that in order to make the journey a contribution rather than an acquisitive venture, we would plant trees and give free public dance performances with trees along our route [Appendix C, pp. 24, 29-30, 37-38, 41; Appendix E]. Naming the project “TWIG: Together We Integrate Growth” reflected our goal to contribute to the “greening of the environment and the greening of human sensibilities” (Sarco and Thomas 2006) along every step of our journey. Dictionary definitions of “twig” include “(1) n. a branch or shoot, especially one from a tree or shrub; (2) *U.K.* to understand or realize something (*informal*).” (*Encarta English Dictionary* 2001). This

vernacular use of “twig” described our intentions to facilitate ecological understanding among people. My public, site-based performances of *Twig Dances* developed as an integral part of TWIG Project.

Richard and I brought our abilities together to research ways of “integrating growth” through our actions. Richard, a skilled social worker, martial artist, visual artist and gardener brought his knowledge of the outdoors and Ki Aikido to the project; I brought my skills in teaching, contemporary dance performance and improvisation. Our questions included:

- How can making art be a practice of ecology?
- How can dance improvisation performances, given outdoors and in public places, draw attention to trees or plants?
- How can we explore perception of our environment with children in order to facilitate a respect for living things?
- How can drawing and dancing serve to hone skills in observation?

Although we did not plan outcomes of TWIG Project, our journey ultimately presented us with opportunities to develop these questions into a creative workshop geared toward children. We gave forms of this workshop to schoolchildren first in Poland, then in China, and later in

Nepal, Swaziland and Liberia. In China we worked for six weeks with 136 children aged seven to fourteen years. By working on painting, drawing, rhythm and dancing we developed our sensibilities toward patterns, qualities and characteristics of plants and animals of the local ecosystem [see Appendix A, ch. 1]. Outcomes included a final performance held in the village theater, attended by 300-plus residents, and an art exhibition of the children's work [Appendix D, "TWIG Party"]. Additionally we recreated one child's drawing of a plant as a mural on the side of the local natural history museum building, and made an art video, *Twig Dances in Nanling* in which children on the program performed dance improvisations with plants in the Nanling Forest Park. Ultimately, our improvisational processes for conducting the project describe a trajectory of learning in which our own strategies evolved as we passed through places along our journey, and finally became involved in the cultural environment of Ruyang village.

Class, culture and location contextualize improvisational and ecological practices. Acknowledging cultural frameworks (or "roots") is a prerequisite to reinventing the pathways (or "routes") used to navigate a cross-cultural situation; by traveling to China with the TWIG Project, we used improvisation to do both. In Guattari's sense, ecology "questions the

whole of subjectivity and capitalistic power formations” (Guattari 2000, pp. 52-53).

It is this praxic opening-out which constitutes the essence of ‘eco’-art. It subsumes all existing ways of domesticating existential Territories and is concerned with intimate modes of being, the body, the environment or large contextual ensembles relating to ethnic groups, the nation, or even the general rights of humanity (Guattari 2000, p. 53).

It is interesting to note here that Guattari’s use of “eco” in “‘eco’-art” is used in “its original Greek sense of *oikos*” (Guattari 2000, p. 91) evoking a practice located within one’s “habitat” or place of dwelling. Toward such a praxis, TWIG’s improvisation activities involved unpicking some of the power formations in our own patterns of thinking.

The notions an individual has about “ecology” depend largely on education and socialization; the absence of a shared, universal understanding of the human-nature relationship is well documented (Castree and Braun 2001, Chappell 1997, Evernden 1992, Franklin 2002, McNaghten and Urry 1998, Smith 2001, Tuan 1977). Increasingly it has become commonplace to discuss ecology in all kinds of previously unconsidered contexts, such as eco-choreography (East 2001), eco-psychology (Fisher 2002), eco-art (Carruthers 2006), and even “eco-capitalism” or “natural capitalism” (Hawken and Lovins 1999). The prevalence of such terms indicates how “ecology” can be interpreted differently, no longer only adhering to the

definitions indicated by the traditional scientific study. The resultant contentions between the multiple assertions of “ecology” in traditions of deep ecology, conservationism, eco-feminism and social ecology are also well documented (Merchant 1994; Milton 1996; Plumwood 1993, 2002; Szerszynski 1996; Warren 1996; Worster 1977).

Interacting with diverse groups of people brought new perspectives to my own ideas about ecology and performance, particularly concerning the impact of economic systems on prevalent ideas of ecology. For example, many of the children we worked with were from working class families with parents employed in the clothing and chemical factories of south China. Understandably due to the hard labor endured, aspirations toward wealth preoccupied most people, who hoped to own a large-screen television above and beyond most other interests. Spending time with the children in Ruyang also affirmed how certain qualities of performance are widely understood. Though we did not speak Chinese, our ability to be playful by making funny faces, pulling handstands, cartwheeling and play-tackling the children, proved to be invaluable in forging understanding and a sense of familiarity and commonality [Appendix D, “Happy Days”]. This commonality kept TWIG workshops from being school-like; it also generated a sense of working together toward something. Ultimately this sense of mutual interest helped shape the direction of TWIG. By sensing

and assessing the effect of our workshop sessions we were able to tailor them to better suit the needs of each group. Meanwhile we honed our abilities to plan, and to respond more quickly to the indicators that a group was learning and benefiting from a session.

By using an evolving series of improvisation methods including those outlined in chapters one through four, I also performed *Twig Dances* for various groups of people in locations throughout the world. I learned to stick to a score while observing the effects of my own choices within a performance. Then I used that information to revise my approach to the next performance. In this way I observed people's reactions to my performances and to the work of TWIG. For Richard and I, TWIG involved ecological participation because it required an improvisational mindset and the ability to adapt our modes of contribution to different circumstances.

TWIG Project first characterized itself as an improvisation by its ability to adapt to our unique challenge of operating with a low carbon footprint.

Later these practices contributed to a process of a-signification: a reevaluation of our knowledge and identities in relation to what we were learning and cultivating a “pre-personal” (Guattari 2000, p. 68) perception of circumstances. Guattari and Husserl admit that finding the pre-personal

is difficult, but striving for it is nonetheless an important value to both (Guattari 2000, p. 54; Moran 2000, p. 408). For Guattari, cultivating singularization involves not relying on codes of commercial significance or being afraid to analyse subjectivity (Guattari 2000, p. 68). It involves acknowledging the factors which make individual creativity and analysis possible.

Key economic and environmental factors enabled TWIG to implement an improvisation-based project strategy. Our work in Ruyang village was supported by the resident tourism company, Nanling EcoTourism Ltd., who provided our lodging, food, interpreter, studio space, publicity and studio supplies in return for the positive public image TWIG's activities gave to the company. We had a great deal of free rein and flexibility in creating a project that would benefit the community. The art gallery Vitamin Creative Space in the regional capital Guangzhou also supported TWIG's work in Nanling by arranging the residency, and included TWIG Project in its reportage of community outreach activities.

By seeing more closely how life situations and economic imperatives shape the landscape and people of China and other countries TWIG passed through, I became aware of the effect my own cultural background has had on my tendency to seek "radical ecological action" through performative



means. As we traveled, I began to see *Twig Dances* and improvisation performances as practices of “social ecology”, in the sense that they reach out to groups of people through deliberate methods of practice. This is true in terms of the circles of people improvisation reaches through both performance and ways of leading workshops. Both aspects of performing—dancing for an audience and leading workshops—provided new insight into the sociopolitical implications of sharing dance improvisation as ecological practice.

My interest in ecology and contemporary dance was made possible in part as a result of my upbringing in the United States, where the national culture and my middle-class family valued individualism and academic achievement, and I pursued dance and liberal arts studies at a women’s university. Sociologists have documented that most American dance audiences and “modern dance” audiences in particular, are highly educated and usually middle or upper-middle class, and that the growth of early modern dance in status as a “high art” form was heavily influenced by programs at prestigious women’s colleges (Sussmann 1998, p. 58). While such studies focus on American theatre-going dance audiences attending work by acclaimed modern dance companies, the suggested demographics confirm my own experience of audiences for theater-based contemporary dance performances in both the US, the UK and Europe. In the UK,

attempts to broaden this traditional audience demographic have inspired a host of site-specific theater and performance activity in the UK (Wilkie 2002, p. 143).

Paradoxically, my means of questioning how I might contribute to the health of the biosphere through dancing is made possible by my own privileged position, which I criticize. Through these fortunate circumstances, my interest in so-called “ecological practice” was voluntary, and a result of the space, time and freedom a substantial scholarship afforded me. For most working people around the world who live a basic existence of daily labor for survival, aspirations toward “ecological practice” are seen as irrelevant unless they can offer tangible benefits. If practices of ecology seek to be relevant to anyone, then facilitating or performing “dance improvisation as a practice of ecology” will consider issues of accessibility for a range of audiences and settings. Part of TWIG’s interests included bringing dance improvisation to locations where such practices were unfamiliar. TWIG’s journey to China offered an array of challenging circumstances by which to test the potential of dance improvisation performance as a practice of ecological principles accessible to diverse peoples and cultures.

## **2. Audiences and Places**

Places are defined as situated spaces acknowledged by narratives, and performed by people and bodies; they are “organized world[s] of meaning” (Tuan 1977, p. 179). As Lefebvre and de Certeau have described, places form the narrative-infused locations of identity for those who dwell there and spaces constitute the ways participants move in and about these places. The site-specific nature of TWIG’s activities included approaching places with an openness to narratives encountered as well as bringing our own “narrative” in the form of our project’s improvisational aspirations with an eye to see what knowledges this activity engendered. Our performances became place-specific in the ways we engaged with the environments, plants and the people we met.

When the TWIG Project traveled through Poland and gave its first series of workshops and performances for schoolchildren, we planted trees in schoolyards surrounded by countryside bursting with forests. These lessons gave us our first taste of rural versus urban attitudes toward the environment. To the farming children we worked with, our “ecological” message seemed nearly out of place. Poland was, next to Russia, the most forested country we traveled through, and the Polish family we stayed with tended an impeccable garden which supplied most of their daily food [Appendix C, pp. 21-22]. In many ways these rural people were already

living close to the land, farming in a sustainable, low impact way. In the larger Polish town of Ilawa, however, schoolchildren knew more about the concepts of ecology and global warming, yet their practical familiarity with the countryside was less.

We entered both kinds of these communities talking about global warming, personal responsibility, individual action, and creative response. We talked with the children about planting and caring for trees, and about appreciating forests and living things. Improvising our way into these new performance-like “guest teacher” roles, we discovered that our practice of ecology was only as relevant as our audience. In all the school groups we visited, we used games, songs and silly dances to forge a common ground.

Whether these activities constituted radical ecological action can also be seen as a matter of located perspective. TWIG’s activities performed certain notions of “ecology” in new locations, far from the universities and studios in which they were spawned. For many of the schoolchildren we worked with, the idea of planting trees and of dancing with trees was unusual and unprecedented. Even by subverting simple conventions of dancing with music, a dance floor and choreography, *Twig Dances* suggested new ways of thinking toward a kind of mental ecology through “a-signifying points of rupture” which Guattari advocates (2000, p. 56).

For Richard and I, the radical aspect of what we were doing derived from the face-to-face level of our interactions with people, and how we were approaching the project: with a handful of core questions and a general intention of positive contribution. In essence, our experimental process *was* improvisation. This deviated from a traditional model of having a firm plan to follow before embarking on such an involved journey. It also challenged the idea that positive environmental action can only be implemented from a top-down, governmentally-issued model. Instead the scale of our project suggested that individuals can be inspired in simple ways to make positive, concrete contributions to their immediate and larger surroundings—by planting trees for example, or simply by noticing trees. In our conversations and interactions we encouraged the children in these activities, challenging them toward self-organized acts of recognition and contribution. Individual contribution is one aspect of practice that “eco-subjects” (Conley 1997, p. 98), or ecologically interested people, must engage in to resituate themselves in relation to the hierarchical powers that be. Guattari refers to this as “deterritorializing” oneself, and is a characteristic of transversal activity (Genosko 2000, p. 151). By practicing *processes* of observation and action outside institutional systems, TWIG’s improvisational activities with the children made possible the “a-signifying rupture” Guattari posits as “at the heart of all ecological praxes” and can be

“catalysts of existential change” (Guattari 2000, pp. 44-45). As socially-engaged art projects like Joseph Beuys’ *7000 Oaks* involved local participants in the planning and planting of trees and commemorative plaques in urban spaces, TWIG’s activities brought children and their artwork together to associate the activities of planting with individual initiative [Appendix C, pp. 23-25, 55-56, 82, 84], sparking potential for future subjective acts.

Where site-specific art and new genre public art are defined by a history of public intervention (Kwon 1995; Lacy 1995), improvisation offers a term for describing a way of ethically working with and for the public of a particular area where the process of responding to the location comprises a significant aspect of the art project. As Miwon Kwon notes, a number of the problematic power relations typically arising in “community art” include the conflation of the notion of “community”, the understanding of community as “other” to the art world and the artist, the imposition of the artist’s aesthetic agenda upon a selected and unassuming group, the use of the artistic project to divert attention from fundamental socioeconomic causes of disenfranchised groups, and the potential for the artist to profit inappropriately from work generated with participants (Kwon 1995, pp. 153-154). By this token, not all site-specific art can be called ecological; ecological art necessarily considers its impact upon mental, natural and

social planes, and while potentially mobile in nature, does not overlook its engagement with place.

Inappropriate profiting from community art projects featured in a presentation given by Zhang Wei of Vitamin Creative Space gallery in Guangzhou, China, at the 2005 Desire Lines Conference on Art and Ecology at Dartington in Devon. In response to the presentation, Richard and I conceived of the TWIG Project as an improvisational approach to the failed “community art” projects previously set up in Ruyang village by the big city gallery. Vitamin Creative Space’s exchange projects sought to include and benefit “community members” of Ruyang, yet often ended up with an artist using his or her time in the village to produce art, only to later profit from its sale in urban galleries.

In the frame of the Art & Ecology conference, Zhang Wei’s presentation resonated as a challenge to investigate a way of working with communities which drew on the social, natural and mental descriptions of ecology drawn by Guattari (2000). Transversality is key to Guattari’s social ecology; it is a practice which reconsiders social orders as composed of a-signifying singularities or *agents* of flows. Originally used by Guattari to describe the self-organised channels of creative activity by the patients of La Borde mental institution where Guattari served as head psychiatrist for many

years, transversality offers one way of critically unsiting “a community” as a conflation. Kwon also suggests destabilizing the “community” in community-based arts as a referential and singular entity, and challenges those involved in “community art” to problematize group identities (Kwon 1995, pp. 154-155). Transversality offers a view to the actions of a group and its constituents as moving between entities, places and roles rather than seeking coherent identification with one kind of referent. While the TWIG Project linked aims of Vitamin Creative Space, the children and families of Ruyang community, and Nanling Eco-Tourism Company with our own, we also improvised a working process that unhinged singular definitions within these groups and identified an interest in keen observation as a common trait among us.

At the same time, we invited the children to be active collaborators in our processes by helping to make the rules of the project and inviting their input on activities; we worked toward what Kwon calls a re-thinking of “community-based art” as “collective artistic praxis” (2002, p. 7). TWIG encouraged observation of natural phenomena as starting point for making artwork, and encouraged the children to see themselves as sensitively engaged and honest interpreters of the world around them by drawing still life pictures, using movement to describe a plant, or using painting to emphasize the sculptural qualities of a stone. In addition to curating a



selection of the children’s artwork to display at the “TWIG Party” [see Appendix A, ch. 4], we asked the children what they would like to do as part of the final performance, and worked with them to create an evening of showing their workshop activities including improvisation scores [see Appendix A, ch. 5] and their own original compositions [see Appendix A, ch. 6].

Therefore, the notion of site-specificity in which the situation of the work is inherent to its definition (Kaye 2000, p. 1) operates only so far in relation to the work of TWIG in Ruyang. Seeing “place” as a multi-referential scheme of interpretation, our activities can be said to have performed a “*working over*” of the definition of place (Kaye 2000, p. 3), though not toward a stable definition. By the responses of those who witnessed and participated in our performances, our activities took on various meanings. The languages used to create our work in Ruyang were multiple—English, Mandarin, Cantonese, body language, vocal games, drawing, dancing, painting, landscaping, writing—and the strategies for their dissemination reached beyond the “place” of the village, through video, journal articles, photos, this document, etc. In de Certeau’s theorization of spatial practices performed in cities, unpredictable movements of individual bodies constitute creative actions within designated urban “places” (de Certeau 1984, p. 117). Within TWIG’s rural activities we took liberties to engage

with the cultural and natural elements of our environment, generating our own relationships to the village area through original interactions that did not seek to reproduce narratives associated with that place, but investigated new kinds of knowledges in the creative acts born from the confluence of traditions and ideas.

In many ways the TWIG Project has focused on how to use improvisational strategies to engage sensitively with the otherness in a culture or species, further complicating the situation of the work as resting clearly within a culturally-defined place. Conscious of both the “other history of intercultural performance” (Fusco 1994) as an extension of colonialist exhibition, as well as the contemporary climate of media images contextualizing our origins as white Anglo and American travelers, our images or videos of the children were gathered within the context of our activities with them. Similarly, for the improvisational studies of plants, the footage marks primarily the children’s responses to a plant, and the composition of the video (beginning with explanatory text and images) situates the children’s improvisations within the larger frame of the TWIG Project. These frames operate as transportable views upon the project, a mobile lens through which to examine TWIG’s site-based work from the screen of a gallery or performance venue in Guangzhou, Beijing or Dartington.

Work with TWIG highlighted how class and culture influence ecological viewpoints, and we questioned how to initiate a more basic exchange with individuals from different cultures about implicit notions of ecology.

TWIG Project offers an example of how, through performing, giving workshops and collaborating, transversal improvisation practices can be cultivated, disseminated and cross-pollinated in a way that constitutes ecological practice. These processes reflect Guattari's "ecosophy" which "links environmental, [mental and social ecology]", integrating modifications in both social and material environments to bring about change in mentalities (Guattari 2000, p. 27).

Through the journey to China, I used improvisation as a process to bring about change by addressing and navigating a world beyond my comfort zone—beyond the contemporary dance scene of Europe and the UK. Upon leaving PARTS it was clear to me that I was interested in working with different audiences than the educated dance milieu who attended performances in Brussels. In the same way that many site-specific theater practices in Britain mark their move away from the performance halls of London as political (Wilkie 2002, p. 143), or contemporary artists "embrace post-studio practices" (Gablik 2008, p. 16), I was keen to bring the improvised movements of my highly trained body to the unexpected

audiences populating different sites and “non-places” (Augé 1995) and to sensibly comprehend the qualities of these quotidian, often aesthetically unremarkable, locations through my movement. As Marc Augé writes, the movements of transport or leisure create “a double movement: the traveller’s movement, of course, but also a parallel movement of the landscapes which he catches only in partial glimpses” (Augé 1995, p. 86). *Twig Dances* were an attempt to slow down this swift and superficial movement of the gaze over the landscape through travel. For commuters passing by the urban sites of *Twig Dances*, the performances sought to snag their gaze upon a tree and suggest its potential bodily significance, thereby interrupting and challenging the “fictional relationship between gaze and landscape” (Augé 1995, p. 86) which becomes sedimented through speed and travel.

In the tradition of Odin Teatret’s *Barters* or Alan Kaprow’s *Happenings*, I was curious to improvise in places which rarely receive performance, and to interact with people in “everyday” situations. My intention was to initiate conversations and exchanges in unconventional ways; TWIG project’s journey also provided the narrative around these performances, and connected to a broader narrative about global warming. Part of my intention in dancing *Twig Dances* was to call attention to the overlooked

plants and trees in urban sites; a second goal was to spark interest in TWIG Project.

Helen Freshwater documents historical frustrations with audiences that have driven the production of new kinds of performance work, as in the case of W. B. Yeats' creation of "A People's Theater", or in Brecht's range of tactics to provoke his sleepy bourgeois audiences into reaction (Freshwater 2009, pp. 44-47). A desire to procure "an appropriately engaged and politicized response" (Freshwater 2009, p. 48), motivated me to perform outdoors and in public areas. I performed *Twig Dances* for diverse audiences as a way of provoking responses from people in locations not socialized to expect unconventional acts of performance. Afterwards, Richard and I would dialogue with onlookers who showed an interest, hearing what they thought of the performance and also talking about our overland journey and its goals. Conversations like this formed an important part of the work as an improvised interactive process.

Sometimes, I would perform a *Twig Dance* for a ready audience of schoolchildren as part of a tree-planting activity, and then invite the students to help with the planting of the tree. The context of our visit to the school and an introduction from teachers framed our activities, and procured a larger and more collectively watchful audience of children. By

introducing my dance as a way of “reading” the tree in these settings I also invited a kind of readership from the audience; I invited the children to look for similar qualities in my movements and in the tree. Performing *Twig Dances* along our route also served as a kind of mapping practice for the event. Each improvisational “reading” of one located tree or plant marked these points in memory for ourselves and our audiences.

Adapting to changing places and audiences throughout the TWIG Project journey required us to improvise in place-specific ways that were sensitive to existing narratives while creatively inviting new modes of audience interaction and contribution.

### **3. Re-Territorializing as Eco-Subjects**

Diverse involvement with places and audiences raises the question of how far re-territorialization outside discourses of place and culture is possible. Personal agency and “creative autonomy” are characteristics necessary to individuals who wish to bring about an ecological revolution, according to Guattari (2000, p. 69). “Eco-subjects” is a term used to describe willing participants in such a revolution (Conley 1997, p. 98). Guattari’s advocates ecology as a *practice* that includes “the articulation of: a nascent subjectivity; a constantly mutating socius; [and] an environment in the

process of being reinvented” (2000, p. 68) as a path toward overcoming the limitations of our current crisis-laden hierarchical world system.

In a close reading of *The Three Ecologies*, Verena Conley explains how Guattari urges people to “think less [...] in relation to subjects and objects than to a territory that is more mental than physical in its articulation. Eco-subjects can deterritorialize and reterritorialize themselves continuously” (Conley 1997, p. 98). Reterritorialization aligns with the TWIG Project’s aim to bring dance improvisation performance into unusual situations beyond traditional circles of educated dancers, dance enthusiasts, critics, presenters, and experts; and to bring practices of ecology into situations beyond circles of educated ecologists, ecology enthusiasts, philosophers, publishers and experts.

As a practice, ecology, according to Guattari, requires a high “degree of creative autonomy” in order to act as “catalyst for a gradual reforging and renewal of humanity’s confidence in itself starting at the most miniscule level” (Guattari 2000, p. 69). Such “creative autonomy” also translates into the personal agency which I discuss as central to a dancer’s ability to sense and alter relationships between his body, space, time and things. Using one’s personal agency to move in relation to things as simple as people and trees on a city street is one way of implementing this agenda of creative

autonomy on the most basic level of the body. Conley wisely asks *how* one might effect the changes called upon by Guattari:

The implicit question asks how we might bring about existential mutations that would remedy the situation, how we can be enabled to disengage ourselves from dominant cultural values, and how we can construct another culture. How do we, in Guattari's words, deterritorialize and reterritorialize ourselves? (Conley 1997, p. 95).

*Twig Dances* performed as part of the TWIG Project offer several responses to Conley's question. As one of our ecological principles in action, TWIG sought to re-territorialize performance practices. Rather than gearing dance performances to paying audiences in theaters, TWIG gave free and unannounced dance performances on the streets of towns and villages we traveled through. *Twig Dances* on street corners, train station platforms, and sidewalks acted as research into the usefulness of improvisation performance as a way of generating interest in, or conversations about trees. I used my senses, moderated through a phenomenological intentionality in improvisation, to gauge the affects my practice had on passersby, and their effect on me.

Through *the act of* consciousness through sensing, the researching improviser examines a kind of pre-cognitive knowledge as source of understanding situations or others as they appear. Husserl describes the act of consciousness as key to the phenomenological research process: "Acts



are intentional experiences, not mental activities” (Husserl 1970b, p. 567).

If one defines improvisation practice as an intentional act of engagement with another, then its usefulness toward phenomenological description is significant.

We further recorded the performances by video and photography to see the event from a different perspective, re-territorializing ourselves as researchers as well as performers, documenters and, to use Boal’s term, “spect-actors”, bringing observation and intervention together in performance.

*A steady stream of people from all walks of life pass by as I dance with this maple tree near Red Square in Moscow.*

*Red square, dancing aware.*

*Pigeons hunt, policemen stare.*

*Maple tree moment*

*Slows down the flow*

*of business people busying by.*



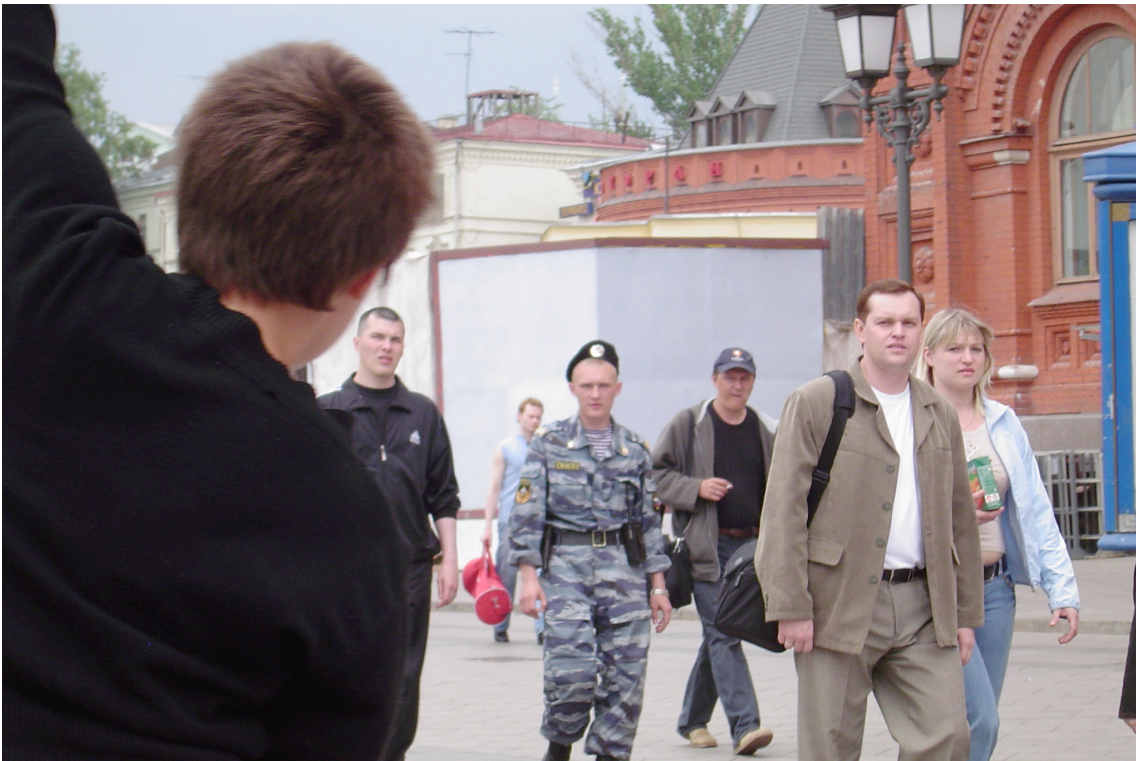
**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**

*Richard is snapping photos as I dance. I am examining how this tree grows: slightly wrinkled skin, strong branches, sturdy limbs arcing over the square, fenced-in planter it has been placed in. Regardless of the throngs of people, it grows out, upwards toward the sun and spreads its greenery wide. These leaves are pointed, flat-surfaced, and grow in strong veined flaps of green; I can feel my response in pointing fingertips as my arms reach out and up, swaying slightly in the tickle of a breeze.*

Looking at the pictures from the dance I performed near Red Square in Moscow, I can more closely scrutinize the faces of the people who were my audience. The place I chose to dance was not a tourist zone, it was

outside Red Square and near a metro entrance, on a wide sidewalk that was walked by many different kinds of people. There was almost no commercial activity along that stretch which is one reason I chose it—people passing there had little distraction except a dozen or so young trees, as they passed from A to B. The faces show surprise, interest, disbelief, confusion and other expressions that lie somewhere between these.

My experience as a white American woman dancing in the Red Square was mixed; would I be called out as attracting attention in an unauthorized activity? Would I be ignored as a lunatic? Would I be seen as foreign or would my Ukrainian facial features advertise me as Russian? I brought my own agenda to the act, which spectators likely saw as difficult to categorize: I did not invite a dance audience to witness my performance, and I did not post a sign advertising my activity. This ambiguity created the space for a different kind of event to take place: unusual and outside familiar definitions.

*A trio of men in army uniforms pass, gazes intent on me as I dance. My movements are not pretty, my face is focused on embodying the tree's character which is intent on growing, not on being flashy. Are the men alarmed? Bemused? I do not sense aggression but am aware of the situation: me, a foreigner, a young woman, engaged in a strange act in the*

*public center of Moscow. I include them in my gaze but do not alter the rhythm of my movement.*

Even with the rising influence of site-specific performance on the field of dance and the larger world, for a substantial majority of the public, seeing dance on the street in a context which is not related to a celebration, entertainment or money-seeking venture (i.e. busking or street performing) is still unusual. When performing a *Twig Dance* during the TWIG Project, I reterritorialized myself in relation to the spectators by performing to unpaying, unsuspecting audience members. I reterritorialized my body in relation to the tree by focusing my performance on it (rather than seeing a tree as a decorative object of scenery to be passed by or ignored, I studied it by dancing its suggested score). Finally, I reterritorialized improvisation performance as an event which can happen on a city street as easily as a country road, a suburban park, or a city theater, and which can invite the attention of people from any class or cultural background, creating the conditions for a non-hierarchical audience-performer relationship.

To create these conditions, my dance movements, my presence, and the activities of Richard documenting the event as photographer, set *Twig Dances* apart from the surrounding activities of the site. Street performances of *Twig Dances* offered a kind of rupture from the

normalized walking patterns of pedestrians, setting up a framing of myself and the tree within the surrounding familiar activity in an effort to create the opportunity for an audience's aesthetic engagement with the event.

By "aesthetic engagement" I mean sensorial engagement, where the performance event makes a distinction between the activities of daily life and creates a space for sensible discourse. Aesthetic engagement with a *Twig Dance* involves an engagement with the performance as well as the tree; my explicit focus upon the tree brings audience's attention to the tree as well as me.

Discourses in the field of aesthetics attempt to distinguish between aesthetic appreciation of art and aesthetic appreciation of nature. For example, Ronald Hepburn (1966, 1984, 2001) contends that appreciation of nature is wider than aesthetic appreciation of art and is an "improvisatory" process (Hepburn 2001, p. 137), which is led through a sense of bodily involvement with nature grounded in experience of perception, rather than contemplated from a distance. Distance, however, features importantly in discussions of art, theater and dance criticism for which a signified frame for the art object is a necessary condition for its contemplation (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998, p. 47, Chaim 1984, Friedman 1976). Malcolm Budd also observes that the appreciation of a natural object's

formal properties are discernible both by removing the object “actually or contemplatively, from its surroundings”, and also by contemplatively replacing the object back into its formative environment in a way that recalls the combination of factors which contributed to its formation (Budd 2002, pp. 130-132). Budd’s project is to promote the aesthetic appreciation of “nature *as* nature” (Budd 1996, p. 207) wherein understanding the origin of the object as natural fundamentally impacts contemplation. By placing myself in same location as the tree which I interpret in a *Twig Dance* I create the opportunity for both contemplative removal and re-placement of the tree, highlighting its singularity and locatedness within its particular setting. *Twig Dances* with trees in built environments call attention also to the surroundings of the site; the dance becomes located in its performance and through its documentation. Questions of framing reveal three layers by which a *Twig Dance* can be appreciated.

On one level the dance can be appreciated as a site-based performance and contemplated in terms of its compositional, rhythmic and formal qualities both singularly and as a framing of the tree. This level draws on more traditional interpretations of dance and performance and, while offering a starting point for engaging with *Twig Dances*, does not fully describe the intention of the activity to practice perceiving a tree on different terms.

Thus the second level of appreciation for the dance is as an organized response to the natural form of a tree, or a process of engaged perception through improvisation. John Dewey said that art's moral function is "to remove prejudice, do away with the scales that keep the eye from seeing, tear away the veils due to wont and custom, [and] perfect the power to perceive" (Dewey 1958 in Saito 1998, p. 103). Audiences witnessing my perception of the tree can extend or defamiliarize their own perceptions. Yuriko Saito writes that powers of perception become improved through a willingness to recognize diversity, and to extend oneself to imagine the different experience of another's perspective. For Saito, as well as for Holmes Rolston and Allen Carlson, this means appreciating a living thing on its own terms, and not narrowing our attention to the parts of nature which are aesthetically pleasing to us. This can include a consideration of its sensuous properties as part of an intricate living ecosystem (Saito 1998, p. 104), or appreciation of the knowledge offered by scientific study in the case of Rolston and Carlson.

This consideration suggests a third level of appreciation for *Twig Dances* as performed within the wider context and ecosophical values of the TWIG Project. This appreciation is available to audience members who learn of the project's intentions through conversation with me or Richard, website information, or word of mouth. According to Arnold Berleant the



valuation of art determines the richness of its aesthetic impact (1970, p. 178), and an appreciation of art in continuity with life must broaden to include “a full perceptual vision of aesthetic, moral and political conditions” (1992, p. 6) as aspects of a “unity of experience” that is “aesthetic field” (1970, p.53). Suzi Gablik also urges that the measure of art’s success should be its capacity to contribute “to the welfare of communities, the welfare of societies, and to our relationship with nature” (2008, p. 20). For Gablik, “empathic” or “ecological” art operates with consideration for ethical visions. From this point of view, others who stood to be affected by TWIG’s performative products are participants or audiences acquainted with the larger goals of the project and interested in its underpinning values. Democratizing the processes by which we connected to audiences and participants was one strategy of extending the reach of our activities.

Just as Guattari encourages his eco-subjects to evade hierarchical modes of thinking and subjectification, *Twig Dances* represent my attempt to deconstruct hierarchies in audience-performer relationships by talking with audiences and considering my performing presence. To encourage an original means of meeting the public in *Twig Dances*, I used a combination of several techniques from Deborah Hay, Kirstie Simson and Chrysa Parkinson. Without appropriating these styles directly, I used aspects of

them in order to cultivate a relationship with my audience that strived to be dialogic, porous, spontaneous and interactive, whatever the location of my dance.

Performances of *Twig Dances* and the activities of the TWIG Project blurred the boundaries between creators and receivers of the performances, resulting in transversal and democratized processes of production and reception which have been called “a crucial aspect of new developments in performance and theory” (Bennett 1997, p. 10). Guerilla-style *Twig Dances* dwell in Richard Schechner’s definition of a theatrical event which can take place in an everyday context and is marked by an “agreement (conscious or unexpressed) between performers and spectators” (Schechner and Schuman 1976, pp. 217-218). *Twig Dances* performed in different cultural situations during the journey of the TWIG Project were colored by curiosity generated for local audiences by the act of an “outsider” offering an unfamiliar and performative act.

*Dozens of ruffled Europeans stumble out of the Trans-Mongolian Express boxcars to stretch, breathing in Mongolian air, and scuffing in the sand blown onto the railway platform. A group of workmen in hardhats look on from a bench beneath a stand of birch trees, their gaze steady. This is where a contact improvisation dance between Richard and myself becomes*

*a local performance. Onlookers—tourists, workmen—take in the lifts, turns and twists of the duet, pointing cameras as well as eyes toward the action.*

Susan Bennett (1997) and Patrice Pavis (1990) note issues raised for spectators of intercultural performance produced in theatre venues include ownership and use of the “otherness” portrayed, and can be analyzed with respect to the “target audience” which often includes the economically advantaged (Bennett 1997, p. 171). However the performative exchanges present in *Twig Dances* differ from these familiar models of theatre production. They involve a more complex network of multicultural audiences including the spectators of *Twig Dances*, myself as spectator of my audience within my performances, Richard as observer-photographer who helps to frame the event as a performance, and the viewers of videos or photographs recording the events.

Highlighting normatives of performances in western theaters, Susan Bennett asks: “is the gaze of the audience is always already white, irrespective of the identity of the spectator?” (Bennett 1997, p. viii). Yet for *Twig Dances* performed en route to China, the diverse audiences and varied performance locations problematized the notion of a single spectatorial situation, or unified set of audience expectations. As Bennett

points out, the expectations of a non-paying, accidental audience will be different from those who pay tickets for a show and expect to enter into a more predictably passive role (1997, p. 204), and depending on the circumstances this can ensure that a different sense of agency is maintained in the audience.

The *Twig Dance* performed in the city park in Beijing illustrates this audience autonomy, where a reluctant group of carers first ignored, then glanced at, eventually watched and finally applauded the performance intended for them [Appendix C, pp. 37-39]. In contrast, the *Twig Dance* of a potted bonsai given on a busy pedestrian market street in downtown Guangzhou immediately attracted masses of attention, as hundreds of people watching at once generated a wave of responsiveness in the crowd [Appendix C, p. 41].

For a resident of Guangdong happening upon a crowd watching a young western woman in jeans, hiking trainers and a yellow button-up shirt doing strange movements while focusing on a potted plant at the exterior of an office building for several minutes before bowing to the plant, and then to the audience, several responses might arise. Presumably one might notice the correlation between the movements performed and the particular character of the plant. It may also open up certain questions. Why is she

doing this? Why the plant? Why here? As noted in the three layers of aesthetic appreciation outlined above, outside an informed context this performance holds limited promise for articulating explicit ecological correlations. Yet certain knowledges of modes of perception generated and communicated are arguably discernible through the performance itself.

In *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: on the Phenomenology of Theater*

Bert States proposes that art and theatre is not simply referential to, or mimetic of an exterior, “essential” world, but its power as an experience for viewer and actor is in the significance of the singular exchange of performance: “[t]he [artwork or] painting is a place of disclosure, not a place of reference” (States 1985, p. 4). Likewise for improvisation, acts of performance become a place of disclosure and experience; knowledges produced in performing improvisation are relevant and meaningful within the channels of exchange created there. That States refers to performance or art as a *place* further invites a new critique of the art event as a socially coded location.

For Janet Wolff (1983), “aesthetics” is contingent upon historical, social and cultural factors, and aesthetic judgment is a necessarily social activity which, by extension, varies according to cultural context. Thus it could also be argued that even the “ecological” significance of *Twig Dances*

appreciable through the third layer of aesthetic engagement discussed above, are equally contingent upon social practices. Sociologist Rudi Laermans makes a similar claim in his writing about European contemporary dancers as a social group. He argues that the events of contemporary dance are perpetuated by a continuity of performative exchange amongst its members, whereby dancers work for the currency of recognition among their colleagues (Laermans 2004). Similar could be said of any self-referential social group, including environmental artists.

In line with these points, the response to *Twig Dances* differed according to their location, socialization of space, and cultural surroundings. The dance given at a busy marketplace in Guangzhou attracted attention from two hundred or more shoppers, most of whom were Cantonese. In contrast, a *Twig Dance* performed at a rather traditional flower market in Hanover [Appendix C, p. 14], Germany elicited little attention from the numerous elderly patrons and smattering of stall-keepers, as though the activity was not recognized or acknowledged as having a performative intention within that market situation. A performance in a city park in Devon drew little attention in comparison to the one given in Beijing, though both environments were marked by the sense of leisure time that characterized that space. Passersby in Devon looked on curiously but those walking dogs or small children continued on, while the park visitors in Beijing were

involved in a sessile activity and had better reason to engage with the dance taking place only meters away. Furthermore, the rainy weather during the Devon city park *Twig Dance* likely contributed to the lack of involved interest, while the sunny conditions in Beijing meant onlookers had more time to enjoy a performance.

A dance of a beech tree given on a suburban street in Hanover, Germany received glances from several passersby and close attention and conversation from one. A dance of a rubber tree given on a suburban street in Liberia received a great deal of vociferous attention and comments from a number of pedestrians, largely due to my whiteness. It should be noted that the Hanover street was in a cooler climate, and typified by pedestrians walking quickly to get from A to B, whereas the Liberian street audience included street vendors and children as well as unhurried pedestrians. Weather, social uses of space and the degree of otherness I represented in each culture seemed to affect the likelihood of overt attention from audiences. The number of observers in each situation affected the quality of the performance, too, injecting me with more energy as I performed in highly public locations.

#### 4. Watching Watching

Much performance since the 1960s has focused on rethinking performer-spectator relations through site-specific work, process based performance and moving out of theaters. Hay's work from the 1970s to the present offers examples of this aim, as does the work of Simson, Parkinson, and myself. Aspects of these artists' work proved useful to me as I developed a performance practice able to interact with a diverse international public.



**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**

*I can feel the turgidity of these leaves, strong centers and slightly floppier bat-wing style webbing between them; my skin stretches across my*



*shoulders in response, and I can see a young businesswoman looking at me. I watch her as the tree might, indiscriminate but aware, acknowledging her acknowledging me, including rather than controlling or suggesting anything with my gaze. She continues to stare, a dubious look upon her face...flick! I flip my torso toward and away from the tree in a leaf-flapping maneuver.*

Deborah Hay calls her work “performance practice”, in that she never rehearses dances but rather practices the skill of performing. By widening her attention to include seeing the effects her own actions have, Hay watches herself as she dances.

As part of her training, Hay projects the existence of an observer who is watching her exploration of bodily cellular consciousness. Hay further projects a second observer who watches the first. Hay’s moving body is thus watching itself moving and watching itself watching itself (Daly in Hay 2000, p. xviii).

In this way Hay likens her own self to another, practicing being seen either by her self-projected self, or by another viewer in the same way. Ann Daly notes that this method of Hay’s enables her to practice a unique, critically reflective awareness of her own activities while in motion. She continues,

Many theories of consciousness do not permit body [sic] to be consciously aware of its own activities while in motion. Many forms of prayer and meditation, even Buddhist meditation, encourage practitioners to sit and be still. In defiance of this opposition between action and reflection, Hay asserts the

possibility of a consciously aware and critically reflective corporeality (Daly in Hay 2000, p. xviii).

Daly is pointing out the potential in Hay's work for critical reflection; this point is wholly relevant to a practice of ecological engagement where an individual not only is capable of coordinating attention and awareness of her own actions but is committed to reading the effects those actions might have on a greater circle of organisms. There are correlations here with imagery processes used in psychotherapy (Thomas 2009, p. 123) or with the blurred boundaries between creators and receivers of contemporary art and performance (Bennett 1997, p. 10). Recognizing herself as both producer and watcher of the improvisation event, Hay practices certain critical capacities. This practice is beneficial to its practitioners in the first instance; in a second instance, it reads to the audience as a performance. Likewise, such projected selves could conceivably help one to practice performance that feeds from and extends to a wider circle of participants, thus completing the feedback loop I mentioned in the introduction: "recognizing the flow of information from the world to the body as well as from the body to the world." This recognition was essential to performing *Twig Dances*, which are about interacting in a recognizable way with both a tree and a watching public in a way that destabilizes the expectation of either a premeditated spectacle or the controlled event of "the total artwork" expected in contemporary performative media events (Oddey and

White 2009, p. 8). In light of Oddey and White's claims that "art reinforces stereotypes of behavior and how we respond to our culture when we spectate it" and that "the new mode of spectating is not the art but the event itself" (Oddey and White 2009, p. 10), a *Twig Dance* can be seen as an expansive event with multiple unfolding effects. Viewers of the dance, readers of the narrative of the TWIG Project Journey to China (via website or book in Appendix C) and participants in *Twig Dances* all partake in reconstructing the performance in some way.

In the performance event, I intend that my presence bring about a level of disturbance in the landscape to permit or inspire an unfamiliar engagement, where "the event" included the human, floral and atmospheric elements of the environment. Though in *Twig Dances* where no tree-planting takes place such "ecological" engagement is not quantitative, a *quality* of engagement is offered to the audience through the performer's presence. As Edward Casey suggests, the quality of a watcher's "ecological" engagement can be said to reside in how he takes in the ruptured "contrary qualities" (2003, p. 203) of a surface at a glance, or how, by extension, he reads the surface of the performance environment in connection with his own lived-world (2003, p. 205).

Hay hopes to “inspire” (Hay in Daly 2000, p. xiv) a non-hierarchical care of attention in the audience through the quality of engagement in her dances. Hay uses the score, “When I see you, I see you practicing what I’m practicing” (Hay 2005) as a way of considering audience and other dancers in her field of view. A dancer investigating this score in the performance of *O*, for example, could look to an audience member and include her observations of that audience member to help inform the possible responses to the overarching question fueling the dance: “What if 75 trillion cells surrender the pattern of facing a single direction?” (2005a). Another suggestion made by Hay in a 2005 workshop for dehierarchizing space and bodies is to imagine “center is everywhere” (Bauer 2006). These scores comprise several of Hay’s techniques for reimagining performer-audience relationships.

However, such claims about how this performance reads to a viewer might not necessarily match the viewer’s experience. Hay often talks to her audience about how to watch her dances; she explains how she is interested “in the ‘recognition of changing’ and not the kind of strict linear progression one tends to expect in dancing” (Hay in Dunning 1987). Reviews of Hay’s dances have been called “difficult but unforgettable” (Bailey 2008) and “inscrutable and totally compelling” yet bound by a “tone [of] eccentricity” (Keithley 2004); Jennifer Dunning has written that

“the quiet intensity of the performing drew the audience irretrievably into Hay’s special world” (1987). But outside the theaters in which Hay frequently presents her work, these qualities might not receive the same appreciation; even inside these settings the work can be read as being distant from the audience not educated in her methods.

The framing of a traditional theater helps to provide the physical distance between performer and audience seen as necessary for aesthetic appreciation. Public or street performances lessen or eliminate this space and can create situations in which audiences interact with a high degree of attention and more autonomy than in traditional theater settings. Where high volumes of participants in street theater or parade-like performance events can encourage participants “to show they are protagonists of their own society” (Shevstova in Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998, p. 57), a *Twig Dance* offers a more open model for engagement. On the street setting of a *Twig Dance*, the improvisation reads to those interested to glance first and then to look more closely. My job in improvising is to be fully engaged with the process of improvising the morphology of the plant *in and for* the context of the performance.

In my experience watching dances directed by Hay, the ability of the performance to enliven me relies on the skill of the performer and her

willingness to interact with a wider sense of space around her, in some way. Beyond simply “inviting being seen”, the most engaging performers dance with an aura of aliveness, a high level of attention to timing and detail that might be better named “deliberately performing to an other” (though this other might not be spatially located) and seems to work well in performers with a high level of technical skill and versatility. For dancers interested in exploring qualities of attention in their whole body, the availability of the whole body to this task seems paramount.

It is also important to note that Hay’s recent choreographies are frequently performed for western theatre audiences, many of whom are conditioned by the performances since the 1970s which explore degrees of presence and absence in the persona of the performer (Claid 2006). The act of taking these performative strategies to the streets brings a new set of circumstances. For my unannounced public *Twig Dances* I utilized Hay’s strategies of inviting being seen. For the *Twig Dances* given to schools or the camera, I took the particular location of the watchers into consideration as a point of reference in my dance [Appendix C, pp. 13-14, 24-25, 81, 84]. This drew more on Kirstie Simson’s work of interacting *with the other* as key to performing dance improvisation.

Simson's performing practice offers another example of a nonhierarchical way of negotiating the audience-performer relationship. Her workshops address situations of *both* watching and being watched in dancing, and emphasize the importance of these two interactions to contextualizing movement and choices in improvising: "It's a wonderful thing—to watch someone," she says. "And it's a wonderful thing to be watched as well, while dancing. And it's a little bit about seduction.... We can practice this watching and being watched while we move, or in stillness" (2007).

Simson's attitude toward both roles of watching and being watched implies that both roles are equally capable of being played in non-dominating ways; she proposes that to accept the seductive nature of dance is to use the act of watching and being watched to more openly fuel an improvisation as a playful *exchange* of energies rather than an isolated practice. One score Simson introduces in her sessions is composed of two directions: 1) watch someone, or 2) enjoy dancing while being watched. Participants engage in either or both activities throughout the exercise, alternating between the two roles sometimes in rapid succession.

*I do a small dance, a little hippity-hop dance while Basil watches me. The feeling of being watched completely by one person makes me a bit giddy, and the feeling takes me into a jump. I land, rebound and fold into a seated*

*position. I look at Basil, gaze intent on me as she sits. Our eyes are both bright with the simplicity of the exercise and its intimacy. She takes my look as signal for her to begin moving, yet the transition is careful, easy.*

*Swiveling on the balls of her feet to uncross and straighten her legs she continues looking at me, her head upside down and hanging. She swipes her left foot across the ground closer toward me and then uses it to lunge over to the right as she opens her torso out to the side and reaches upward with her arms. She suspends before a small flip takes her spiraling to the floor again. She winds up sitting crosslegged in a new place, looking at me intently. My move again.*

*I lean onto my right arm, and cross my legs to match her. She leans into her arm, and shifts herself over slightly. I shift myself over again, and begin to tilt off center with my torso, suspending myself toward an imminent fall. She does too, and now we are falling at the same moment. I recover, swish around and look at her to find her spinning in one direction and then another, looking at me each time she changes. The small performances have become a kind of dialogue. I am “watching” her, reading her energy with my whole body, and she is watching me with hers.*

In Simson’s watching scores “to watch” is not necessarily a disembodied action, but can in fact be fully physical, embodied and sensual. Watching



and being watched form a duet where both parties are complicit participants: showing, tracking, responding, supporting, and following. In such a model, neither party is exploited for the other's entertainment or pleasure because both are agents in the moving relationship. By establishing that both the roles of "watcher" and "dancer" can be practices of paying attention through moving and observing, Simson's exercise demonstrates how embodied watching is the basis of being able to observe the politics of placement for oneself and for others.

Though dancing a duet within Simson's workshop framework poses a complicit and understood relationship between improvisers, audiences of street performance do not share a common framework for reference. While my score for performing *Twig Dances* included cultivating an attentiveness in myself which I hoped would inspire similar attention in audiences, the idea of creating, through my performing presence, a "common" space for my audience and myself was of course impossible across a list of performance spaces that spanned ten countries. The politics of a place dictated my ability to improvise there; the power of my performing presence was secondary. While traveling through India, for example, the unwelcome male attention I received in almost every public place we went made it impossible to think of "offering" a *Twig Dance*.

Similar to both Hay's and Simson's modes of performing, when giving *Twig Dances* I "invite being seen" dancing with a tree or plant. Thereby I engage in a full-bodied practice of perceiving a tree while also *creating a deliberate performance* of this perception for anyone or anything that is watching me. Meanwhile, I remain sensitive to the responses this generates. This includes being clear about not making my performance into a carefree example of a woman dancing in public, but rather investing it with a sense of attention that is serious even while it is absurd. In homage to Chrysa Parkinson's perception practices (2007), I seek to include, not control my audience members, bringing an awareness of them into my perception as I dance whilst also acknowledging the frame their watching brings to my performance. As audience, they create the necessary conditions for performance. Finally, I complete each dance with a bow like Chrysa Parkinson's "BOW" (2007), wherein the instructions are to "salute your audience." (2007). Generally I perform this as a small bow first to the tree or plant, and then to the watching public. In this way I acknowledge both as integral participants in my performance.

Acknowledgement of the other is essentially the attitude that links Hay's, Simson's, Parkinson's and my own practices of improvisation performance. When taking improvisation out of the studio and into performance, it becomes necessary to elucidate the dancer-watcher

relationship clearly in order to create the conditions for a meaningful exchange. For improvisation performance to demonstrate ecological principles, it must establish a kind of acknowledgement of the other that presupposes a kind of kinship. In doing so, the performer practices an understanding of interrelationship that could be extended to non-human “others” as well, as *Twig Dances* propose. This conscious attitude toward interrelationship comprises the backbone of ecological awareness.

## **5. Context and Responsibility**

TWIG offers a further example of how improvisational principles can facilitate political awareness on another scale to that of *Twig Dances*. Linking the personal to the political, the TWIG Project sought to relate dancing to the wider actuality of current global economic, cultural and environmental events. TWIG pursued these goals whilst also addressing the cultural differences and disparities of privilege so present throughout our interactions with the people we worked with, both in and en route to China. By choosing to work with a range of children, most of whom had not had previous exposure to art or performance lessons, and by putting our own improvisational method to work in forming this program, we created opportunities for learning amongst all TWIG participants.

Ecological awareness is necessarily contingent upon political and economic awareness. Andrew Simms makes this argument in his book, *Ecological Debt* (2005), which details how the global environmental crisis is a direct result of the richest countries taking advantage of the poorest countries.

Like Guattari, Simms draws a parallel between the global economy and the environmental crisis and his findings underscore the importance of political awareness to any ecological agenda, supporting TWIG Project's goal to bridge economic, cultural and class divides. Simms suggests that as part of a plan to remedy both the environmental crisis and global economic disparities, rich nations should pay underdeveloped nations a compensation fee for using more than their fair share of the atmosphere to dump carbon dioxide. Simms' economic analysis of the global environmental crisis is useful to understanding how the world economic system might be responsible for the differences in environmental policy among nations, and how business and legislature geared toward generating wealth has impacted upon both the environment and oppressed social groups. It offers a way of looking at the situation of the people in Ruyang village in light of the international economy.

Wanting to respond at a grassroots level to the ecological/environmental crisis, TWIG aimed its workshop offerings at children in developing

regions of the world. The village of Ruyang in the Pearl River Delta region of Guangdong was a particularly interesting area in which to initiate an ecological art project due to the rapid industrialization affecting the region. Living in Ruyang was also an experience that elucidated for us the pressures of the global economy upon the lives and environment of China's working class, who made up the majority of the village.

For example, the village population is composed almost entirely of elderly people and young or school-aged children. Nearly all the parents of working age live in labor quarters of the factories they work in, leaving the grandparents to rear the children in the village. It is common for a child to see his or her parent or parents only once or twice a year (married couples do not always work together in the same factory and sometimes live hundreds of miles apart). The factories providing these jobs and conditions are most often the multinational industries producing cheap goods for western countries' consumption. These industries frequently build in China because of its lenient environmental legislation for businesses, making the country famous for its growing industry-related pollution (Reuters 2008). As a result, the people living in Ruyang are quite dependent upon the income from nearby factories for their livelihood, and many view the escalating development of the area as a good thing.

However, Ruyang borders Nanling National Forest Park, one of the largest areas of untouched forest in Guangdong province, and the encroaching industry from surrounding areas threatens the wilderness with development. With TWIG we aimed to cultivate in the children of Ruyang an equal appreciation for the natural local environment, in order to spark a greater sense of pride in, and care for, their relatively intact wilderness surroundings; we sought to transcend cultural differences and identify care for our environment as an omni-cultural concern.

Like TWIG, Simms' book also prioritizes environmental health as the lynchpin to other global problems; it describes how global environmental health is the single most pressing current issue and simultaneously the most effective means of combating social and economic disparity. This said, however, the definition of environmental health espoused by Simms or TWIG is not necessarily that of world leaders. As Jim Cheney (1995, p. 40-41) points out from correspondence with Elizabeth Bird, health is a political concept, dependent upon political and governmentally-defined notions of human-centered well-being.

Simms' book brings the environment to the forefront of consideration in international policy, highlighting how international policy that values capitalism and economic growth is the single biggest obstacle to those

working to combat global warming, a point made by Guattari (2000, p. 50). Because the structures of international banking operate in a way that implicitly underprioritize the environment and makes social justice a back-burner issue, Simms states that to reign in global warming, international governing bodies must agree to address social and ecological imbalances on a global scale, thus requiring commitments by polluting rich countries to pay off their ecological debt to poor countries.

On first glance Simms' analysis seems to spell helplessness for individuals. Its scathing review of governmental behavior is directed at people in power, and Simms' suggestion for rectifying the global crisis is a top-down strategy. But a second take of this information can bring about a kind of acknowledgement of agency. As Guattari writes,

to confront capitalism's effects in the domain of mental ecology in everyday life [... rather] than cultivating a stupefying and infantilizing consensus, it will be a question in the future of cultivating a *dissensus* and the singular production of existence (2000, p. 50, emphasis in original).

TWIG's "do it yourself" approach of planting trees and sharing skills of observation through improvisation and drawing seems a fitting match to the ecological recipe suggested by Guattari and de Certeau.

## 5. “Play” as Ecology in Everyday Practice

TWIG focused on simple, playful activities to engage children’s sensibilities toward their environment on an immediate, bodily level and by doing this created a “common ground” upon which to gather and learn together. By meeting regularly with the intention to explore social and environmental interconnectedness through outdoor walks and art studies, we made the workshops into special events whose rules were not determined only by English, American or Chinese conventions. Conley, whose close reading of de Certeau’s work seeks to highlight the nascent ecological principles therein, says ecological practice requires meeting on such a “common ground” that eludes economic classification. This is also somewhat of a polarity or paradox, as noted by Conley:

a double polarity of ecological practice inheres in de Certeau’s vision. One must, first, decompress, by countering the cult of information, open and make habitable a chosen space. Second, the First World must express compassion for, and solidarity with, those who do not “have” by remembering what ecology has taught us about interconnectedness and pressure relations rather than simple organic composition. Third, the First and Third Worlds must thus seek to meet on common grounds in such a way that complexities of interconnectedness replace the former dyad of self and other” (Conley 1997, p. 115).

The goals of TWIG included creating a “chosen space” in which the children could be encouraged to observe and respond to the natural world in creative and individual ways [see Appendix A, ch. 1], thus “countering



the cult of information” through perceptive experience. Paradoxically, Richard’s and my position as western foreigners enabled us somewhat to create this chosen space. Our unfamiliarity with the customs and culture of Ruyang gave the advantage of being able to cultivate a new space—common to us and to the children—in which we could gather to learn, move, paint, draw and talk. Our translators worked hard to transfer our ideas from English into Mandarin, creating yet another challenge to direct understanding between ourselves and the children. Yet, perhaps because of our special situation as foreigners, we were able to introduce “radical” ideas—such as dancing with plants—to the children, and were met with their total curiosity and interest. Equally I learned that the improvisation scores which I used in performances at PARTS were useful but also needed a new life in this context. To engage the children in the sessions I began to conduct myself during TWIG sessions with even more energetic confidence, leaving behind the more cautious, questioning nature of my improvisation performances at PARTS. In this chosen space, many new things became possible.

De Certeau’s proposition that ecology can only be practiced in a way that brings the “First and Third Worlds” together to illustrate the “complexities of interconnectedness” grounds the idea that TWIG’s work in art and ecology made the most sense when instigated in a cross-cultural, cross-

class context. By initiating the workshop activities in Ruyang, and thus becoming part of the local community for the two months we were there, our awareness grew about the importance of class and cultural placement to the readiness of any individual to engage in ecological practice. For instance, in China we noticed that the school-age children we worked with were hesitant to show signs of individualism or creativity, and were much more comfortable conforming to familiar rules or obeying authority. However, observing how these children's capacity for original artwork increased dramatically over the course of the six weeks we worked with them indicated that the work we did in TWIG had a measurable impact. The workshop opened up the potential for a whole range of previously unexplored ways of thinking and doing for many of the children. For example, participants who copied their neighbor's still life drawings in week one were creating original sketches in week six. Children who previously knew nothing about "dance improvisation" were performing solo *Twig Dances* by the end of the summer. Richard and I benefited equally from the exchange. Communicating across the language barrier (even though we had translators) taught us to use our whole bodies to illustrate an idea and to listen more thoroughly to others without the aid of linguistic comprehension.

These learning experiences for all parties were made possible by the sense of playfulness within the “common ground” we created together with the children. Bringing the ideas of exploration and collaboration into the center of our lesson plans enabled us to facilitate a two-way exchange of ideas. TWIG also integrated different activities—such as observing bugs and drawing, or observing flowers and dancing, for example—that are not normally practiced in situ. That our goals for this project reached across the scope of both the “great outdoors” and the art studio made group sessions into an exceptional space for studying interconnectedness.

Richard and I thought of several other possible influences that were at work in making the workshops into effective learning environments. One possible reason for the popularity of the project is that our local identity as foreigners afforded us a kind of celebrity status to the children, already making our actions appear larger than life. Whatever we did and wherever we went, we had an audience, and when the children showed up to TWIG sessions, they were eager and ready to learn. Many children were so enthusiastic that they arrived forty minutes before the session started. Another reason could be that what we were asking the children to do was unprecedented, to both us and to them. For example, when I taught techniques for *Twig Dances* to a group of children, the resulting performances, which were filmed and made into a DVD as part of an art

exhibition in Beijing, were noticeably attentive [see Appendix A, ch. 2]. The solos, duets and trio that emerged showed interest and involvement very different from the copying we had seen in children at the beginning of the course. Dance with a plant? Why not? Because there were no preconceptions about this activity to fall back on or imitate, each child had to create his or her own response to the problem.

Rather than a “teaching” endeavor, we made TWIG a program to facilitate learning on all sides. In the long term, we saw the project as benefiting the children by giving them a broader understanding of their own effects on their environment, and the effects of their environment on them. Ideally it gave them the foundation for a lifelong interest in interconnectedness and a sense of their ability to cultivate an active relationship with the environment instead of feeling separate. From the children Richard and I learned much about attention and interest—what keeps our interest when we are learning became a focus of our workshop sessions as we worked to strike a balance between “working” and “having fun” within our art projects. Furthermore, collaboration between ourselves and the children created an exchange accessible to audiences beyond the studio through our final performance and the “Twig Dances in Nanling” video footage which we produced [Appendix D]. Through all these sessions our collaboration across cultural “otherness” provided a space in which expectations were

suspended to a certain degree, enabling the children, Richard and me to “play” with the situation and improvise our way toward final artworks.

*We are warming up, on a big flat river rock next to the path where we will be filming. The boys are together now, a group of three, and I have a few minutes to get them into the flow, finding their bodies’ possibilities for moving, and opening their senses to the wealth of plant forms around us. We start by doing some rhythmic call and response and I vary the pitch and speed to keep them on their toes. Each boy follows in his way, and the energy is high. I point now to the vine colonizing the big crevice of the rock and start to play with its qualities in movement. Taking the momentum we’ve just generated together, the boys each look at the vine, a monocotyledon with net-veined leaves and green tendrils, and move to explore its qualities.*

*I continue dancing while moving into different levels and spaces around the rock surface, and the boys also open up their range of movement. Pretty soon we are tuning into each other as we move, cognizant of one another’s spacing and keeping in with the flow of spiraling, winding, pointing moves in and around one another, inspired by what looks like a pumpkin vine. I am amazed by how attentive and playful they seem, relishing the opportunity to move but also taking the task seriously; they*

*are really looking at the vine through their movement and sensing one another's timing and qualities without copying or homogenizing the trio. Their eyes are open, alive, and their faces are intent, looking at the vine and all around them too.*

*I back away from the group, and they continue to move—the vine improvisation has acquired a life of its own and these three are taking it through their whole bodies. I have no doubt the cameras will register these boys' care and interest. Their playful attentiveness inspires mine [see Appendix A, ch. 3].*

“Play” is central to de Certeau’s analysis of ecologically-useful social activities. Drawing attention to the creative activities instigated by groups, like children, who “*make use of* or tinker about social space” (Conley 1997, p. 110), de Certeau writes that

There are a thousand ways of playing with and against the other, that is the space instituted by others, and that characterize the subtle, tenacious, and resistant activity of those groups that, since they have nothing of their own, have to make do with what they have (de Certeau 1984, p. 60).

As a way of practicing ecology in the everyday, de Certeau’s ideas of play manifested in TWIG’s activities; the improvisatory nature of the project opened a space for experimentation to take place, dislocating prescriptive

ways of doing and creating a space for learning open to participants from several class and cultural contexts.

## **6. Dissemination, Cross-pollination, Farming**

Improvisation can be a tool for learning and relating to the politics of place. My experience as a practitioner of improvisation in cross-cultural contexts through the TWIG Project has been documented in the DVD *TWIG Project in Nanling* [Appendix D], and the booklet *TWIG Project: Journey to China 2006* [Appendix C]. I have offered an account of ways in which TWIG's improvisation practices can provide routes toward interacting with participants in new and unfamiliar contexts, and how they constitute activities with potential to stimulate people's sense of interconnectedness through natural and social ecologies. As I have pointed out, ecological awareness in improvisation necessarily includes awareness of the political, social and cultural contexts of a performance, and the effects brought about by improvisational strategies upon constituents or spect-actors in these contexts.

Recognizing the influences of economics and culture on various people and environmental situations, one can better understand local and global contexts and act in ways that promote the integrity of "ecological" relationships when learning and performing improvisation. As outlined by

Berleant, Gablik, Guattari, Simms, and de Certeau, “ecology” represents practices that enable individuals to act with agency and regard for the greater whole, and I have argued dance improvisation practices can exercise this understanding of relationship. In TWIG Project this manifested as collaborative, tree-planting activities with schoolchildren in Poland and Nanling. In *Twig Dances* this practice includes relating to the audience in a way that destabilizes traditional spectator-performer roles through interventionist performance (Kershaw 1992, Wilkie 2002).

The opportunity to share improvisation with an audience creates an exchange of ideas, which is made richer when the initial division between participants is considerable. Careful dissemination of ideas, such as “ecological practice through improvisation” across social and cultural divides will encourage cross-pollination, resulting in new species of ideas and creative actions. By closely observing the processes that produce these hybridized performance forms, improvisation practitioners can continue to develop processes which themselves facilitate greater understanding of ecological relationships.

To disseminate and cross-pollinate wisely one must follow up one’s actions with critical reflection, modifying methods to ensure their suitability for a specific time, place and audience. This “stewardship” of one’s processes



can be likened to the attentiveness required for all aspects of dance improvisation practice, as have been discussed in this thesis. Stewardship of processes, like stewardship of land and stewardship of body, is characterized by consideration of growing things. With respect to thought processes, land and bodies that are continually growing and changing, care toward *how* these processes develop must be the navigating force behind any ecological practice.

Ultimately, the skill of *observation* enables an improviser to reflect on the impact of his or her practice on a wider sphere of living things. Using integrated sense perception, an improviser actively researches body, world and body-in-the-world by practicing sensing, spacing, timing, structuring and observing again. This is the paradox of phenomenological sensing and knowing: only through the body can an improviser sense the world, and only through sensing the world can an improviser come to know the reality of his body in relationship to the world. Mediating both processes at once, improvisation practices continually register, respond to and reflect on the developments that emerge through actively sensing and doing. Chapter six further explores the role of paradox in practices of improvisation and ecology.

## Chapter Six

### Paradox in Transversal Practices

[Let] me make clear that what is important is not to lay down universal laws as a guide to ecological praxes but, on the contrary, to highlight the basic antinomies that exist between the ecological levels (Guattari 1989, p. 139).

The theme of paradox ties this thesis together. Seeing improvisation and ecological practice as paradoxical relieves both projects of weighty self-importance, and frees up a space for play. “By opening a little space for play, no matter how narrow its window, something is being dislocated” writes Verena Conley (1997, p. 110), summarizing De Certeau’s discussion of play in social space. The dislocation offered by paradox enables “ecological practice” and its inherent ethical undercurrent to be individually experienced through improvisation, sensation, action and revision, rather than mandated through imposed definition. By performing *Twig Dances* and learning other improvisation forms I discovered the prevalence and usefulness of paradox in ecological practice. This final chapter first explains how paradox can be used to create scores that “liberate” improvisational practice from the affliction of assumptions, and then reflects on the paradoxical aspects of improvisation as ecological practice.

## 1. Transversality: Unexpected Evolution

Where our motives in starting TWIG were based on principles such as contribution versus consumption, practical versus didactic, and improvisation versus prescription, our learning curved to include a number of discoveries about the evolving nature of TWIG Project as a movement reaching across unexpected social, biological, economic and cultural planes.

Felix Guattari's notion of transversality describes a quality of social gathering that ruptures and resists hierarchical ordering. Transversality enables agency and makes possible a freedom of movement and exchange along unregulated channels. According to Susan Kelly, transversality in the arts involves "experimentation rather than representation and a focus on means: on activity that brings into proximity the why and the *how* of coming together" (Kelly 2005). Bourriaud's relational aesthetics similarly describes art as mobile, "a zone of activity" that focuses on inhabiting "the forms of culture" and "making them one's own" (2000, pp. 11-12). The transversal is "crucially linked to production—the production of subjectivity and what Guattari calls self-engendering practices that seek to create their own signifiers and systems of value" (Kelly 2005). This includes creating temporary or ongoing spaces for social interaction that bring different people together across disciplines, cultures or classes. Kelly

writes that transversal processes often invent the actions and procedures for doing things, which do not fit into approved or familiar patterns, thereby resisting containment by institutional powers (Kelly 2005).

TWIG Project offered this mobile relationship to institutions, art forms and knowledges by working alongside local organizations, children, and art galleries to create an event, or a newly active community, which is not reducible to one outcome. TWIG generated gardens of trees, a dance video, live performances, an art exhibition, a website, a book, a mural and a series of workshops which adapted through their presentation to schoolchildren in a number of countries. TWIG also initiated a community of participants that will continue to create artworks from skills shared and ideas generated collectively, and posited the relationship between artist and participant *as* one aspect of the artwork as it engaged multiple audiences in its outcomes, aspects of the “new genre social practice art” described by Suzanne Lacy (1995, pp. 34, 37). Describing the project, then, has required acknowledging the paradoxes within our working practices, as well as the range of social, biological, economic and cultural sites affected by TWIG’s activities. Kelly discusses Alain Badiou’s contention that art which seeks political relevance must resist easy recognition by the “empire”. She writes,

“transversal practices” must often negotiate a double and *sometimes paradoxical move*. A logic of refusal – of resisting visibility, or taking on recognisable forms. This refusal while running serious risks of invisibility, marginalisation, or inoperability, however also becomes a condition for an opening out of another logic, [...] that in order to defend something you might also need to displace it, and its categorisation at the same time (Kelly 2005, emphasis mine).

Destabilizing TWIG as solely an “institution”, “pedagogy”, “political project” or “community” then, requires locating paradox in our improvisational working processes: how can we teach without leading, facilitate without imposing, author without encouraging imitation? As we delivered workshops, improvisation became a tool whereby we sought to respond appropriately to our changing environment while remaining maximally alert. Improvisation requires assimilating knowledge through action, or, paradoxically: learning to do by doing. During workshops with the children, the idea of improvisation called attention to the necessary performativity of our actions. And *Twig Dances* developed from an improvisation score which poses a paradox as its research question. In these activities we found improvising with paradox as a tactic that levels the ground of binarized thinking.

*What if performing is the opposite of knowing? Those kids in the corner are getting unruly...what if we include them, and include is the opposite of control? [see Appendix A, ch. 7].*

## **2. Recognizing Paradox**

A paradox is a proposition which seems absurd, contradictory, or impossible but which actually is or may be true. In improvisation practice, paradox offers a way of associating dissonant elements in theory and action. In ecological thought, paradox is one way of confronting environmental ethics in a way that both acknowledges the value of caring for “the environment” while also avoiding moralist championing and “potentially doing great harm in the name of good” (Proctor 2001, p. 227). Examining the seemingly contradictory positions of social constructivism and scientific realism, James Proctor explores the positions of exclusion and compromise, noting the violence so often bred by exclusionism, and the weakness begat by compromise. He then proposes paradox as a third view upon the two issues, one which sees the necessity for both positions to exist in theory and in practice, as each one is incomplete without the other (2001, p. 235). Creating space for this paradox in practice might also be likened to Edward Soja’s description of “thirdspace” (1996), marked by the “radical openness” described by bell hooks as the quality of the “communities of resistance” she seeks to create in the margins of postmodern academic thought (hooks 1990, pp. 145-149). Soja and hooks seek to carve out a space for radical subjectivity and resistance to a

binarized and hegemonic order which happens not in opposition to a located, centralized “other”, but as a result of legitimizing one’s own purposes (hooks 1990, pp. 145-153). Paradoxically, by choosing marginality, notions of the center are also destabilized (Soja 1996, p. 98).

In *Twig Dances* I improvise with the idea of “becoming” a tree, a practice which has paradox within it. I call this “reflective paradox” as it describes a seemingly contradictory situation. I also *use* paradox within my score, as an instruction by which to relate myself to the tree: “What if every cell perceives and performs the unique dance of this plant? What if my body understands this beach grass through moving it?” I call this “active paradox” as it is a tactical disengagement with familiar modes of thinking in an effort to ignite basic sensory capacities.

As Emily Brady points out, imaginative processes can enhance aesthetic experiences of nature by facilitating understanding through identification (1998, pp. 143-144), yet in the phenomenological “theatrical field” described by Garner, the “givenness” of a performed moment becomes grounded by the actuality of the thing being represented. By transparently seeking to “become” like the beach grass in a performance, the *Twig Dance* offers a unique spectatorial opportunity to see the body as “an experiential actuality that transgresses (without fully erasing) the boundaries between

‘is’ and ‘as if’” (Garner 1994, p. 42). Active paradox generates a state of a Deleuzian “in-between” for the practitioner, as he negotiates movements between certainty and potentiality. But importantly, these movements are physically embodied and produce real sensations, feelings and actions that perform located understandings of intersubjective aesthetic experience.

In ecological practice, active paradox can be used to undermine hierarchical notions *and* re-examine preconceptions, and to operate as a “plane of consistency” whereby procedures of working do not pre-determine products. Deleuze and Guattari’s plane of consistency resists organization, acts as a location for flows, and “does not pre-exist the movements of deterritorialisation that unravel it, the lines of flight that draw it and...the becomings that compose it” (2003, p. 270).

“Consistency” refers to connective movement, like a viscous substance which flows at different speeds and encompasses heterogeneities without imposing a solid structure. Kelly proposes that, within social practice art, an “attempt to retain practices in a certain consistency crucially works to open out different, as yet unknown futures for the ideas, concepts and activities described” (2005).

Used in improvisation as a license to practice sensing, active paradox can also function as a transversal activity, resisting categorization and operating



with a consistency that enables its application to different situations.

Scores of active paradox can position children as agents, support phenomenological enquiry, explore an environment through dancing, and establish improvisation as a research method.

As a confident proclamation of intellectual uncertainty, Active paradox can offer a suspension of belief that enables new learning to take place. A *tactic* of paradox sets the stage for a playful and productive engagement with improvisation and environment, sharpening tools of perception and enabling bodily recognition of, and appropriate response to, “the other”.

### **3. Paradox in Perception**

In the same year David Abram’s *Spell of the Sensuous* was published, Bronislaw Szerszynski (1996) argued that residual modernist divisions between language and world continue to trump the ability to prescribe “right” ecological action, underpinning belief in an ultimately nihilistic world picture. Szerszynski posited that the various strands of thought emerging from the modernist period must be acknowledged for their historical situation, and ways forward must address the modernist schism between language and the world. Abram’s text, then, drew on Merleau-

Ponty's phenomenological theories of engagement to forge a notion of experience whereby the world can be understood as having language beyond that which humans bestow upon it. Through enhancing perception, argued Abram, we might come to comprehend what the non-human world articulates, and in this process come to a more nuanced understanding and responsive relationship with this world.

Perception can be described as a lynchpin between scientific observation and creative practice, and as actions that implicates the active, sensing body with the environment, perceptual practices can also be said to be research methods toward ecological engagement. The distinctive element of perceptual research rests, in phenomenological terms, with the perceiver's engagement in an epoché, or rigorous commitment to engage solely with the experience before him. By bracketing or laying aside all preconceptions clouding conscious experience, argues Husserl, we can come closer to a pre-reflective experience of what the world actually is. Merleau-Ponty later expressed doubts about the possibility of achieving this fully (1963, pp. xiv, vii) and reframed the reduction in terms of the preeminence of the sensing body, and its pre-linguistic entwinement with perceptual phenomena. He writes, "...perception is a nascent *logos*; ...it teaches us, outside all dogmatism, the true conditions of objectivity itself; that it summons us to the tasks of knowledge and action" (1963, p. 25).

In an effort to illuminate both the rootedness of perception in bodily experience *and* the potential of the body to perceive differently (in different modes of engagement), Merleau-Ponty suggests we imagine and examine disruptions in our bodily habits of movement. Merleau-Ponty suggests that understanding an object involves seeing it, not as an amalgamation of visual impressions, but as “a structure accessible to inspection by the body” (1962, pp. 320, 369). He describes this inspection as a lived experience, and, drawing on Bergson’s ideas of intuition, implies that the body has an instinctive, paradoxical tendency by which it links itself, in movement, to objects, “like a hand to an instrument” (Merleau-Ponty 1963, p. 5). To illuminate the paradox in bodily relationship with the world can be to break from a conditional, objectified understanding of action as mediated by circumstances, but also to recognize the potential of the body to interpret, to language or “live” the world in new ways. Improvisational scores for movement offer this possibility.

*What if, rather than my eyes seeing a juniper bush, every cell in my body perceives the bush and performs the possibility of its shapes in space and time? What if the texture of this bush is explained through the movements of my feet? What if the moisture of this bush pervades my body and produces a rhythm not located in any one part? What if the smell, color,*

*size and density of these berries offer themselves up as instructions for bodily description? What if this bodily description is the opposite of familiar?*

The emerging discipline of eco-phenomenology claims that phenomenology's methods offer needed, experience-based insights into our ecological situation and enable a study of the metaphysical and axiological dimensions of the interrelationship between organism and world (Brown and Toadvine 2003, p. xiii). Methods for this encounter are proposed by phenomenologists with an eye toward clarifying both the nature of an entity and the nature of our experience of that entity. An ecological paradox is then finding a way to make experiences possible through forms of *practice* which, while remaining improvisatory and alive, can be described and disseminated.

*What shape does a plant make as it grows? What rhythms do its leaf patterns remind us of? How interested can you be with your whole body?*

Rather than “seeing” a tree as a signifier of anything else, the phenomenological project within a *Twig Dance* gives each improviser agency to respond to the qualities evoked by the image as it resonated with “*the structures intrinsic and essential to our sensations of the moving*

*body*” (Stewart 1998, p. 45, emphasis in original). As articulated by Stewart, the phenomenological project of dance is to bracket or put aside our cultural associations with an image in order to engage with its sensuous qualities. “Seeing” the “dance” of moving energy in the tree is one way of doing this.

An active paradox is a confident proclamation of uncertainty. By remaining uncertain, an improviser calls upon his senses to inform him of relationships. Toward the idea in chapter four that both confidence and uncertainty are useful qualities with which to approach structures in improvisation situations, active paradox offers the curious promise of both. Active paradox does not represent a formulaic mode of improvising or engaging with the world’s bodies, spaces, times and structure, but rather can offer a suspension of belief that enables perception-based learning to take place.

#### **4. Using Paradox**

A *tactic* of paradox sets the stage for a playful and productive engagement with improvisation and one’s environment. Such active paradox sidesteps the complicated moralities of structures and strategies and can dislocate

patterns of self-identification and enable recognition of, and relationship to, “the other”.

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise,” wrote Aldo Leopold (Drengson and Inoue 1995, p. 4). Words such as these offer limited definitions of what constitutes right and wrong action, ecologically, prescriptives which Guattari insists are counter to his project (Guattari 1989, p. 139). Active paradox, however, can suspend moralistic or binarized logic and give a platform to perception at the surface, or a kind of *a priori* willingness to observe and respond to a range of crises or situations in the world at the point of our immediate contact with them. Edward Casey describes such perception of surfaces as a necessary component of his levels of responsiveness and action when employing an eco-phenomenological method of engagement (Casey 2003). During TWIG, working with the children to develop attention to local phenomena of butterflies, plants, floods, monkeys and road works brought about material for dance improvisations that implicated us within the environment as perceivers and responders.

Toward a working practice of ecology which seeks growth through relationship, creating impossible situations can provide the necessary

foundations for undoing familiar and ingrained definitions, movements (Garoian 1999, p. 88) or thought patterns, freeing up one's ability to act out of a different, non-mandated response, or indeed to contribute to a transversal activity. In improvisation, active paradox as a conceptual starting point can help create the conditions for non-prescriptive, "liberatory" movement to arise.

Deborah Hay writes, "my body feels weightless in the presence of paradox" (2000, p. 74). Hay exemplifies active paradox when she uses an impossible task for many of her performance scores. For example, in 1999 her year-long movement meditation was:

What if my whole body at once has the potential to perceive here, spatially including everything I see and everything I can't see, now, and now, and now? What if Now is my past, present, and future here, here, and here? (2000, p. 104).

As an active paradox, this score offers one way to circumvent the problem of dualities such as here versus there, now versus then, or soon versus now. By constructing an open-ended riddle that presupposes the body's movement to be a sufficient response to the question, Hay's scores focus attention on the emerging realm of the possible: the "what if?".

Chrysa Parkinson who has spent time working with Hay in performance development, has taken the idea of paradox deep into her own teaching and

working practices in order to focus on sensing. At PARTS, workshops she teaches have focused on exploring what happens when movement is performed not as a practice of seeking formal or image-based ideals, but as a task of exploring “perception of movement” (2005, p. 43).

Throughout the essay “Folding the field—Fielding the fold”, Parkinson practices the scores she discusses while undertaking a second layer of discussion about her experience of teaching technique classes/performance workshops. Parkinson discusses and performs the conundrum of perception in dancing by introducing impossible juxtapositions as ideas and movement scores. She notes how using active paradox in this way can relieve the struggle for getting something right (2005, pp. 42-44).

Her essay focuses on several key points for returning to phenomenological (though she does not use this term) and perceptual understandings of movement while dancing. These include returning to “sensing” rather than searching”, “doing vs. interpreting”, “authoring vs. modeling”, and “including vs. controlling” (2005, p. 3). These practices relocate a dancer in her own perceptual sphere, inviting a scholarship practice that is active, engaged, awake, and responsibly willing to notice and try movement. This equal relationship facilitates learning that is more actively experienced and less passively accepted.



Parkinson notes that movement perception is often best practiced in situations of extreme simplification or, as in the case of (active) paradoxical scores, extreme “overload”, where “performance scores based on impossibility seem to allow the ideal-infested waters between failure and perfectionism to settle down and become a valuable, grounded working area” (2005, p. 43). As such, impossible practices are useful in that their disruption of any preset reality invites any practitioner—dance student, performer, teacher, audience member—to return to their own perception with a heightened attention to movement.

Through these scores, movement, which Parkinson calls “a material field with a non-material nature” (2005, p. 3), becomes the medium into which an attentive perceiver pours his attention. The non-material nature of this field requires the practitioner to practice awareness of change, rather than focusing on static forms or ideas. This practice of awareness of relationships through movement or change offers a starting place for eco-phenomenological participation.

In the case of improvisation, participation requires determining the scores, however simpler or complex, which will underpin the performance as an *acknowledged* basis for action. Acknowledgement is the purpose of the

improvisation score. Andy Fisher, author of *Ecopsychology* describes the importance of “*acknowledging the human-nature relationship as a relationship*” (2002, p. 8, emphasis mine) to developing meaningful interaction between oneself and the natural world. By admitting the existence of this relationship between humans and the natural world we can look more closely at how our actions create and affect this relationship. Fisher proposes that any journey toward an ecological psychological practice must begin by finding

ways to talk about the human-nature relationship that do not set humans outside of nature, that is, that clarify how it is that we relate to “nature” while also being an embodied part of nature, involved in its processes ourselves (Fisher 2002, p. 8).

Without dictating the framework of the hugely contested human-nature relationship, a practical eco-phenomenology would seek to enable its practitioners to research the possibility of such claims firsthand. Toward building such a practice, paradox can serve to establish such an indeterminate and questioning stance toward the human/nature relationship.

Examples in dance improvisation evidence this. Deborah Hay supposes her body to have a kind of “wisdom” in its ability to respond to paradoxical scenarios (Hay 2000, p. 103). Similarly, “What if I perceive and dance the unique character of this plant, here and now?” is the score I use for my *Twig Dances*. To *be* a tree is impossible, yet asking myself how I *might be*

a tree and how its patterns of growth would manifest in my body through movement is the underlying question that generates *Twig Dances* as a form of observation.

A *Twig Dance* then presents a chance for an “ecological” exchange between my study subject and myself because it furnishes the conditions for full-bodied perception and immediate relationship-through-response to take place. By performing a score of paying attention to trees in public environments, *Twig Dances* presented guerilla character studies of often-overlooked plant species. A *Twig Dance* takes as its score the morphology of a living tree or plant located in the performance space. Interpreting this score involves full use of the dancer’s perception through his senses of the environment. The dance may be announced with a ready audience present [Appendix F, ch. 2], or at other times it can be unannounced and performed in a public space where passersby may engage to varying degrees as audience [Appendix F, ch. 1]. During the journey Richard and I made to China with the TWIG Project, I performed *Twig Dances* regularly in urban, rural and village locations that we passed through [Appendix C, pp. 13-14, 24, 29-30, 37-39, 81, 84; Appendix E; and Appendix D, ch. 4]. The purpose of these performances in public outdoor locations is to bring attention—my own and an audience’s—to focus on a tree or plant which might normally be overlooked. Through a score that invites my whole

body to respond to the shapes, patterns and colors of a plant, I study the tree with my senses in order to sketch a portrayal of it in improvised movement. I learn about the plant through trying out its qualities in my own body in movement.

The work of dance improviser Jennifer Monson also uses improvisation and sensory practices to question the human-nature relationship; her multi-year Bird Brain Migrations project has charted the migratory pathways of gray whales and birds in the northern and southern hemispheres using a range of resources that are free and open to the public. These include “site-specific public dance presentations; panel discussions with artists and scientists; dance workshops for students and the general public; and a web site that tracks the migrating birds and dancers” (iLAND, 2009). Bird Brain links dance with goals of conservation, and research in migration science through an active program of community involvement. Monson’s projects with iLAND investigate the collaborative possibilities for understanding between the arts and sciences. The Ridgewood Reservoir/iMAP project, for example, joins dance artists and wildlife specialists in field research to look at the relationships between life in the inner city reservoir landscape. The Mahomet Aquifer project uses a mobile gallery, dance performances and panel discussions to question the political, social and cultural relationships between humans and Illinois’ largest

aquifer, whose water levels are dropping due to climate change (iLAND 2009).

Monson's work represents an effort to link aesthetic and scientific descriptions of nature in a program of public intervention. For Monson, improvisation serves as an exploratory method where dancers experience concepts and relationships of environments studied. Drawing on this material, Monson's choreography uses multimedia approaches to re-present ideas emerging from conversations with scientists and performers in a way that "draws an audience into understanding their own relationship to water" (iLAND 2009) in the case of the Mahomet Aquifer Project, or to other natural phenomena. The work emerges from aesthetic descriptions of nature that are built on, or enhanced by, scientific knowledge.

Environmental philosophy offers various perspectives on the relationship between aesthetic and scientific description of nature. For Allen Carlson, aesthetic description of nature is always enhanced by, or points to scientific understanding (1981). He argues that knowledge of biological classifications widen our capacity for appreciation of nature and hence facilitate greater understanding. Similarly for Holmes Rolston, scientific description can aid our understanding of nature in that it can "describe the phenomena as they exist in themselves" and that "we can, through various

constructs of the human mind, find out things that are not created of the human mind” (Rolston 1997, pp. 52, 42). For both Carlson and Rolston, the true contents of “nature” lie as objects to be discovered, and science can function as a descriptive language for this objective project. Going one step further, Hilary Putnam offers that our perceptions of the world are always already conditioned by the schemes of description with which “we cut up the world into objects” (Putnam 1981, p. 52), and that social and cultural conditions to an extent predetermine our ability to experience the world.

Working within a range of social and cultural conditions across three continents, TWIG Project developed a scheme of description by asking children we worked with to engage with the formal qualities of a plant, a rock, or a tree in order to generate artistic material, as did *Twig Dances*. Where Monson uses collaborative activities, public panels and mobile galleries to frame her choreographic inquiries through the language of science, *Twig Dances* represent a different approach to language generation, seeking to substitute textual modes of floral classification with an experiential method *in order to generate a new kind of knowledge about a plant form*. This new knowledge exists in the form of a different way of describing a plant’s morphology—through dance—in an activity legible to an observer.

Claire Waterton engages with the issue of language as a descriptor in “Performing the Classification of Nature” as she, with co-researcher Nigel Stewart, uses the contrasting descriptive methods of dance phenomenology and the National Vegetation Classification system to describe various species of grass found in one square meter of grassland. Waterton’s experiment is an effort to describe how our classification systems are performative, and inasmuch as they are embedded into our daily habits, embodied, creative and improvisatory (Waterton 2003, p. 114). Waterton points out how classifications are shown to have “powerful naturalizing tendencies” to those who use them, and that a consideration of how we use these systems is crucial to understanding how we operate with our own sense of agency (2003, p. 113). As the book *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* points out, “to classify is human” and is a practice embedded into every aspect of our lives; it is a social fact with material consequences (Bowker and Starr 2000, pp. 1, 5). Where commonly accepted systems of scientific classification can have normalizing effects, so can other learned and performed classificatory systems. Waterton’s account foregrounds the contingencies involved in replicating any method of classification, and calls us to question the symbolic and invisible repercussions brought on by our methods of structuring.

Waterton also notes the trouble of using classificatory systems in a superficial way that only engages with the letter of the instructions without a fuller understanding of the embodied practice which leads to those instructions. Certainly this is the case with writing about dance improvisation or any practice; writing can only point to embodied experience, for which there is no substitute. The phenomenological model attempts to address this gap by writing to describe and give meaning to “lived experience” (Manen 2000, p. 35) as it is known pre-reflectively.

However, as previously noted, the degree to which “lived experience” is separable from one’s cultural conditioning through social discourse is another point of contention between environmental philosophers and phenomenologists. The impossibility of a complete reduction was expressed by Husserl himself and repeated by Merleau-Ponty as a preface to a discussion of why a special kind of reductive process remains important and philosophy should mediate a return to a pre-intellectual experience of the world (Moran 2000, p. 402). Even though cultural conditioning is pervasive, the intention to experience the formal, sensorial qualities of an object in a way that is uncluttered by preconceptions, remains the phenomenological project. For Husserl, this project involves a number of distinct steps including the bracketing of preconceptions through



the epoché, the investigation of phenomena as they appear to consciousness, and the examination of general essences of the experience through eidetic reduction (Stewart 2005, pp. 364-365). Each of these steps can be linked to a process within the *Twig Dance*.

### **5. *Twig Dances*: Translating Perception**

First, each *Twig Dance* performance begins with a centering action which functions as the epoché: I bow to the tree with the intention to lay aside preconceptions and see the tree, as if for the first time, with all my cells at once. Sense is all-important in this endeavor to study a living plant, as is nonseparation of the senses; i.e., not separating hearing from touch and so on. I study a living plant with my whole body and nothing less. In this way *Twig Dances* requires rooting bodily movement in the kind of sensitive perception which Parkinson works toward in her classes, or Merleau-Ponty's pre-reflective perception as an activity that unites both dancer and tree in the chiasmic "flesh" of the "general Sensible" which guarantees a kind of pre-objective intertwining between the two (Merleau-Ponty 1968, pp. 130-131, 167; Stewart 2005, pp. 367-368\*) as discussed in chapter one. Making oneself available to the information of worldly perception is the intention of the epoché and the bow that begins a *Twig Dance*.

Secondly, Husserlian methodology requires a phenomenologist to investigate the experience of phenomena which arise in perception after the epoché. In the case of dancing to intuit phenomena, this can include discerning shapes (of the plant form), analyzing their significance as translated into the medium of movement, and recording this experience in video, drawing or writing (Stewart 2005, p. 364). Dance offers a way of bodily writing impressions of the irreducible patterns and shapes of the natural world by investigating the “what” and the “how” of the appearances of nature (Husserl 1970a, p. 366). Husserl’s reflections on geometry discuss the usefulness of logical, written language to translate ideals with the capacity for “reactivation” (1970a, p. 368), where passive meanings become “constructed through active production” (1970a, p. 362-364). He notes that only through translating geometric ideals into experiential facticity does geometry retain its meaning as “something that can be made originally self-evident” (1970a, p. 367). By referring to the plant itself as a kind of geometric ideal, *Twig Dances* make a plant’s contours originally self-evident to the dancer and audience, revealing immediately associative potential between the two figures.

Through “trying on” the imaginary clothes of a plant’s form, qualities and movement, a *Twig Dance* performs the paradoxical possibility of shared

likenesses between human and plant body. The reflective paradox is that the differences between the two bodies are evident in all sorts of ways. The practice consists of a dancer making a connection between the two to create unexpected movements that bring the plant to life in the mind of the dancer and the audience, and reveal the human also as a potential portal for unusual, foreign, “nonhuman” movement materials. Reflective paradox produces the possibility for ecological understanding that comes from “trying on” the character of another.

Finally, the eidetic reduction takes the form of the performance as shared information of movement made possible by the epoché (Bossert 1974, p. 245). The essence of the improviser’s experience of the plant is shared through the spatialization of force performed in patterns that welcome an audience. To perform, the dancer extends his mind to the tree’s bark, its leaves or buds, its roots and the flowing or stalled sap, with intent to observe what is happening there and to dance that observation. This process is not strictly scientific in its methods; the tree is not dissected to obtain a data set of its properties. Instead the dancer observes the tree with unified sense perception.

Physically touching the tree or plant before the dance begins can be one way of gathering information about it, but “playing at perceiving” the plant

can be another, direct route into generating movement for an improvisation. The dancer imagines her skin to be able to feel and recreate the quality of turgidity or texture she observes in the plant. In this respect, the process of imagining the plant's experience for a *Twig Dance* can be described in terms of Brady's four modes of imagination useful in appreciation of nature. Brady's "exploratory imagination" helps make associative observations, e.g. seeing canyons in tree bark. "Projective imagination" projects somatic experiences onto natural phenomena, e.g. aligning a tightly curled fist with the unfurling of an oak leaf. "Ampliative imagination" might explore larger, smaller, past or future manifestations of a natural phenomena, e.g. imagining the forceful wind which must have often tested the strength of an aged tree, and "revelatory imagination" imparts a sense of awe with the realization of a greater environmental force, e.g. the power and resilience of oak (Brady 1998, pp. 143-144). Brady names advantages to her alternative model including its "freedom from the constraints of scientific knowledge, because imagination and perception facilitate aesthetic rather than intellectual attention, and also because [it] does not require specific knowledge of the percipient" (1998, p. 146).

Moments of revelatory imagination transcend structures of phenomenological description and can be likened to the "saturated

phenomena” described by Jean-Luc Marion, or Goethe’s “intuitive perception of a whole” that exceeds our means of quantifying it (Heitler 1998, p. 65). Like a religious experience, the “givenness” of the phenomenological object can seem to exceed our expected perception of it when intentionality generates an excess of intuition (Marion 2000, p. 215), or Goethean contemplation of plant morphology reveals archetypes which reflect “nature’s innermost spiritual core” (Heitler, 1998, p. 65). Without denying the potentially powerful ethical response generated by reverence for saturated phenomena, in an environmental encounter the difference of a *Twig Dance* is its intention to encounter a plant as knowable through the human body in a physical, practicable, exact, and slightly *disinterested* way.

Mikel DuFrenne insists that in an aesthetic experience we must restrain the imagination in order to allow perception of a thing through in its most accurate light (1973, p. 370). Further, by participating or identifying ourselves with an object we “rediscover within ourselves that movement by which the object is itself” (1973, p. 394). Likewise Brady and Husserl advocate cultivating disinterestedness when engaging with an aesthetic or phenomenological object, while also acknowledging the situatedness (Brady 1998, p. 147) of the percipient. Husserl’s method of imaginative free variation also sought to more fully acquaint a phenomenologist with an

object, by altering the object through imagination to try to discern its inalienable characteristics. While *Twig Dances* do not employ imaginative free variation per se, the engagement with the tree through exploratory and projective imagination offers a fuller, more embodied process of examining the plant and reveals movements that may not be accurate readings of its morphology. In instances where the dancer might not be able to fully touch the plant, such as when improvising with the structure of a very tall tree, she uses all her senses with ampliative and exploratory imagination to ascertain the level of flexibility, density and aliveness of the wood, and inject these qualities into her movement. This using the senses, or “playing awake”, is an ecological practice. It describes the dancer’s willingness to pay keen attention to all she perceives with her whole body, and to exclude nothing, as when Chrysa Parkinson suggests sensing versus searching.

By sensing to perform movement derived from trees, *Twig Dances* uses paradox to explore difference and commonality. I ask “What if my whole body perceives and dances the unique dance of this plant, here, now?” with a willingness to accurately observe the plant in question, but also with a commitment to recall the impossibility of the question. The performance that unfolds then becomes a response to the “What if?” proposition and not a weighty task of duty toward some ideal.

*I respect the solidness of this oak tree. Making my craggy fingers into the rivulets of canyon-like bark which covers its surface, the sensation of putting my immediate observations into movement is satisfying. There is joy in trying to align my tightly curled fist with the unfurling of an oak leaf, and reaching my own four limbs energetically outwards, across the ground, in response to the sweep of branches above me.*

Using detailed observation, *Twig Dances* are a practice of perception. The act of taking time and space to consciously, performatively ask the question of what the body perceives of the environment, is a score of returning “to the things themselves” (to use the phenomenologists’ refrain) in a sensory, muscular, impulsive, visceral way. The dance form creates a context for these observations to be embodied. Merleau-Ponty advocated returning to an experience which is pre-constituted to language and socialization. For him to return to phenomenology’s slogan of “the things themselves” means

to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks*, and in relation to which all every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learned beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is (Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. ix, iii).

Finding a sense of commonality with the object of my *Twig Dance* happens through engaging with its sensible image. Though my movement-based interpretation of the plant is colored to some degree by the sedimented

knowledge of my moving body's technical training and movement practices, there remains an intention to use my observations to move beyond these patterns to interpret intuited forms and textures.

*Twig Dances* as research moments constitute a semi-transferable experience of knowledge generated, although to some extent the transferability of knowledge depends upon the performer's interest in "reading" the plant systematically and offering that information in a way that the movement can be seen clearly by the audience. Dances recorded in video or text represent another layer of transfer. In the case of *Twig Dances* performed during the TWIG Project, Richard's photography and filming framed performance moments and the editing of the DVD *Twig Dances in Nanling* included the curatorial choices of Huang Xinghai, and his interests for representing positive relations between Nanling EcoTourism and the Ruyang community. Within the practice of *Twig Dances* however, the key way knowledge of a plant is generated and shared is as *description*. The act of describing the plant first to oneself, then to other watchers constitutes an intimate study of relationship between performer and plant.

While Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiasmic intertwining between body and world is useful to training full-bodied perception in all dance



improvisation practices, a return to Husserlian methodology becomes useful in the more detailed work of performing the floral description of a *Twig Dance*. The description of a plant is presented through movement as the language of the dancer's phenomenological engagement with the plant. The *Twig Dance* incorporates Husserl's two-sided notion of intentionality. First, the *noesis*, or the perceiving, is the dancer's method of sensing a plant's contours, textures and shapes; as focus of consideration, the impression of the plant is the *noema*, or object of perception. The improvisation process begins with stillness and a bow to the plant, signaling a clearing, or epoché as the beginning of the process of phenomenological perception. By bracketing the preconceptions I might have about the *noema* before me, I am able to allow my senses to interpret as if from a place of sensing for the first time. Honing in on specific features of the plant creates opportunities for layers of analysis within the reduction; here the uniqueness of an experience of a plant is analyzed through identifying its "essential" geometric components. The turgidity of a stem, the venation pattern of a leaf, and the pattern of inflorescence are all examples of details which can be marked with movement and thereby measured as readable components of a plant specimen. The immediacy by which these qualities become translated into performance through improvisation demonstrates the reliance on the moving body's a priori responses to essential qualities of a plant.

*I see the rakish leaves of the globe thistle further down, curling outward, upward in long, flat, sheets punctuated by prickles and ending in a point. I dip downward, curl in and swoop my upper body to a point, aimed at audience this side, then that side... Spike! Purple flower heads explode upward, spheres point forked tongues of petal-arrows in all directions, going-going-going-going here-here-here-here; the aim is relentless, all-encompassing from this flowering sphere held high atop a strong stem. I'm on relevé, jutting arms in all directions [see Appendix A, ch. 8].*

Here I translate the variously three dimensional leaves of *Echinops ritro* into movement through my spine, legs, arms and fingers, emphasizing the decurrent leaves punctuated by emergences. Interpreting the global inflorescence upon a long peduncle manifests in the verticality of movements in the second section of the dance as well as changes in focus and repetitive, multidirectional arm movements.

Exploring Husserl's methodology implies an assumption of its usefulness in generating knowledge about a particular plant located in time and place, and begs the question of whether identifying "essences" outside of cultural discourse is possible. Herbert Spiegelberg questions whether such methodology is essential to phenomenological analysis, given the risk of

“ending up with an absolute and indubitable being no longer subject to suspension” (1994, p. 123; 1973) which runs counter to the usefulness of paradox or epoché. Dances honoring natural forms echo practices of diverse indigenous groups and traditionally bear meaning within socio-cultural contexts (Highwater 1996). Yet *Twig Dances* performed, for example, in Dartington Gardens [Appendix F, ch. 2], do share a premise of explaining a new form of knowledge within its context. At the start of this performance, participants were informed of the basic outline of my project and invited to perceive the plant through touch, smell, sight, etc, in their own time, as well as watching my performance. While I do not pretend one’s danced description of perceived essential qualities offers an infallible form of knowledge by which to build a universal picture of the plant studied, I do propose that the process of engagement with the plant through improvisation is a route toward individual, embodied understanding of specimen-specific forms and shapes. Performing a *Twig Dance* makes this information—the *information of an experience*—available to observers through an aesthetic encounter.

It is significant that during the performance of a *Twig Dance*, the surface of the plant is as available to me as it is to my observers; I do not have a privileged position or prior insight to its surfaces. The dance takes as its starting point my position in front of the plant—I do not delve deeply into

its interior to examine the branches or trunk—my interest is to address the same general field of perception available to the audience. A performance with a Japanese maple, or *Acer palmatum*, in Dartington Gardens begins with me asking the audience to take a close look at the textures and turgidity of the specimen [see Appendix A, ch. 9].

As a study of Casey's surfaces, this *Twig Dance* offers an example of a phenomenological reading of the superficial qualities of the Japanese maple. In this specimen, the qualities which entered my perception included a distinctive leaf shape with horizontally-oriented, slightly curled, jagged and pointed tips, a softness in leaf texture and a multi-pronged structure which responded readily to wind, and a layered surface of leaves which covered the interior structure of branches and trunk, providing a thick carpet of multi-directional curves and tips which tended to flip in the wind.

The improvisation begins with a section in response to the shapes and positions of the leaves of the plant, with clear reference to the pointing, curling, multi-tipped star-like shape of each leaf and the turgid, raised and elongated veins extending into the sections of each leaf. The horizontality of the leaves is echoed in the outward, expansive, and flat movements of arms and torso initiating from lower spine as well as the focus and the low

level of some of these movements; the pointing tips of the leaves become pointing fingers, and the turgid supported veins of each leaf become the straight arms which surface amidst the more flexible curling flesh of the leaf. A second section follows where the minute adjustments and responses to wind in the body of the plant become movement that slightly shakes or jogs the “branches” of my arms as I very slightly exaggerate the bouncing movements of the branches in the wind. After another brief look, the third and final section takes a broader point of view and “sketches” the multidirectional surface of all the different leaves on top of one another; this results in a faster-paced account of the whole visual effect of the plush and complex surface presented by the front of the topiaried, cultivated tree [see Appendix A, ch. 10].

The knowledge that this generates of the respective plants is as an experience of movement for dancer and audience. Marking sensations-through-action in performance makes an imprint upon space and time. For a viewer these qualities manifest as another surface, an event in the environment which brings human perception together with living, growing organisms to create a new layer of possible interaction, an exploration of intersubjectivity that can give rise to empathy. In Authentic Movement a sense of being witnessed brings context to movements; in performance for an audience movement makes a mark for others to see and a heightened

impression of the dancer's findings. A watching public can reinforce the reflective potential of the phenomenological act, though inquiries without a live audience can also allow for a more relaxed, extensive investigation of one quality, as in the unannounced *Twig Dances* filmed in a public but remote location in Dartmoor National Park, and "witnessed" by Richard Sarco-Thomas, *Crataegus oxyacantha*, and a video camera [see Appendix A, ch. 19]. As with the TWIG Project, the transversal artwork takes place through such unprecedented acts in unexpected settings.

A *Twig Dance* articulates qualities of the perceived plant that words cannot. To take again the example of the *Acer palmatum* dance, the specimen becomes known in a new language, one that expresses its qualitative impressions given through its surfaces interfacing with my body. Growth patterns and qualities of density, resilience, directionality are reflected in a way that could give clues to the plant's health, or offer insight into its situation within an environment. This specimen, fully leafed and rounded, appears healthy amidst its cultivated environment, and responsive to the trimming it certainly receives.

A *Twig Dance* also shows the embodied knowledge of the dancer in the body's familiar ways of moving, revealing information about modes or patterns of perception and translation. A key part of the Husserlian method

applied to *Twig Dances* involves identifying obstacles to perception and acknowledging influence of various movement styles upon one's own improvisation performance.

By analysing the *Acer palmatum* dance through the video, I observe disjointed movement reminiscent of Forsythian avoidance of space [see Appendix A, ch. 11] a sense of breath and extension out into space at times that could be traced to Simson's expansive movement [see Appendix A, ch. 12] and highly toned suspensions that fall into more chaotic dissolutions in the way de Keersmaeker's choreography seems to slice and carve space [see Appendix A, ch. 13]. This reflects the interface of my conditioned dancer's body with the task of the improvisation. Other moments are not so classifiable [see Appendix A, ch. 14].

In the dance with the common plantain, or *Plantago major* [see Appendix A, ch. 15], the first section of the same dance depicting the lengthened stalk of the flower head is more evocative of butoh work which extends time, yet also draws on a sense of lengthening and grounded extension into the earth that Simson's work values. The second section offers a similar comparison to the image-work of butoh, as I use my face to explore an impression of the head of the plantain from which protrude shriveled corollas and the tenuous anthers which, having finished pollenating, are off-white (Sagar

and Harper 1964). My features are stretched but shriveled, and evoke the strength of the fibrous stem and the density of the bracts collected on its spike. The third section where my body stays quite low to the ground mimicking the low lying, horizontally reaching leaves of the plantain, is reminiscent of the slippery Forsythian style, but results from aligning my spine with an enlarged spatial model of the plantain's leaves. My hands moving together into the same direction in parts reflects the parallel veined form of the plantain's leaf structure. A slight shiver in my movements reflects my observation of the minute silver hairs, or trichomes, covering the surfaces of the leaves. I orient my movement mainly toward the audience in front of me, though the two cameras give extra points of reference as I perform. The long hedgerow behind me creates a kind of backdrop reminder of the cultivated gardens in which this dance with an uncultivated specimen takes place.

## **6. Embodying Imagination**

In each context, the focus in performing these dances is on translating what I see directly through embodiment, rather than demonstrating stylistic interpretations. My practice of "becoming" some natural image was initially inspired by butoh artist Min Tanaka. Tanaka works, in dancing, to transform body parts into natural scenes, creating scores such as, "heavy



rain on your back / a cow is pissing on your legs / your torso is mist / there's a garden on your head" (Tanaka in Cardone 2001, p. 17). Initially, researching these propositions through dancing them, I found that my body engaged in totally new states of feeling. Instead of imagining my dancing body as a finite sculptural form making shapes in space, I felt a distinct sense of freedom when researching the sensory implications of a body theorized as soluble.

Furthermore, my imagination expanded to include the notion of my torso being mist; this *imagined* possibility had a concrete effect on my dancing, making it much more imagistically sense-based and less representational. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone describes the phenomenological significance of dance movements which arise in response to certain images, proposing that the actions of our dance reveal the images behind them (1979, p. 114; see also Stewart 2005, pp. 367-368), and expose the possibility for our bodies to trace or imaginatively interpret pre-existing shapes in terms of the "spatialization of force" shown in linear designs, linear patterns, areal designs and areal patterns (Sheets 1966, p. 120). By interpreting images as possibly traceable through the body the dancer extends her movement vocabulary and presents the audience with embodied designs that reflect this imagination (Sheets 1966, p. 121).

Brady describes how imagination can enhance an aesthetic experience of nature when it is used to “somatically imagine” a flower’s experience of growing, or to “amplify what is given in perception” toward realizing an “aesthetic truth” about natural processes (Brady 1998, pp. 143-144). This is also the case for Hepburn, who contends that the most resonant moments of aesthetic experiences in nature come from imaginatively placing ourselves into a natural situation: “If suddenly I realize the height of a cumulo-nimbus cloud I am not simply *taking note* of the height, but imagining myself climbing into the cloud in an aeroplane or falling through it” (Hepburn 1966, p. 303). Such effects of heightened sensory involvement arise when I imagine my body can not just climb, but *align with* an actual living thing which I can look at and study closely.

*Not just any tree, I’m dancing that tree, this tree. Here, now, I look at it and see it and live it with my whole self at once. This oak has been split off by some great force; it leans ominously out over the lane below, a bit off-kilter-looking, perhaps a bit into one hip, possibly poised to pluck up something from below... My arm reaches luxuriously, heavily out and over a long lane that leaves me plenty of sunlight; there is a powerful feeling of the force of this spiraling tall branch of heartwood. Its bark is gnarled near the base, a clenched swoop of knobbles, where some stubble-like new shoots are growing. There is even a hole, a small cavity suggesting a*

*hollow bit of the trunk, just there—my stomach sucks in and my shoulders scoop out in imitation.*

Improviser Simone Forti uses the idea of “becoming” the very things which inspire her improvisations. In a 1986 interview Forti describes how her need for “an animism in the reality of today” (Hayes 1986, p. 11), led her to become “the shapes and the actions”(Hayes 1986, p. 11) of the environmental landmarks that inspired her:

I’ll be the various parts so for instance in that section of the dance where I was talking about the iron coming out of the ground, I started by licking my arms and licking the taste of the iron, then suddenly I was the cannon, my arms stretched forward forming the barrel, and boom I shot my body out through my arms, hurling myself across the stage and landed, thud, a cannon ball lodged in the field. It’s not mime, it’s becoming all of these things, it’s lifting the block that normally prevents us from becoming all the things we perceive and imagine” (Hayes 1986, p. 11).

*Becoming all the things we perceive and imagine.* The proposition is ridiculous and impossible, but it is the lively act of practicing this active paradox that serves as research into our relationships with things. My practice of “becoming” denies power to any idea that we know what a human body is and can do, or that we objectively know what a plant body can do. I take Spinoza onboard: “We know not what a body can do” (1677). I take onboard Elizabeth Grosz describing Nietzsche: “a philosophy shows itself in what it enables bodies to do” (Grosz 1994, p.

127). I propose a third possibility: by intentionally embodying parts of the environment we can learn what many different bodies can do, seeking a transcendence of objectivity that, in Husserl's thought, can only be known "intentionally-constitutively" (Zahavi 2001, p. 17). *Twig Dances* require the dancer to imagine the corporeal sensations of a particular tree, improvising a scenario of intersubjectivity through identification. I research what happens when I imagine that my body understands what it is to feel inside the body of a tree.

*Pinus pinea has dry, deeply cut bark that shows layers and cracks. The skin on my back, hands and face stiffen, then contract in unpredictable patterns to become the chunks of thick skin [see Appendix A, ch. 16].*

*Roots grip side of hill and send sap up to where sun sparkles off branches arcing into a horizontal canopy. My body weight is down, reaching into soft earth as my inner sap-blood surges upward, supporting my huge arm, this limb that reaches dangerously out over the precipice, extending to seek sun [see Appendix A, ch. 17]. I see pine cones lined up, growing on diagonals; my arms, elbows form nodes of condensed energy [see Appendix A, ch. 18].*

The practice of this improvisation score denies that the human body is incapable of interpreting perceptual languages of non-human bodies

through immediate response. Thus, performing a *Twig Dance* is action research: through the body I research the possibility of being an intelligent environment in order to perceive the body as just that: an intelligent environment acting within a wider intelligent environment. On some level the inquiry is scientific in its morphological description. On another level the inquiry is metaphysical, working with concepts of the “animism” of objects described by Forti as an underlying force for intuitive perception.

Bringing space into the body, or acknowledging the potential of the body to house spatial impressions or memories, is central to the metamorphosis-oriented work of butoh. As Sondra Fraleigh notes, butoh artists use very particular notion of the human body in relation to the world in their work. The Japanese concept of *jinen* describes the rhythmic animism perceptible in all things from trees to trains, clouds, cities and plastic (2005, p. 337), and butoh dancer Takenouchi Atsushi takes *jinen* as his partner in his Jinen Butoh Dances that take place in diverse and historicized locations all over the globe. From the site of the Kobe earthquake to the “killing fields” of war in Poland, Cambodia and Japan, Takenouchi brings his dancing to locations with natural or cultural significance; using his dancing he says “I touch the human crisis there, I feel the ground and the clouds” (Takenouchi in Fraleigh 2005, p. 336). Fraleigh also discusses how butoh artist Yoshioka Yumiko expresses a similar ideal of the human body as part of

nature. This concept of *jibun* includes an idea of the self as in the whole and vice versa: “Everything is born from nature, and we are no exception... animals, plants, wind and water live in our body” (Yoshioka in Fraleigh 2005, p. 333).

## **7. Embodying Identification**

Identification with another is an essential part of developing greater ecological awareness. Arne Naess, founder of the Deep Ecology movement which holds that environmentalism must be founded on an integrated sense of commonality and spiritualism with the natural world, stresses identification as integral to a process of realizing “an expansive sense of self” (Fox 1995, p. 230). In the essay “Identification as a Source of Deep Ecological Attitudes”, Naess writes,

*How do we develop a wider self? The self is as comprehensive as the totality of our identifications. Or, more succinctly: Our Self is that with which we identify. The question then reads: How do we widen identifications?”* (Naess 1984).

According to Naess we must broaden our definition of the self to include that which is nonhuman if we are to develop deep ecological attitudes. A *Twig Dance* illustrates such a broadened definition of the self because its practice includes entering into a paradox wherein widened identifications

of the body are proposed and practiced. By practicing the paradoxical possibility of identification, a dancer can benefit from the experience of closely observing another entity and develop a sense of commonality with that entity.

Warwick Fox, author of *Towards a Transpersonal Ecology* identifies commonality as a key feature of identification for ecological purposes. He writes that, “[identification] should be taken to mean what we ordinarily understand by that term, that is, the experience not simply of a sense of *similarity* with an entity but of a sense of *commonality*” (1995, p. 231). As such, Fox emphasizes that identification is characterized by an experience, and that the usefulness of this experience toward developing ecological sensibilities lies in its ability to bring about a sense of oneness or compassion for another. Again, a reflective paradox: the self must choose to recognize itself as being part of the whole. Fox discusses this idea in terms of a human relationship to a tree, wherein one’s sense of self expands

to include the tree even though I and the tree remain physically “separate” (even here, however, the word *separate* must not be taken too literally because ecology tells us that my physical self and the tree are physically *interlinked* in all sorts of ways) (Fox 1995, p. 232).

Being both “separate” and “interlinked”, one’s sense of the physical self in relation to the tree represents a significant paradox. Fox points to the parallels between understanding interconnectivity and commonality in ecological awareness; both ideas feed each other and contribute to the widening sense of self discussed by Naess. Such a widening sense of self can be defined not in strictly physical or psychological terms, but even as religious or spiritual experiences. Thinker Jiddu Krishnamurti, renowned for his spiritual teachings has written extensively on the ability of simple contact with nature to affect one’s feeling of sanity and wholeness.

That healing [of the mind] gradually takes place if you are with nature, with that orange on the tree, and the blade of grass that pushes through the cement, and the hills covered, hidden, by the clouds. [...] This is not sentiment or romantic imagination but a reality of a relationship with everything that lives and moves on the earth (Krishnamurti in Forbes 2008).

Krishnamurti emphasizes that this oneness is not in the imagination, but is “a reality of relationship”, which, when observed fully, is our fullest means toward self-education. *Twig Dances* uses movement to articulate this reality of relationship in its many forms. From the starting point of identifying with a plant through movement, the sensations and observations which emerge during a *Twig Dance* are further starting points for further observations. This pattern of continuing interested observation provides the basis for responsible



relationship between oneself and all others one encounters in this mode of improvised research.

The practice of *Twig Dances* might extend one's awareness to *feel*, at some level, a sense of commonality with a plant. This offers a strong base for building more informed, conscious relationships with many plants and their environments. Since beginning to practice *Twig Dances* I have become increasingly interested in observing the various forms of many species of plants that grow in the landscapes I pass through, including plants of urban landscapes and houseplants. Looking at the plants in their various stages of growth through the seasons, I ask myself what kind of dance this plant would suggest. I am expanding my sensitivity to environments, and valuing species of plants which I once quite completely overlooked.

Arne Naess writes,

To the ecological field worker, *the equal right to live and blossom* is an intuitively clear and obvious value axiom. Its restriction to humans is an anthropocentrism with detrimental effects upon the life quality of humans themselves (Arne Naess 1973, p. 4).

He describes a key aspect of ecological awareness which is a growing willingness to invest in preservation of other species' "equal right to live

and blossom”. Through *Twig Dances* my own awareness of other species, and by extension my willingness to preserve them, has grown enormously.

Butoh dancer Akira Kasai speaks of “the community body” as his larger reason for dancing. In an interview with Sondra Fraleigh he describes this community body as the larger sphere of beings with whom he shares the planet; he sees his dancing as having an impact on this group in ways both sensible and immeasurable (Fraleigh 1999a, pp. 236-237). In her conclusion to the essay “Witnessing the Frog Pond” in *Researching Dance*, Sondra Fraleigh references the community body in relation to the roles of dancers and researchers, implying that there is a responsibility to a greater sense of self to consider when dancing and when researching.

If “our body becomes the form of our will,” as [Paul] Ricoeur holds, then our body-of-dance is being formed hourly, as is our body-of-life. What butoh dancer Akira Kasai calls ‘the community body,’ is the larger result of our dancing. Reflecting the body of the pond, we become what we dance. What forms do we want to practice? (Fraleigh 1999b, p. 197).

Fraleigh draws the parallel between dance and research in a way similar to that of Chrysa Parkinson, noting a common value of attention which acts as the main currency of the performance. If a *Twig Dance* is rooted in a form of observation, it represents yet another way of contributing to the practices of widening awareness that seek to bring flesh, growth, color and diversity to this community body, expanding it to include more than just humans.

## **8. Conclusion: Moving from Intra- to Intersubjectivity**

Throughout this text I have argued that improvisation can be a practice of ecology when performed in ways that evidence active perception, personal agency, and a willingness to extend oneself to relate to an “other”, including non-human others. Building a definition of ecology that comprises an expanded sense of relationship to the natural world, I have also built a definition of improvisation as a participatory, individual and evolving process of negotiating one’s relationship to sensation, space, time, structures and political situations. Paradox offers a common thread among these chapters and serves to contextualize improvisational ecological practice as an active process that moves from intrasubjective to intersubjective understanding, emerging only as it is experienced, reviewed, reflected on, played with and shared.

In chapter one the paradox of sensing is that only by sensing others do we sense ourselves, and vice versa. In chapters two and three I explained how by defining space and time we shape our own improvisational experience of it. These first chapters make clear that we can exercise our ability to choose relationships of self to other, body to space, and action to time, all

while maintaining our capacity to observe and respond to how these relationships affect our perception. In chapter four the idea of playing with structures in order to improvise is paradoxical in itself, and I argued that an awake and improvised engagement with structures is essential to maintaining one's sense of independence and personal agency in practice. Chapter five explains how the TWIG Project offers one example of how practicing improvisation in diverse locations enables a broader perspective on political and social influences on place. I suggest that through seeking a larger circle of witnesses and collaborators improvisation as ecological practice can become strengthened and relevant; by observing and interacting with the world *through movement* the body can comprehend its own politics of placement. Finally this chapter describes how active paradox can relieve these processes of their weight, turning improvisation into a research-focused, observational, non-mandated, individually-motivated exploration into bodily relationships with the world. Throughout these chapters, a definition of "ecological practice" emerges as a sensitive, active enquiry into relationship as interrelationship.

Interrelationship precludes hierarchy, validating individual enquiries into improvisational and ecological practice. By acknowledging the elements of sense, space, time, structure, politics and paradox within a performance, an improviser can begin to observe her movements in relation to these.

Paradoxically, while an individual always already moves in relationship to these elements, only by *claiming* relationship to them can she develop a sense of personal agency. Verena Conley echoes this sentiment when she discusses de Certeau's ideas of how individuals can implement ecological practices in everyday life: "What the subject can do is to deter imposed orders by reintroducing *space* and *time* into discursive activities" (Conley 1997, p. 111). By making the many elements of performance discursive, an improviser invites active paradox, a-signification, sensitivity and research into her practice.

This study set out to investigate the connections between practices dance improvisation and ecology, and has shown that practicing improvisation as an ecological practice opens up a field of possibilities for the improviser.

Improvisation by definition is an action of always sensing, acting, choosing, trying, playing, observing, revising, and sensing again.

Ecological practice is also all of these things. By moving in order to practice awareness, both twig dances (dancing with the intent to develop awareness) and *Twig Dances* function as experiments in understanding the body in the world. As a process that continually re-invents, challenges, outdoes and reforms itself to account for new kinds of knowing, improvisation as a practice of ecology will continually create itself anew as

a research method to accommodate the evolution of the intersubjective agents of its study.

As a method for research, improvised twig dances and *Twig Dances* also comprise rich processes toward bodily understanding. By operating improvisationally I have experientially investigated connections between body and environment, self and society, human and non-human. During my time at PARTS I learned improvisation skills, and I also began to use improvisation as a method for operating in relation to the institution of PARTS. I then took these ideas and improvisation methodologies forward into the larger world through the TWIG Project. By performing *Twig Dances* and using improvisation to lead workshops for young people in other countries, I tested the viability of improvisation as a method toward understanding relationship. Through documenting and reflecting on these experiments I have also described a rich understanding of improvisation as a lived process of embodied observation. Perceptions continually inform the improvising researcher who dances with the intention to discover, and observations are tested and refined through bodily experience.

This thesis has described a number of ways in which dance improvisation practices comprise a collection of knowledges which themselves can be seen to embody ecological principles. In documenting my experience as a

practitioner of the improvisation methods of various artists, and as practitioner and facilitator of my own improvisation performance, I have offered an account of ways in which these practices can provide the grounds to increase awareness of the relationships between living things on the earth. Toward a definition of ecology which is not fixed but is rather individual, multiple and adaptable, I have explained how certain dance improvisation practices sharpen skills of perception, thereby inspiring a practical understanding of the dynamic interrelationships which ecology aims to elucidate. Dance improvisation methods do this through suggesting practices that can heighten the individual's sensitivity to his environment on many levels: at the level of the body through sense perception; at the level of "the other" through spatial awareness; at the level of the present moment through intuition of timing; at the level of theoretical structures of the body, space and time through exercising individual agency; at the level of political, economic and sociocultural activity, by performing improvisation in ways that usefully acknowledge individual activity in local and global context; and at the level of "not knowing" and "non-doing" by surrendering self-imposed control through the use of active paradox.

A number of suggestions for further research emerge from this study.

While I have focused on dance, the TWIG Project utilized other art forms

in its explorations, and finding parallels between ecological practices and the processes of observation in singing, theater and drawing would be relevant subjects for consideration. Additionally, this study suggests that while certain ecological practices can be located in studio-based art and performance work, the *wider* environmental, social and political implications of such work stand to be realistically assessed in any situation that seeks to align itself with progressive ecological initiatives. As Albert Einstein observed in his own life and research,

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us ‘Universe’, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us.

Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty (Einstein in Russel 1982, p. 129).

Developing and articulating relationships with body, space, time, others and even “all living creatures”, dance improvisation performance can be a practice of experiencing the body as part of an ever widening circle of reference. Cultivating both an awareness of environment and a sense of responsibility, or response ability, toward other members of the biosphere, improvisation practices can provide roots and routes for an ecologically active, intentional, and embodied engagement with the world.





## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abercrombie, N. and Longhurst, B. (1998) *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- “About Earthdance” (2006) *Earthdance: Inspiring the Art and Spirit of Improvisation*. Available at: <http://earthdance.net/about.htm> (Accessed: 22 January 2010).
- Abram, D. (1995) “Merleau-Ponty and the Voice of the Earth”, in *Postmodern Environmental Ethics*, edited by Max Oelschlaeger. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- (1996) *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Achbar, M. and Wintonick, P. (1992) *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* [DVD]. London: BFI DVD.
- Achterland, a film by Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker*. (2006) Directed by Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker [DVD]. Immortal Studio.
- Adam, B. (1995) *Timewatch: The Social Analysis of Time*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Adler, J. (2002) *Offering from the Conscious Body: The Discipline of Authentic Movement*. USA: Inner Traditions.
- Agamben, G. (1995) *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- “Air pollution at historic highs in China’s Guangdong” (2008) *Reuters*. 16 January [Online]. Available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUKHKG1362420080116> (Accessed: 2 May 2008).
- Albright, A. C. (1997) *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*. Connecticut: Wesleyan.

- Albright, A. C. and Gere, D. (eds.) (2003) *Taken By Surprise: A Dance Improvisation Reader*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- Alexander, F. M. (1923) *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual Inheritance*. New York: Dutton.
- (1932) *The Use of the Self*. New York: Dutton.
- Alli, A. (2005) *Stage of Emergence: A Paratheatre Manifesto*. Available at: <http://www.paratheatrical.com/manifesto.html> (Accessed: 11 September 2009).
- Amans, D. (ed.) (2008) *An Introduction to Community Dance Practice*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Andrews, M. (ed.) (2006) *Land, Art: A Cultural Ecology Handbook*. London: RSA in partnership with Arts Council, England.
- An Inconvenient Truth: A Global Warning*. (2006) Directed by Davis Guggenheim [DVD]. USA: Paramount.
- “Art & Ecology: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Curriculum” (n.d.) *Greenmuseum.org*. Available at: <http://www.greenmuseum.org/c/aen/> (Accessed: 8 October 2008).
- Attenborough, D. (1979) *Life on Earth: A Natural History*. London: Collins and BBC.
- (1995) *The Secret Life of Plants*. London: BBC Books.
- Auge, M. (1995) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Translated by John Howe. London: Verso.
- Bachelard, G. (1964) *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by Maria Jolas. New York: Orion Press.
- Bailey, J. (2009) “Awestruck by Dance: Dance in the Melbourne Festival”, *RealTime*, Issue 88, December-January, p. 2 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.realtimearts.net/article/88/9208> (Accessed: 10 December 2009).
- Bainbridge Cohen, B. (1993) *Sensing, Feeling and Action*. Northampton: Contact Editions.

Ballet Atlantique-Régine Chopinot (n.d.) "Ballet Atlantique-Régine Chopinot", *Enterchange: Performance and Nature*. Curated by Wallace Heim. Available at: <http://greenmuseum.org/c/enterchange/artists/ballet/> (Accessed: 11 December 2009).

Banes, S. (1993) *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theatre, 1962-1964*. Duke University Press.

----- (1994) *Writing Dancing In the Age of Postmodernism*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.

Bank, L. (2008) *Tree and Space*. Available at: <http://www.treeandspace.org/> (Accessed: 16 January 2010).

Barba, E. (2005) "Reflections on Forty Years of Odin Teatret", *The Drama Review*, 49 (1), Spring, pp. 153-161.

Barba, E. and Savarese, N. (1991) *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*. London: Routledge.

Bateson, G. (1987) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. Jason Aronson.

----- (2000) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. USA: University of Chicago Press.

----- (1979) *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. New York: Bantam.

Batson, G. and Schwartz, R. E. (2007) "Revisiting the Value of Somatic Education in Dance Training Through an Inquiry into Practice", *Journal of Dance Education*, 7 (2), pp. 47-55.

Bauer, E. (2008) *At Large With Reasonable Doubt: A Soliloquy en Masse*. Antwerp: Good Move.

----- (2007) "Becoming Room, Becoming Mac: New Artistic Identities in the Transnational Brussels Dance Community",

*Sarma B-Chronicles* [Online]. Available at: [http://www.b-kronieken.be/index.php?type=research\\_eleanor&txt\\_id=0&lng=eng&p=0](http://www.b-kronieken.be/index.php?type=research_eleanor&txt_id=0&lng=eng&p=0) (Accessed: 3 October 2008).

----- (2006) "Subject: Center is Everywhere?" E-mail to Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Received 22 March 2007.

Baumrin, S. (2000) "Ode to Progress, and: Judith, and: Dona Musica's Butterflies, and: Castle of Holstebro II, and: Itsi Bitsi (review)", *Theatre Journal*, 52 (3), October, pp. 410-414.

"Beached: A Commonplace Book" (n.d.) *Rescen*. Available at: [http://www.rescen.net/Rosemary\\_Lee/beached\\_book.html](http://www.rescen.net/Rosemary_Lee/beached_book.html) (Accessed: 20 February 2010).

Bedau, M. and Humphreys, P. (eds.) (2008) *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Bell, A. D. and Bryan, A. (1991) *An Illustrated Guide to Flowering Plant Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bell, J. (1994) "Uprising of the Beast: An Interview with Peter Schumann", *Theatre*, 25 (1), pp. 32-43.

Bennett, S. (1997) *Theatre Audiences: Theory of Production and Reception*. Second edition. London: Routledge.

Benzoni, F. (2006) "Creatures as Creative: Callicott and Whitehead on Creaturely Value", *Environmental Ethics*, 28 (1), Spring, pp. 37-56.

Berger, J. (1980) *About Looking*. New York: Vintage.

Bergson, H. (1983) *Creative Evolution*. Translated by Arthur Mitchell. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Berleant, A. (1970) *The Aesthetic Field: A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*. USA: Charles C. Thomas.

----- (1992) *The Aesthetics of Environment*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- (ed.) (2002) *Environment and the Arts: Perspectives on Environmental Aesthetics*. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate.
- Berleant, A. and Carlson, A. (1998) "Introduction", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56 (2), Spring, pp. 97-100.
- Berry, W. (1981a) *Recollected Essays 1965-1980*. San Francisco: North Point Press.
- (1981b) *The Gift of Good Land*. San Francisco: North Point Press.
- "Biggest Living Organism: FUNGUS *Armillaria ostoyae*" (n.d.) *Extreme Science*. Available at:  
<http://www.extremescience.com/biggestlivingthing.htm>  
 (Accessed: 9 August 2008).
- Blakeslee, S. (2006) "Cells That Read Minds", *The New York Times*, January 10 [Online]. Available at:  
<http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F60A1F934540C738DDDA8> (Accessed: 20 April 2007).
- Blau, H. (1990) *The Audience*. London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Boal, A. (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto Press.
- (1995) *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*. Translated by Adrian Jackson. London: Routledge.
- "The Body Cartography Project" (n.d.) Available at:  
[http://www.bodycartography.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=57&Itemid=94](http://www.bodycartography.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=57&Itemid=94) (Accessed: 11 December 2009).
- Bossert, P. J. (1974) "The Sense of 'Epoche' and 'Reduction' in Husserl's Philosophy", *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 5 (3), October, pp. 243-255.
- Bourriaud, N. (2000) *Postproduction*. New York: Lukas & Sternberg.
- (2002) *Relational Aesthetics*. Translated by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mahieu Copeland. *Sine loco*: Les presses du reel.

- Bowker G. C. and Starr, S. L. (2000) *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. London: MIT Press.
- Brady, E. (1998) "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56 (2), pp. 139-147.
- (2003) *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Briginshaw, V. (2001) *Dance, Space and Subjectivity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- (2005) "From Performance through Narrative to Interconnected Subjectivities", in Giannachi, G. and Stewart, N. (eds.) *Performing Nature, Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*. Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 235-250.
- Brown C. S. and Toadvine, T. (eds.) (2003) *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Brown, J. H. (1995) *Macroecology*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Brownstein, O. L. and Daubert, D. M. (eds.) (1981) *Analytical Sourcebook of Concepts in Dramatic Theory*. Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press.
- Brown, T. (1988) *Tom Brown's Field Guide to Nature Observation and Tracking*. New York: Berkley Publishing Group.
- Budd, M. (1996) "The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 36 (3), July, pp. 207-222.
- (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature: Essays on the Aesthetics of Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burt, R. (1995) *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle and Sexuality*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- (1993) *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge.

- Buttimer, A. and Seamon, D. (eds.) (1980) *The Human Experience of Space and Place*. London: Croom Helm.
- Capra, F. (1999) *Ecoliteracy: The Challenge for Education in the Next Century*. *Liverpool Schumacher Lectures*, 20 March. Berkeley: Center for Ecoliteracy.
- Cardone, A. (2001) "Killing the Body-Ego: dance research with Min Tanaka at BodyWeather Farm, Japan", *Contact Quarterly*, Winter/Spring 2002, pp. 15-21.
- Carlisle, A. and Preston-Dunlop, V. (2010) "Living Architecture Lecture Demonstration: From the Esoteric to the Choreographic" in *The Dynamic Body in Space: Exploring and Developing Rudolf Laban's Ideas for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. [Presentations from the Laban International Conference 24-26 October 2008 at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London.] Edited by Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Lesley-Anne Sayers. Hampshire: Dance Books Ltd.
- Carlson, A. (1979) "Appreciation and the Natural Environment", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 37, pp. 267-275.
- (1981) "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 40, pp. 15-27.
- (2009) *Nature and Landscape: An Introduction to Environmental Aesthetics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Carlson, M. (1984) *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present*. USA: Cornell University Press.
- (1989) *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture*. London: Cornell University Press.
- (1996) *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. Second edition. London: Routledge.
- (2002) "After Stein: Traveling the American Theatrical 'Landscape'", in Fuchs, E. and Chaudhuri U. (eds.) *Land/Space/Theatre*. USA: University of Michigan.



- Carruthers, B. (2006) "Mapping the Terrain of Contemporary EcoART Practice and Collaboration", *The Canadian Commission for UNESCO*. Available at: <http://www.unesco.ca/en/activity/sciences/documents/BethCarruthersArtinEcologyResearchReportEnglish.pdf> (Accessed: 22 April 2008).
- Casey, E. S. (1997) *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. London: University of California Press.
- (2003) "Taking a Glance at the Environment: Preliminary Thoughts on a Promising Topic", in Brown, C.S. and Toadvine, T. (eds.) *Eco-Phenomenology*. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 187-210.
- Castree, N. and Braun, B. (eds.) (2001) *Social Nature: Theory, Practice and Politics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- de Certeau, M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chaim, D. B. (1984) *Distance in the Theatre: The Aesthetics of Audience Response*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press.
- Chappell, T. D. J. (ed.) (1997) *The Philosophy of the Environment*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Chaudhuri, U. (1994) "'There Must Be a Lot of Fish in That Lake': Toward an Ecological Theater", *Theatre*, 25 (1), pp. 23-31.
- (1997) *Staging Place: the Geography of Modern Drama*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Cheney, J. (1995) "Postmodern Environmental Ethics: Ethics as Bioregional Narrative", in Oelschlaeger, M. (ed.) *Postmodern Environmental Ethics*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1987) *The Chomsky Reader*. Peck, J. (ed.) New York: Pantheon Books.

- Cixous, H. and Conley, V. A. (1984) *Helene Cixous: Writing the Feminine*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Cixous, H. and Calle-Gruber, M. (1997) *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing*. Translated by Eric Prenowitz. London: Routledge.
- Cixous, H. (1998) *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*. New York: Routledge.
- Claid, E. (2006) *Yes! No? Maybe... Seductive Ambiguity in Dance*. London: Routledge.
- Clark, M. (2002) *Paradoxes from A to Z*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Cohen, S. S. (1984) "Ingarden's Aesthetics and Dance", in Sheets-Johnstone, M. (ed.) *Illuminating Dance: Philosophical Explorations*. London: Associated University Presses, Inc., pp. 146-166.
- Collins, T. (2008) "Catalytic Aesthetics", in *Artful Ecologies: Art, Nature and Environment Conference*. University College Falmouth, Falmouth 2006. RANE Research Cluster. Falmouth: Festerman Press, pp. 25-42.
- (2003) "Lyrical Expression, Critical Engagement, Transformative Action: An Introduction to Art and the Environment", *Community Arts Network*. Available at: [http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2003/06/lyrical\\_express.php#\\_ftnref2](http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2003/06/lyrical_express.php#_ftnref2) (Accessed: 2 January 2010).
- Compagnon, A. (1994) *The 5 Paradoxes of Modernity*. Translated by Franklin Philip. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Conley, V. A. (1997) *Ecopolitics: The Environment in Poststructuralist Thought*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Connor, S. (1997) *Postmodernist Culture*. Second edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Connolly, M. (1997) "Physical Education", in Embree, L., Behnke, E. A., Carr, D., Evans, J. C., Huertas-Jourda, J., Kockelmans, J., J. McKenna, W. R., Mickunas, I. A., Mohanty, J. N., Seebohm, T. M., Zaner, R. M. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

- Copeland, R. and Cohen, M. (eds.) (1983) *What is Dance? Readings in Theory and Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Corning, P. A. (2002) "The Re-Emergence of Emergence? A Venerable Concept in Search of a Theory", *Complexity*, 7 (6), pp. 18-30 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.complexsystems.org/publications/pdf/emergence3.pdf> (Accessed: 10 February 2010).
- Cotgreave, P. and Forseth, I. (2002) *Introductory Ecology*. Oxford: Blackwell Science Ltd.
- Corbett, E. (2004) *Forsythe Improvisation Technologies* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Brussels: PARTS.
- Counsell, C. (1956) "The Kinesics of Infinity: Laban, Geometry and the Metaphysics of Dancing Space", *Dance Research*, 24 (2), Winter 2006, pp. 105-116.
- Coupe, L. (ed.) (2000) *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. Canada and USA: Routledge.
- "Cow: The Udder Way (Manchester/Liverpool)" (n.d.) *Shrinking Cities*. Available at: <http://www.shrinkingcities.com/projekte3.0.html> (Accessed: 8 December 2008).
- Cracraft, J. and Donoghue, M. J. (eds.) (2004) *Assembling the Tree of Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crutchfield, J. P. (2008) "Is Anything Ever New? Considering Emergence", in Bedau, M. and Humphreys, P. (eds.) *Emergence; Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 269-286.
- Cunningham, M. (n.d) *Beach Birds*. [Video clip]. Available at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ra2T\\_iMXQVM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ra2T_iMXQVM) (Accessed: 19 July 2009).

----- (n.d.) *Pond Way*. [Video clip]. Available at:  
<http://www.videosurf.com/video/merce-cunningham-pond-way-50241069> (Accessed: 19 July 2009).

Cvejic, B. (2005) “To End With Judgment By Way of Clarification...”, *INVENTORY: Dance and Performance Congress / Live Act / Intervention / Publication*, Tanzquartier Wien, 3-5 March. Brussels: Bojana Cvejic and Xavier Le Roy.

----- (2007) “learning by making (Contemporary Choreography in Europe: When did theory give way to self-organization?)”, *Summit: non-aligned initiatives in education culture*. Available at: <http://summit.kein.org/node/235> (Accessed: 9 October 2008).

Daly, A. (1997) “An Experimentalist in Soul and Body”, *The New York Times*, March 30. Available at:  
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9806E0DB1E3BF933A05750C0A961958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=print> (Accessed: 23 October 2006).

----- (1999) “Horse Rider Woman Playing Dancing: Ann Daly Interviews Deborah Hay.” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*. 21:3, pp. 13-23.

----- (2002) *Critical Gestures: Writings on Dance and Culture*. Connecticut: Wesleyan.

“DeborahHay.com Biography” (n.d.) *DeborahHay.com*. Available at:  
<http://www.deborahhay.com/bio.html>  
(Accessed: 20 March 2007).

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1994) *What is Philosophy?* Translated By Graham Burchill and Hugh Tomlinson. London: Verso.

----- (2003) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Reprint. Translated by Brian Massumi. London: Continuum.

----- (2010) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Reprint. Translated by Brian Massumi. London: Continuum.

“‘DEMAE’ Performance Series ‘SHUKAKUSAI’ (Harvest Festival)”  
(n.d.) *Monochrome Circus/Kyoto*. Available at:  
<http://www.pilotprojekt-gropiusstadt.de/2003/monochrome.html>  
(Accessed: 22 January 2010).

*De Quincey Co* (n.d.) Available at:  
<http://www.bodyweather.net/mainframe2.html> (Accessed: 11  
December 2009).

Desire Lines (2005) *International Symposium Concerned with Arts  
and Ecology*. Arts & Ecology at Dartington, Devon, UK,  
September.

----- (2007) *International Symposium Concerned with Arts  
and Ecology*. Arts & Ecology at Dartington, Devon, UK,  
September 20-23.

Desmond, J. (1997) *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of  
Dance*. Duke University Press.

Devall, B. and Sessions, G. (1985) *Deep Ecology: Living as if  
Nature Mattered*. USA: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc.

Dewey, J. (2005) *Art as Experience*. Reprint. New York: Perigee.

Doel, M. (1995) “Bodies Without Organs: Schizoanalysis and  
Deconstruction”, in Pile, S. and Thrift, N. (eds.) *Mapping the  
Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*. London:  
Routledge, pp. 226-240.

Dolan, J. (2001) *Geographies of Learning: Theory and Practice,  
Activism and Performance*. Middletown, Connecticut:  
Wesleyan University Press.

Drengson, A. and Inoue, Y. (eds.) (1995) *The Deep Ecology  
Movement: An Introductory Anthology*. Berkeley: North  
Atlantic Books.

Drobnick, J. (2006) “Deborah Hay: A Performance Primer”,  
*Performance Research*, 11 (2), pp. 43-57.

- Dufrenne, M. (1973) *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*. Translated by Edward S. Casey, Albert A. Anderson, Willis Domingo and Leon Jacobson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- (1987) *In the Presence of the Sensuous: Essays in Aesthetics*. Translated by Mark S. Roberts and Dennis Gallagher. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc.
- Duncan, I. (1977) *The Art of the Dance*. Sheldon Cheney, John Milton and Ruth Neils Ward Collection. New York: Theatre Arts Books.
- Dunning, J. (1986) "Dance: Cunningham *Inlets 2*", *New York Times*, March 17. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/03/17/arts/dance-cunningham-inlets-2.html> (Accessed: 21 August 2009).
- (1987) "Dance: Deborah Hay", *New York Times*, May 28. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/05/28/arts/dance-deborah-hay.html?pagewanted=1> (Accessed: 21 January 2010).
- East, A. (2001) "Making Dance as if the World Mattered: Eco-choreography – A model for Dance making and Dance teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century", *Danz Research Forum*. University of Waikato, New Zealand.
- Eagleton, T. (1996) *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Second edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- "Ecopsychology" (n.d.) *Teaching Psychology for Sustainability: A Manual of Resources*. Available at: [http://www.teachgreenpsych.com/tg\\_ecopsychology.html](http://www.teachgreenpsych.com/tg_ecopsychology.html) (Accessed: 20 January 2010).
- Egoscue, P. (1992) *The Egoscue Method of Health Through Motion*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- (2000) *Pain Free: A Revolutionary Method for Stopping Chronic Pain*. USA: Random House.
- (2004) *Pain Free for Women: The Revolutionary Program for Ending Chronic Pain*. USA: Random House.

Embree, L., Behnke, E. A., Carr, D., Evans, J. C., Huertas-Jourda, J., Kockelmans, J. J. McKenna, W. R., Mickunas, I. A., Mohanty, J. N., Seebohm, T. M., Zaner, R. M. (eds.) (1997) *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

*Encarta World English Dictionary* (1999) Featured in MS Office Software, Microsoft Corporation, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Engdahl, C. (2010) *Swedance: International Network of Movement*. Available at: <http://swedance.ning.com/> (Accessed: 10 January 2010).

Enghauser, R. (2007) "The Quest for an Ecosomatic Approach to Dance Pedagogy", *Journal of Dance Education*, 7 (3), pp. 80-90.

Evernden, N. (1992) *The Social Creation of Nature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

----- (1993) *The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment* Second Edition. London: University of Toronto Press Inc.

Fallaize, E. (ed.) (1998) *Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical Reader*, London and New York: Routledge.

Fara, P. (2004) *Sex, Botany & Empire: The Story of Carl Linnaeus and Joseph Banks*. Second edition. Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd.

Faust, F. (1998) *The Axis Syllabus: Universal Motor Principles™*. Brussels: Frey Faust.

----- (2005) *Contact Improvisation Skills with Axis Syllabus Principles* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Brussels: The Tango Bar.

Feldenkrais, M. (1949) *Body and Mature Behavior*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

----- (1972) *Awareness Through Movement*. New York: Harper and Row.

----- (1992) *The Potent Self*. New York: HarperCollins.

- Fensham, R. (2008) "Deconstruction and Embodiment: Steps Towards the Decolonizing of Dance Discourses", *Discourses in Dance*, 4 (2), pp. 25-38.
- The Fictional Dogshelf Theatre Company* (n.d.) Available at: <http://www.dogshelf.com/never.html> (Accessed: 13 July 2009).
- Filip, G. M. and Yang-Erve, L. (1997) "Effects of Prescribed Burning on the Viability of *Armillaria ostoyae* in Mixed-Conifer Forest Soils in the Blue Mountains of Oregon", *Department of Forest Science, Oregon State University* [Online]. Available at: [http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/org\\_NWS/NWSci%20journal%20articles/1997%20files/Issue%202/v71%20p137%20Filip%20and%20Yang-Erve.PDF](http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/org_NWS/NWSci%20journal%20articles/1997%20files/Issue%202/v71%20p137%20Filip%20and%20Yang-Erve.PDF) (Accessed: 8 September 2008).
- Flynn, B. (2004) "Maurice Merleau-Ponty", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/merleau-ponty/> (Accessed: 20 December 2009).
- Fisher, A. (2002) *Radical EcoPsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life*. State University of New York Press.
- Forbes, S. (2008) "Jiddu Krishnamurti and His Insights into Education", *Infed* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-krish.htm> (Accessed: 23 October 2008).
- Forti, S. (2004) "Animate Dancing: A Practice in Dance Improvisation", in Albright, A.C. and Gere, D. (eds.) *Taken By Surprise: A Dance Improvisation Reader*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 53-63.
- Foster, S. L. (2003) "Choreographies of Gender", in Striff, E. (ed.) *Performance Studies: Readers in Cultural Criticism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 166-77.
- (1986) *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*. Berkeley: University of California Press.



- (ed.) (1995a) *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power*. Routledge.
- (ed.) (1995b) *Choreographing History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Fox, W. (1995) *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism*. Dartington: Green Books Ltd.
- Fraleigh, S. H. (1987) *Dance and the Lived Body: A Descriptive Aesthetics*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- (1993) “Good Intentions and Dancing Moments: Agency, Freedom, and Selfknowledge in Dance”, in Neisser, U. (ed.) *The Perceived Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 102-111.
- (1999b) *Dancing Into Darkness: Butoh, Zen and Japan*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- (1999b) “Witnessing the Frog Pond”, in Fraleigh, S. H. and Hanstein, S. (eds.) *Researching Dance: Evolving Modes of Inquiry*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- (2004) *Dancing Identity: Metaphysics in Motion*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- (2005) “Spacetime and Mud in Butoh”, in Giannachi, G. and Stewart, N. (eds.) *Performing Nature, Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*. Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 327-344.
- Fraleigh, S. H. and Hanstein, S. (eds.) (1999) *Researching Dance: Evolving Modes of Inquiry*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Franklin, A. (2002) *Nature and Social Theory*. London: Sage.
- Franklin, S., Lury, C. and Stacey, J. (2000) *Global Nature, Global Culture*. London: Sage.
- Fraser, M. and Greco, M. (eds.) (2005) *The Body: A Reader*. Oxon: Routledge.

- Freedberg, D. and Gallese, V. (2007) "Motion, Emotion and Empathy in Esthetic Experience", *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences*, 11 (5) [Online]. Available at: [http://www.italianacademy.columbia.edu/art\\_and\\_neuro/paper\\_sp07\\_FreedbergGallese.pdf](http://www.italianacademy.columbia.edu/art_and_neuro/paper_sp07_FreedbergGallese.pdf) (Accessed: 30 January 2010).
- Freshwater, H. (2009) *Theatre & Audience*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Friedman, J. M. (1976) *Dancer and Spectator: An Aesthetic Distance*. Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers.
- Freidman, T. L. (2007) "It's too late for later", *International Herald Tribune*. 16 December [Online]. Available at: <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2007/12/16/opinion/edfriedman.php> (Accessed: 9 January 2008).
- Fuchs, E. (1994) "Play as Landscape: Another Version of Pastoral", *Theatre*, 25 (1), pp. 44-51.
- Fuchs, E. and Chaudhui, U. (eds.) (2002) *Land/Scap/Theatre*. USA: University of Michigan.
- Fulkerson, M. (1976) "Language of the Axis", *Theatre Papers, First Series*, Dartington College of Arts, 12a, 12b, 12c, Spring/Summer, pp. 1-100.
- (1981) "The Move to Stillness", *Theatre Papers, Fourth Series*. Dartington: Dartington College of Arts, 10, pp. 3-26.
- (n.d.) *Release, from Body to Spirit: Seven Zones of Comprehension Coming from the Practice of Dance*. Available at: <http://www.streamxs.nl/releasedance/pdf/Credits,%20Release.pdf> (Accessed: 20 January 2010).
- (n.d.) *Mary O'Donnell Fulkerson*. Available at: <http://www.releasedance.com/> (Accessed: 14 February 2010).
- Fuller, L. (n.d.) *Serpent Dance*. [Video clip]. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDUn-VK4MJQ&NR=1> (Accessed: 19 July 2009).

- “Fungi symbiosis could protect trees from acid rain” (2002).  
*Environmental Data Interactive Exchange Net*. 21 June.  
 Available at:  
[http://www.edie.net/news/news\\_story.asp?id=5641](http://www.edie.net/news/news_story.asp?id=5641) (Accessed:  
 20 October 2008).
- Fusco, C. (1994) “The Other History of Intercultural Performance”, *The Drama Review*, 38 (1), Spring, pp. 143-67.
- Gablik, S. (1985) *Has Modernism Failed?* London: Thames & Hudson.
- (1998) “The Nature of Beauty in Contemporary Art”, *New Renaissance*, 8 (1) [Online]. Available at:  
<http://www.ru.org/81gablik.html> (Accessed: 9 October 2008).
- (2008) “Art & The Big Picture”, in *Artful Ecologies: Art, Nature and Environment Conference 2006*. RANE Research Cluster. University College Falmouth in association with Festerman Press.
- Galeota-Wozny, N. (2005) “Interview with Jennifer Monson on BIRD BRAIN DANCE—A Navigational Dance Project”, *Contact Quarterly*, Summer/Fall, pp. 12-23.
- Gare, A. E. (1995) *Postmodernism and the Environmental Crisis*. London: Routledge.
- Garoian, C. R. (1999) *Performing Pedagogy: Toward an Art of Politics*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Garner, S. B. (1994) *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Genosko, G. (2000) “The Life and Work of Felix Guattari from Transversality to Ecosophy”, in Guattari, F. *The Three Ecologies*. Translated by Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton. London: Continuum, pp. 106-159.
- (2002) *Felix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction*. London: Continuum.
- Giannachi, G. and Stewart, N. (eds.) (2005) *Performing Nature: Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*. Bern: Peter Lang.

- Giannachi, G. and Kaye, N. (2002) *Staging the Post-Avant-Garde: Italian Experimental Performance after 1970*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Gibson, J. (1950) *The Perception of the Visual World*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- (1966) *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Gil, J. (1998) *Metamorphoses of the Body*. Translated by Stephen Muecke. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Goldhahn, E. (2007) *Shared Habitats: The MoverWitness Paradigm*. PhD Thesis. Dartington College of Arts.
- Gore, A. (2006) *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- (2007). "Nobel Lecture: Speech by Al Gore on the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, December 10, Oslo, Norway". Available at: [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2007/gore-lecture\\_en.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2007/gore-lecture_en.html) (Accessed: 21 September 2008).
- Gregory, G. and Urry, J. (eds.) (1985) *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Grene, M. (1993) "The Primacy of the Ecological Self", in Neisser, U. (ed.) *The Perceived Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 112-117.
- Grosz, E. (2004) *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely*. North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- (2005) *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*. North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- (1995) *Space, Time, and Perversion*. London: Routledge.
- (1994) *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

- Grotowski, J. (1968) *Towards a Poor Theatre*. London: Odin Teatrets Forlag.
- Guattari, F. (1995) *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Translated by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis. Sydney: Power Publications.
- (1989) *The Three Ecologies*. Translated by Chris Turner. *New Formations*, 8, Summer, pp. 131-147 [Online]. Available at: [http://www.amielandmelburn.org.uk/collections/newformations/08\\_131.pdf](http://www.amielandmelburn.org.uk/collections/newformations/08_131.pdf) (Accessed: 21 January 2010).
- (2000) *The Three Ecologies*. Translated by Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton. London: Continuum.
- Guest, A. H. (1985) "Dynamics", *The Labanotator*. Volume 40. London: Language of Dance Centre.
- Guest, A. H. and Kolff, J. (2003a) *Advanced Labanotation: Sequential Movements*. Issue 4. Hampshire: Dance Books Ltd.
- (2003b) *Advanced Labanotation: Floorwork, Basic Acrobatics*. Issue 6. Hampshire: Dance Books Ltd.
- "Guide to the Rudolf Laban Icosahedron" (n.d.) *Online Archives of California*. Available at: <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt0t1nc9dc> (Accessed: 10 August 2009).
- Halprin, A. and Kaplan, R. (eds.) (1995) *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance*. New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press.
- Halprin, A. (1989) "Planetary Dance", *The Drama Review*, 33 (2), MIT Press, pp. 51-66.
- Hamilton, J. (1993) *Julyen Hamilton: Technique and Improvisation*. [DVD]. London: The Arts Council of England.
- Haraway, D. J. (1997) *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium: FemaleMan©\_Meets\_Oncomouse™*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Harrison, S., Pile, S., and Thrift, N. (eds.) (2004) *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd.
- (1991) *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books Ltd.
- Harvey, D. (1990) *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd.
- Hawken, P. (2007) *Blessed Unrest*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Hay, D. (2000) *My Body the Buddhist*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- (2001) *What If Now Is? The score for The Other Side of O (1998), part 1 of dance trilogy Boom Boom Boom*. Available at: <http://www.deborahhay.com/What%20if%20now%20is.html> (Accessed: 22 March 2007).
- (2005a) *O [Workshop]*. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Brussels: PARTS, May.
- (2005b) *O [Performance by PARTS students]*. Brussels: PARTS, May.
- (2008) *Grope and Find It and Pull It Out [Performance]*. London: Bonnie Bird Theatre, Laban Centre. 27 January.
- Hayes, C. (1986) "Dancing in Earth Context: Interview with Simone Forti", *Contact Quarterly*. Spring/Summer, pp. 9-11.
- Hayles, K. (1999) *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Hayward, T. (1995) *Ecological Thought: An Introduction*. Oxford: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Headrick, D. R. (2000) *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700-1850*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Heidegger, M. (1971) *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: HarperCollins.
- Heil, M. and McKey, D. (2003) "Protective Ant-Plant Interactions as Model Systems in Ecological and Evolutionary Research", *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics*, 34, pp. 425-453 [Online]. *JSTOR*. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/30033782> (Accessed: 24 December 2009).
- Heilbroner, R. L. (1975) *An Inquiry into The Human Prospect*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Heim, W. (2005) "Performance and Ecology: A Reader's Guide", in Giannachi, G and Stewart, N. (eds.) *Performing Nature: Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*. Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 405-415.
- (2005) "Navigating Voices", in Giannachi, G and Stewart, N. (eds.) *Performing Nature: Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*. Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 199-216.
- Heitler, W. (1998) "Goethean Science", in Seamon, D. and Zajonc, A. (eds.) *Goethe's Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature*. USA: State University of New York Press, pp. 55-69.
- Hepburn, R. W. (1966) "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty", in Williams, B. and Montefiore, A. (eds.) *British Analytical Philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- (1984) *Wonder and Other Essays*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- (2001) *The Reach of the Aesthetic: Collected Essays on Art and Nature*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Highwater, J. (1996) *Dance: Rituals of Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- hooks, b. (2003) *Teaching Community: a Pedagogy of Hope*. London: Routledge.
- (1990) *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Husserl, E. (1931) *Ideas*. Translated by W. R. Boyce Gibson. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- (1970a) *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Translated by David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Husserl, E. (1970b) *Logical investigations* (Volumes 1 & 2). Translated by J. N. Findlay. New York: Humanities Press.
- Husserl, E. (1977) *Cartesian Meditations: an Introduction to Meta-physics*. Translated by D. Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (2002) *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. 5th edn. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Ingarden, R. (1975) "Phenomenological Aesthetics: An Attempt At Defining Its Range", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 33 (3), pp. 257-269.
- Ingold, T. (1998) *What is an Animal?* London and New York: Routledge.
- (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Dwelling, Livelihood and Skill*. London: Routledge.
- Institute for Social Ecology* (n.d.) Available at: <http://www.social-ecology.org/about/> (Accessed: 19 December 2009).
- Irland, B. (1992) "Artist Statement", *Women Artists of the American West*. Available at: <http://www.ecn.purdue.edu/~artemis/Ressler/artists/Irelandstat.html> (Accessed: 12 December 2009).



- Irigaray, L. (1985) *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Translated by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke. New York: Cornell University Press.
- (1987) *Sexes et parentes*. Paris: Minuit.
- Irigaray, L. (1994) *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution*. Translated by Karin Montin. London: The Athlone Press.
- Jacky Lansley Dance Theatre (n.d.) *View from the Shore* [Program notes]. Available at:  
<http://www.jackylansley.co.uk/reviews/view/programme.pdf>  
 (Accessed: 10 August 2009).
- Jagtenberg, T. and McKie, D. (eds.) (1997) *Eco-Impacts and the Greening of Postmodernity: New Maps for Communication Studies, Cultural Studies, and Sociology*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Janicaud, D., Courtine, J. F., Chrétien, J. L., Henry, M., Marion, J. L., and Ricœur, P. (2000) *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*. Translated by Bernard G. Prusak. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Jencks, C. (1989) *What is Postmodernism?* New York: Saint Martin's Press.
- Jennifer Monson's Mahomet Aquifer Project Performances* (2009)  
 Available at:  
[http://illinois.edu/calendar/Calendar?calId=1775&eventId=126558&ACTION=VIEW\\_EVENT](http://illinois.edu/calendar/Calendar?calId=1775&eventId=126558&ACTION=VIEW_EVENT) (Accessed: 29 August 2009).
- Jennings, L. (2006) "Submerged moves: The illusion of underwater dance is a beguiling spectacle" *The Observer*. Available at:  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2006/feb/26/dance>  
 (Accessed: 10 August 2009).
- Jinen Butoh: Atsushi Takenouchi* (2007) Available at: [http://www.jinen-butoh.com/profile\\_e.html](http://www.jinen-butoh.com/profile_e.html) (Accessed: 12 December 2009).
- Johnson, D. H. (1978) *The Protean Body*. New York: Harper Colophon.
- (1992) *Body: Recovering Our Sensual Wisdom*. North Atlantic Books.

- (1994) *Body, Spirit and Democracy*. North Atlantic Books.
- (1995) *Bone, Breath and Gesture: Practices of Embodiment*. North Atlantic Books.
- “Joseph Beuys and his 7000 Oaks” (n.d.) *Walker Art Center’s Tree Planting Project*. Available at:  
<http://www.walkerart.org/archive/E/A24315825E9BEAE26130.htm>  
 (Accessed: 16 May 2010).
- Juhan, D. (1998) *Job’s Body: A Handbook for Bodywork*. New York: Station Hill Openings.
- Kaplan, R. (2003) “Some Traveler’s Tales”, in Albright, A.C. and Gere, D. (eds.) *Taken By Surprise*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 215-226.
- Kaye, N. (1994) *Postmodernism and Performance*. London: Macmillan Press.
- (2000) *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*. London: Routledge.
- Keithley, K. (2004) “Intracellular Sports: In ‘The Match’, the latest from Deborah Hay, four people and their many millions of cells play an awareness game”, *Offoffoff.com*. Available at:  
<http://www.offoffoff.com/dance/2004/match.php> (Accessed: 24 April 2005).
- Kellner, D. (2000) *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kershaw, B. (1992) *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention*. London: Routledge.
- (2007) *Theatre Ecology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kester, G. (2000) “Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework for Littoral Art”, *Variant Supplement*, 9. Available at:  
<http://www.variant.randomstate.org/9texts/KesterSupplement.html>  
 (Accessed: 20 August 2009).

- Kisselgoff, A. (1992), "Surreal Beach Life Amid the Silences of Unreality", *New York Times*, 19 March. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/19/arts/review-dance-surreal-beach-life-amid-the-silences-of-unreality.html> (Accessed: 19 June 2009).
- Koerner, L. (1999) *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Kozel, S. P. (1994) *As Vision Becomes Gesture*. PhD Thesis. University of Essex.
- Kraus, L. (2004) "Hay Brings Out the Best in Parkinson, Warby, Cardona & Lorimer", *The Dance Insider*. Available at: [http://www.danceinsider.com/f2004/f0211\\_1.html](http://www.danceinsider.com/f2004/f0211_1.html) (Accessed: 6 August 2004).
- Krishnamurti, J. (1953) *Education and the Significance of Life*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.
- (1987) *Krishnamurti to Himself*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.
- (1996) *Total Freedom: The Essential Krishnamurti*. New York: Harper Collins.
- (1999) *This Light in Oneself: True Meditation*. Boston: Shambala Publications Inc.
- Kuppers, P. (2003) *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge*. London: Routledge.
- Kwon, M. (2002) *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. London: MIT Press.
- Laban, R. (1959) *Effort*. Reprint. London: Unwin Brothers Ltd.
- (1966) *Choreutics*. London: MacDonald and Evans.
- (1984) *A Vision of Dynamic Space*, compiled by Lisa Ullmann. Routledge Falmer.

- (1988a) *The Mastery of Movement*. Fourth edition. Revised by Lisa Ullmann. Plymouth: Northcote House.
- (1988b) *Modern Educational Dance*. Third edition. Revised by Lisa Ullmann. Plymouth: Northcote House.
- Lacy, S. (1995) *New Genre Public Art*. Seattle: Bay Press.
- Laermans, R. (2004) *Performing the Belief in Contemporary Dance*. [Unpublished paper obtained from the author]. Centre for Sociological Research, Catholic University of Leuven.
- Lane, J. (1996) *A Snake's Tail Full of Ants: Art, Ecology and Consciousness*. Dartington: Green Books Ltd.
- Langer, S. (1967) *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Lansley, J. (2009) "Jacky Lansley Choreographic Works" Available at: <http://www.jackylansley.co.uk/pages/works5.htm> (Accessed: 9 September 2009).
- Lash, S., Szersyznski, B. and Wynne, B. (eds.) (1996) *Risk, Environment and Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.
- Leake, J. and Woods, R. (2009) "Revealed: the environmental impact of google searches: New research lifts lid on links between CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and internet searches", *The Times Online*, January 11. Available at: [http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech\\_and\\_web/article5489134.ece](http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and_web/article5489134.ece) (Accessed: 2 January 2010).
- Lee, R. and Pollard, N. (2004) "How to hoard: field notes of rehearsals: *In The Field*", *Rescen*. A paper first presented at the Dance and Performance Ethnography Forum at De Montfort University, 24 January. Available at: [http://www.rescen.net/Rosemary\\_Lee/hoarding/hoarding2.html](http://www.rescen.net/Rosemary_Lee/hoarding/hoarding2.html) (Accessed: 29 June 2009).
- Lefebvre, H. (1995) *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Leopold, A. (1966) *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford University Press.

- (1964) *Plant Growth and Development*. London: McGraw Hill.
- LePecki, A. (1999) "Skin, Body and Presence in Contemporary European Choreography", *The Drama Review*, 43 (4), Winter, pp. 129-140.
- (2004) *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*. Wesleyan.
- (2006a) "Mutant Enunciations" *The Drama Review* 50:4, Winter, pp. 17-20.
- (2006b) *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. Routledge.
- Long, C. (2008) *Navigating Narritory, Creating Terristory: story as a way of knowing*. Dissertation, MA Art and Ecology, University College Falmouth incorporating Dartington College of Arts.
- Lovelock, J. (1995) *The Ages of Gaia: New Edition*. USA: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Lyotard, J. F. (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press and Manchester University Press.
- Mackey, S. (2006) "~~Intuition~~", *Performance Research Lexicon*, pp. 75-78.
- Mackinlay, S. (2007) "Exceeding Truth: Jean-Luc Marion's Saturated Phenomena", *Pacifica*, 20 (1). Abstract [Online]. Available at: <http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsidt=18554846> (Accessed: 21 January 2010).
- Macnaghten, P. (2006) "Nature". *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23 (2-3), May, pp. 347-349. Available at: <http://ejournals.ebsco.com/direct.asp?ArticleID=45BEB51EEC6A6CFACF5D> (Accessed: 21 August 2009).
- Macnaghten, P. and Urry, J. (eds.) (1998) *Contested Natures*, London: SAGE Publications.
- (2000) "Bodies in the Woods", *Body & Society*, 6 (3-4), pp. 166-182.

- Macy, J. (1991) *World As Lover, World As Self*. Berkeley, California: Parallax Press.
- Male, J. (2005) "Jose Limon Technique: Taught by Daniel Lewis", *Dance Magazine*, April. Available at: [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1083/is\\_4\\_79/ai\\_n13456598/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1083/is_4_79/ai_n13456598/) (Accessed: 10 August 2009).
- Maletic, V. (1987) *Body, Space, Expression: The Development of Rudolf Laban's Movement and Dance Concepts*. New York: Mouton De Gruyter.
- Manning, S. A. (1995) "Modern Dance in the Third Reich: Six Positions and a Coda", in Foster, S.L. (ed.) *Choreographing History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 166-176.
- Marion, J. (2000) "The Saturated Phenomena", in Janicaud, D. et al. *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*. New York: Fordham University Press, pp. 176-216.
- (2002) *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Markham, D. (1996-1999) *Modern Technique* [Classes]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Winston Salem: North Carolina School of the Arts.
- Marranca, B. (1996) *Ecologies of Theatre: Essays at the Century Turning*. Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Martin, R. (1998) *Critical Moves*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Maturana, H. R. and J. Varela, F. J. (1992) *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*. Revised edition. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc.
- May, J. and Thrift, N. (eds.) (2001) *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality*. London and New York: Routledge.
- May, T. J. (2005) "Re-Membering the Mountain: Grotowski's Deep Ecology" in in Giannachi, G. and Stewart, N. (eds.) *Performing*

*Nature, Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*. Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 345-359.

McGrath, J. (1990) *The Bone Won't Break: On Theatre and Hope in Hard Times*. London: Methuen Drama.

Merchant, C. (ed.) (1994) *Ecology: Key Concepts in Critical Theory*. Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962) *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

----- (1963) "*The Primacy of Perception*" and *Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*. Edie, J. M. (ed.) Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

----- (1964) *Signs*. Translated by Richard C. McLeary. Chicago: Northwestern University Press.

----- (1968) *The Visible and the Invisible*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Edited by Claude Lefort. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

----- (2002) *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*. Translated by Leonard Lawlor and Bettina Bergo. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Mesle, C. R. (2008) *Process-relational philosophy: an introduction to Alfred North Whitehead*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press.

Mills, M. and Cohen, B. B. (1979) *Developmental Movement Therapy*. Amherst: The School for Body/Mind Centering.

Milton, K. (1996) *Environmental and Cultural Theory: Exploring the role of anthropology in environmental discourse*. London and New York: Routledge.

Milz, B. (n.d.) "*Conglomerates*" *Dance Dramaturgy & Dramaturgy of the Body* [Online]. Available at:  
<http://www.tau.ac.il/~dramatur/docs/CONGLOMERATES.doc>  
(Accessed: 10 December 2008).

- Mitchell, M. (2008) "New U. of I. Dancer-Choreographer Focusing on Environmental Works", *University of Illinois New Bureau*, November 5. Available at: <http://news.illinois.edu/news/08/1105dance.html> (Accessed: 31 August 2009).
- Moffett, M. W. (1999). "Ants and Plants: A Profitable Partnership", *National Geographic*, 195 (2), February, pp. 122-133.
- Monson, J. (n.d.) "Artist's Statement", *iLAND Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Art, Nature and Dance*. Available at: <http://www.ilandart.org/about.cfm?id=2> (Accessed: 8 October 2008).
- (2009) "Speaker Biography", *Planet U: the Human Story of Climate Change, University of Illinois*. <http://www.planetu.illinois.edu/speakers/> (Accessed: 31 August 2009).
- (2010) Interview with Jennifer Monson by Malaika Sarco-Thomas via Skype. 30 January.
- Moran, D. (2000) *Introduction to Phenomenology*. London: Routledge.
- Moran, D. and Mooney, T. (eds.) (2002) *The Phenomenology Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Morawski, S. (1972) "What is a Work of Art?", in Baxandall, L. (ed.) *Radical Perspectives in the Arts*. Reprint. Middlesex: Penguin Books, pp. 324-370.
- Moustakas, C. (1994) *Phenomenological Research Methods*. California: SAGE Publications.
- Myers, M. (2006) *Homing Place*. Available at: <http://www.homingplace.org/> (Accessed: 12 December 2009).
- Naess, A. (1984) "Identification of a Source of Deep Ecological Attitudes", in Michael Tobias (ed.) *Deep Ecology*. San Marcos, CA: Avant Books, pp. 256-270.
- (1973) *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary*. Available at:



[http://www.alamut.com/subj/ideologies/pessimism/Naess\\_deepEcology.html](http://www.alamut.com/subj/ideologies/pessimism/Naess_deepEcology.html) (Accessed: 23 September 2008).

Naess, A. and Sessions, G. (1995) "A Deep Ecology Eight Point Platform", in *Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism*, George Sessions, ed. Boston and London: Shambhala. Available at: <http://www.haven.net/deep/council/eight.htm> (Accessed: 21 August 2009).

Nakamura, Tamah L. (2001) "Japanese Butoh Dance as Participatory Action Research", *Proceedings, Fielding Graduate Institute, Action Research Symposium*, Alexandria, Virginia July 23-24. Available at: [http://www.fielding.edu/research/ar\\_papers/Nakamura.pdf](http://www.fielding.edu/research/ar_papers/Nakamura.pdf) (Accessed: 16 March 2008).

Nassauer, J. I. (1997) *Placing Nature: Culture and Landscape Ecology*. Washington D.C. and Covelo, California: Island Press.

Neisser, U. (ed.) (1993) *The Perceived Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nelson, L. (2001) "Before Your Eyes: Seeds of a Dance Practice" [first published in French translation as "Vu du Corps: Lisa Nelson, Mouvement et Perception"], *Nouvelles de Dance* 48-49, Brussels, Belgium. Available at: <http://www.charliemorrissey.com/#/classes/4527708001> (Accessed: 5 January 2010).

----- (2006) *Contact Improvisation Archive DVD Number One* [DVD]. Directed by Lisa Nelson. East Charlston, Vermont: Videoda.

Newlove, J. and Dalby, J. (2004) *Laban For All*. London: Nick Hern Books Limited.

"New Perceptions of Morecambe Bay Through Dance, Film and Sound" (2008) *Re-Enchantment and Reclamation*. Available at: <http://www.re-enchantment.org.uk/> (Accessed: 18 May 2008).

Nicholson, L. J. (ed.) (1990) *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York and London: Routledge.

- Nicholsen, S. W. (2002) *The Love of Nature and the End of the World: The Unspoken Dimensions of Environmental Concern*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press.
- Novack, C. (1990) *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- (1995) "The Body's Endeavors as Cultural Practices", in Foster, S.L. (ed.) *Choreographing History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 177-184.
- "Number of cells in the human body, scientific estimates" (n.d.) [Online]. Available at:  
<http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?q=trillion+cells+in+the+human+body&hl=en&lr=&btnG=Search>  
 (Accessed: 6 November 2007).
- Oddey, A. and White, C. (eds.) (2009) *Modes of Spectating*, Exeter: Intellect.
- Oelschlaeger, M. (ed.) *Postmodern Environmental Ethics*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- "Oguri and Body Weather Laboratory" (n.d.) *Body Weather Laboratory*.  
<http://www.lightningshadow.com/About.html> (Accessed: 11 December 2009).
- Ohno, K. and Ohno, Y. (2004) *Kazuo Ohno's World: From Without & Within*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- "Ointment Home" (n.d.) <http://www.ointment.org.uk/home.html>  
 (Accessed: 11 December 2009).
- Olivan, R. (2005) *Drumming* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Brussels: PARTS.
- Oliver, M. (1978) *American Primitive*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.
- Olsen, A. (1998) *Bodystories: Experiential Anatomy* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Lewiston, Maine: Bates Dance Festival.

- (2000) *Bodystories: A Guide to Experiential Anatomy*. Station Hill Openings/Barrytown, Ltd.
- (2002) *Body and Earth: An Experiential Guide*. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- Pallant, C. (2006) *Contact Improvisation: An Introduction to a Vitalizing Dance Form*. USA: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Parkinson, C. (2005) “Folding the field – Fielding the Fold”, in De Belder, S. and Van Rompay, T. (eds.) *Ten Years of PARTS*. Brussels: PARTS.
- (2006) *Contemporary Technique* [Class]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Brussels: PARTS.
- Partsch-Bergsohn, I. and Bergsohn, H. (2003) *The Makers of Modern Dance in Germany: Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss*. New Jersey: Princeton Book Company.
- Parviainen, J. (1998) *Bodies Moving and moved: A Phenomenological Analysis of the Dancing Subject and the Cognitive and Ethical Values of Dance Art*. Tampere Studies in Philosophy. Vammala: Tampere University Press.
- (2002) “Bodily Knowledge: Epistemological Reflections on Dance”, *Dance Research Journal*, 34 (1), Summer. Available at: <http://choreograph.net/articles/bodily-knowledge-epistemological-reflections-on-dance> (Accessed: 13 December 2009).
- Patton, P. (1996) *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Pavis, P. (1990) “Interculturalism in Contemporary Mise en Scene: The Image of India in *The Mahabharata* and the *Indiade*”, in Fisher-Lichted, E., Riley, J. and Gissenwehrer, M. (eds.) *The Dramatic Touch of Difference: Theatre, Own and Foreign*. Tübingen: Gunter Naar Verlag, pp. 57-72.
- (1996) *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. London: Routledge.

- Pearson, M. (2007) *In Comes I: Performance, Memory and Landscape*. University of Exeter Press.
- Pearson Widrig Dance Theater (n.d.) "Community Performance Projects" Available at: <http://www.pearsonwidrig.org/repertory/community-performance.php#> (Accessed: 11 December 2009).
- Pellauer, D. (2007) *Ricoeur: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum.
- Pepper, D. (1996) *Modern Environmentalism: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Perron, W. (1999) "Dance: The Power of Stripping Down to Nothingness", *The New York Times*, November 7. <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/11/07/arts/dance-the-power-of-stripping-down-to-nothingness.html?pagewanted=all> (Accessed: 11 December 2009).
- Persighetti, S. (2003) *A Site-Specific Toolkit* [Exhibition]. Dartington College of Arts: Dartington Gallery, April.
- Phelan, P. (1993) *Acting Out: Feminist Performances*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.
- Phelan, P. and Reckitt, H. (eds.) (2003) *Art and Feminism*. London: Phaidon Press.
- Pile, S. and Thrift, N. (eds.) (1995) *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*. London: Routledge.
- PLATFORM (2002) "Freedom in the City", *PLATFORM: promoting creative processes of democratic engagement to advance social and ecological justice*. Available at: <http://www.platformlondon.org/fitc.asp> (Accessed: 11 December 2009).
- Plumwood, V. (1993) *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. London: Routledge.
- (2002) *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. London: Routledge.

- Poynor, H. (2004) "Bodies and Sites: Kinaesthetic relationship to site, a practitioner's perspective" [Unpublished paper and presentation]. Exeter University, January 28. Obtained from the author.
- Pratt, V., Howarth, J. and Brady, E. (eds.) (2000) *Environment and Philosophy*. London: Routledge.
- Preston-Dunlop, V. and Sayers, L. (eds.) (2010) *The Dynamic Body in Space: Exploring and Developing Rudolf Laban's Ideas for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. [Presentations from the Laban International Conference 24-26 October 2008 at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London]. Alton, Hampshire: Dance Books Ltd.
- Proctor, J. D. (2001) "Solid Rock and Shifting Sands: The Moral Paradox of Saving a Socially Constructed Nature", in Castree, N. and Braun, B. (eds.) *Social Nature: Theory, Practice and Politics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Putnam, H. (1981) *Reason, Truth and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rabillard, S. (1994) "Fen and the Production of a Feminist Ecotheater", *Theatre*, 25 (1), pp. 62-71.
- Rabkin, G. (2000) "Danish Discoveries", *Performing Arts Journal*, 64, pp. 95-100. Available at: [http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.falmouth.ac.uk:2048/journals/performing\\_arts\\_journal/v022/22.1rabkin.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.falmouth.ac.uk:2048/journals/performing_arts_journal/v022/22.1rabkin.pdf) (Accessed: 12 December 2009).
- RANE: Research in Art, Nature and Environment (2008) *Artful Ecologies: Art, Nature and Environment Conference*. University College Falmouth, Falmouth 2006. RANE Research Cluster. Falmouth: Festerman Press.
- Read, A. (1993) *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*. London: Routledge.
- Readings, B. (1991) *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Reckett, H. and Phelan, P. (eds.) (2001) *Art and Feminism*. New York: Phaidon.

Reeve, S. (2006) "The Next Step: Eco-Somatics and Performance", *The Changing Body*. January 6-8. University of Exeter.

----- (2009) *The Ecological Body*. Available at:  
<http://www.moveintolife.co.uk/EcologicalBody/#-1> (Accessed: 22 January 2010).

"Re-imaging Performance" (2009) *NCSA*. March 15  
<http://www.ncsa.illinois.edu/News/Stories/Dance/> (Accessed: 31 August 2009).

Reynolds, D. (n.d.) "Displacing Humans: Merce Cunningham's Crowds"  
Available at:  
<http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/1no1/DEEreynolds.htm> (Accessed: 19 June 2009).

Ricoeur, P. (2007) *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*. Translated by Edward G. Ballard and Lester E. Embree. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Ritsema, J. (2004) "Lecture on Improvisation", *Sarma*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.sarma.be/text.asp?id=1101> (Accessed: 11 September 2008).

----- (2005) *Theater* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Brussels: PARTS

Ritsema, J. and Williams, S. (2005) *BLINDSPOT* [Performance and program text]. Performance 23 March in Kaaistudios, Brussels. Accompanying text published by: [jritsema@dgt.nl](mailto:jritsema@dgt.nl).

Roberts, R. H. (2004) "'Nature', Post/Modernity and the Migration of the Sublime", *Ecotheology: Journal of Religion, Nature & the Environment*, December, 9 (3), pp. 315-337.

Robinette, B. (2006) "A Gift to Theology? Jean-Luc Marion's 'Saturated Phenomenon' in Christological Perspective" [Abstract]. *Wiley InterScience* [Online]. Available at:  
<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118501638/abstract?CRTRY=1&SRETRY=0> (Accessed: 21 January 2010).

- Rolston, H. (1997) "Nature for Real: Is Nature a Social Construct?", in Chappell, T.D.J. (ed.) *The Philosophy of the Environment*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 38-64.
- Roman, A. (2006) *Forsythe Improvisation* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Brussels: PARTS.
- Rosenthal, R. (n.d.) "Rachel Rosenthal/Biography" Available at: <http://www.rachelrosenthal.org/rr/biography.html> (Accessed: 30 August 2009).
- Rotie, M. G. (2009) Discussion with Marie-Gabrielle Rotie by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Dartington Campus, University College Falmouth, Devon, UK. 9 December 2009.
- Rudstrom, S. (2003) *Action Theater Workshop* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Dartington College of Arts.
- (2005) *Action Theater Improvisation Training* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Berlin.
- Russel, P. (1982) *The Awakening Earth, Our Next Evolutionary Leap*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Sagar, G.R., Harper, J.L. (1964) "Plantago Major L., P. Media L. and P. Lanceolata", *Journal of Ecology*, 52 (1), March, pp. 189-221, *JSTOR* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2257792> (Accessed: 20 February 2010).
- Saito, Y. (1998) "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56 (2), Spring, pp. 101-111.
- Saldino, A. (2004) "Foucault's Imperative for the Philosophy of Religion" Presented at AAR-National Meeting, San Antonio, November. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.lmc.edu/faculty/saldinoa/docs/FoucaultsImperative.pdf> (Accessed: 21 January, 2010).
- Sankai Juku* (n.d.) Available at: [http://www.sankaijuku.com/about\\_e.htm](http://www.sankaijuku.com/about_e.htm) (Accessed: 10 December 2009).
- Santayana, G. (1923) *Scepticism and Animal Faith: Introduction to a System of Philosophy*. London: Constable.

- (1955) *The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Santkin, M. Ingvarsten, M. and Brutmann, S. F. (2009) "Where's my privacy?" [Dance project and film]. Available at: <http://www.aisikl.net/mette/html/wimp.html> (Accessed: 2 January 2010).
- Sarco, M. (2003). *Response Ability: Artist Statement and Documentation*. M.A.L.S. degree, Hollins University.
- Sarco, M. (2004a) '*Called to Living, Called to Respond*': *Towards a theory of improvisational dance as ethical love*. M.A., Dartington College of Arts.
- (2004b) *Intimate Revolts: Feminist Practices of Dance Improvisation Performance*. M.A., Dartington College of Arts.
- (2004c) *Zen + Flesh + Performance* [Program notes from MA concert]. 1 October. Dartington College of Arts.
- Sarco, M. and Thomas, R. (2006) "TWIG Project Mission Statement", *TWIG: Together We Integrate Growth*. [Online]. Available at: <http://travelblog.org/Bloggers/TWIG-project--Together-We-Integrate-Growth/> (Accessed: March 20, 2007).
- Sartre, J. P. (1969) *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Translated by Hazel Barnes. London: Routledge.
- (2002) *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imaginary*. Translated by Jonathan Webber. London: Routledge.
- Schechner, R. and Schuman, M. (1976) *Ritual, Play and Performance: Readings in the Social Sciences/Theater*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Schechner, R. (1994) *Environmental Theater*. New York: Applause Theatre Books.
- (2006) *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.



- Schneider, R. (1997) *The Explicit Body in Performance*. London: Routledge.
- “School for Social Ecology” (n.d.) University of California Irvine. Available at: <http://socialecology.uci.edu/pages/school-social-ecology> (Accessed: 19 December 2009).
- Schumacher, M. (2003) *Improvisation* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Kyoto Hot Summer Dance Festival. Kyoto Art Center, Japan.
- Shusterman, R. (1997) *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*. London: Routledge.
- (2000) *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art*. London: Cornell University Press.
- (2008) *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Schwartz, R. E. (2002) *Body-Mind Centering* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Lewiston, Maine: Bates Dance Festival.
- Seamon, D. (1979) *A Geography of the Life-World: Movement, Rest, and Encounter*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- (1980) “Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets”, in Buttimer, A. and Seamon, D. (eds.) *The Human Experience of Space and Place*. London: Croom Helm, pp. 148-165.
- Seamon, D. and Mugeraur, R. (eds.) (1985) *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World*. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Seamon, D. and Zajonc, A. (eds.) (1998) *Goethe’s Way of Science; A Phenomenology of Nature*. USA: State University of New York Press.
- Sellers, S. (ed.) (1988) *Writing Differences: Readings from the Seminar of Helene Cixous*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- (ed.) (1997) *The Helene Cixous Reader*. New York: Routledge.

- Semetsky, I. (n.d.) "The Phenomenology of Tarot, or: The Further Adventures of a Postmodern Fool" Monash University Victoria Australia [Online]. Available at: <http://www.trinity.edu/org/tricksters/trixway/current/Vol%204/Vol41/Semetsky.pdf> (Accessed: 2 December 2010).
- Sewall, L. (1999) *Sight and Sensibility: The Ecopsychology of Perception*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Shepard, P. (1999) "The Conflict of Ideology and Ecology", in Shepard, F.R. (ed.) *Encounters with Nature: Essays by Paul Shephard*. Washington D.C.: Island Press, pp. 158-169.
- Sheets, M. (1966) *The Phenomenology of Dance*. Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (1979) *The Phenomenology of Dance*. Second edition. London: Dance Books Ltd.
- (ed.) (1984a) *Illuminating Dance: Philosophical Explorations*. London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, Inc.
- (1984b) "Phenomenology as a Way of Illuminating Dance", in *Illuminating Dance: Philosophical Explorations*. London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, Inc., pp. 124-145.
- (1990) *The Roots of Thinking*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- (1999) *The Primacy of Movement*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Simms, A. (2005) *Ecological Debt: The Health of the Planet and the Wealth of Nations*. London: Pluto Press.
- "Simon Whitehead" (n.d) *Enterchange: Performance and Nature*. Curated by Wallace Heim. Available at: <http://greenmuseum.org/c/enterchange/artists/whitehead/> (Accessed: 17 July 2009).
- Simson, K. (2005) *Improvisation Workshop* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Brussels: PARTS.

- (2007a) *Improvisation Workshop* [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Penzance.
- (2007b) Interview by Malaika Sarco-Thomas [Unpublished audio CD]. October. Dartington College of Arts.
- Smith, A. (1976) "Footlights: Deborah Hay", *The Village Voice*. December 13 [Online]. Available at: <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1299&dat=19761213&id=SXMQAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=RYsDAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5968,4685366> (Accessed: 1 February 2010).
- Smith, M. (2001) *An Ethics of Place: Radical Ecology, Postmodernity and Social Theory*. USA: State University of New York Press.
- "Social Sculpture Research Unit" (2008) Available at: <http://www.social-sculpture.org/> (Accessed: 31 August 2009).
- Soja, E. (1989) *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Theory*. New York and London: Verso.
- (1996) *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Solnit, R. (2000) *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. London: Viking.
- (2003) "Elements of a New Landscape", in *As Eve Said to the Serpent: On Landscape, Gender and Art*. The University of Georgia Press, pp. 45-62.
- Sonfist, A. (2010) *Alan Sonfist Official Website*. Available at: <http://www.alansonfist.com/> (Accessed: 16 January 2010).
- Soper, K. (1995) *What is Nature? Culture, Politics and the Non-Human*. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Soulé, M. and Lease, G. (eds.) (1995) *Reinventing Nature? Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction*. Washington D.C.: Island Press.
- Spaid, S. (2002) *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies*. Cincinnati: The Contemporary Arts Centre and ecoartspace.

- Spiegelberg, H. (1973) "Is the Reduction Necessary for Phenomenology? Husserl's and Pfander's Replies", *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 4 (1), January, pp. 3-15.
- (1994) *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*. Third edition. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Spinoza, B. (1677) *Ethics in Everyman Classics*. Translated by G.H.R. Parkinson (1989) *Philosophy Archive*. Available at: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ne/spinoza.htm> (Accessed: 21 March 2007).
- Spretnak, C. (1999) *The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature and Place in a Hyper Modern World*. New York: Routledge.
- States, B. O. (1985) *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Steinman, L. (1986) *The Knowing Body: The Artist as Storyteller in Contemporary Performance*. Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books.
- Stewart, N. (1998) "Relanguaging the Body: Phenomenological Descriptions of the Body Image", *Performance Research*, 3 (2), pp. 42-53.
- (2005) "Dancing the Time of Place: Fieldwork, Phenomenology and Nature's Choreography", in Giannachi, G. and Stewart, N. (eds.) *Performing Nature, Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*. Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 363-376.
- (2010) "The Weathering Body: Composition and Decomposition in Environmental Dance and Site-Specific Art", in *The Dynamic Body in Space: Exploring and Developing Rudolf Laban's Ideas for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. [Presentations from the Laban International Conference 24-26 October 2008 at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London]. Edited by Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Lesley-Anne Sayers. Hampshire: Dance Books Ltd.
- Stodelle, E. (1978) *The Dance Technique of Doris Humphrey*. New Jersey: Princeton Book Company.

Stoner, J. (2003-2004) *Ki Aikido* [Classes]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. St. John's Church Hall, Totnes, UK.

“Suprpto Surydarmo” (n.d.) *Undisclosed Territory: Performance Art Event*. Available at: <http://www.lemahputih.com/undisclosed/Artist08/Suprpto%20Suryo%20darmo.html> (Accessed: 29 January 2010).

Sussman, L. (1998) “Dance Audiences: Answered and Unanswered Questions”, *Dance Research Journal*. University of Illinois Press on behalf of the Congress on Research in Dance, 30 (1), Spring, pp. 54-63, *JSTOR* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1477894> (Accessed: 13 January 2010).

“Sustainable Dance Ecology” (n.d.) *Movement Research Spring Festival 09*. Available at: [http://movementresearch.org/rollcall/?page\\_id=450](http://movementresearch.org/rollcall/?page_id=450) (Accessed: 20 January 2010).

Szerszynski, B. (1996) “On Knowing What to Do: Environmentalism and the Modern Problematic”, in *Risk, Environment and Modernity*. Lash, S., Szerszynski, B. and Wynne, B. (eds.) London: Sage Publications, pp. 104-137.

Szerszynski, B., Heim, W. and Waterton, C. (eds.) (2003) *Nature Performed: Environment, Culture and Performance*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

“Taking Wing: Jennifer Monson Celebrates Bird Migration Through Dance” (n.d.) *Walker Art Center*. September 2003-May 2004. Available at: <http://calendar.walkerart.org/canopy.wac?id=1159> (Accessed: 13 June 2009).

Thomas, H. (1995) *Dance, Modernity & Culture*. London: Routledge.

----- (2003) *The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Tilley, C. (1994) *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Tisdall, C. (1979) *Joseph Beuys*. London: Thames and Hudson.

- Todd, M.E. (1937) *The Thinking Body*. New Jersey: Princeton Book Company.
- Tuan, Y. F. (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspectives of Experience*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- (1990) *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes and Values*. Chichester: Columbia University Press.
- Tudge, C. (2000) *The Variety of Life: A Survey and a Celebration of all the Creatures that Have Ever Lived*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tufnell, B. (2006) *Land Art*. London: Tate.
- Uminski, K. (2007) *The Goddess Dancing: Isadora Duncan and Modernism*. Available at:  
[http://www.thegoddessdancing.com/isadora\\_duncan.htm](http://www.thegoddessdancing.com/isadora_duncan.htm)  
 (Accessed: 19 June 2009).
- University of the Trees*. (2007) Available at:  
<http://www.universityofthetrees.org/> (Accessed: 12 December 2009).
- Van de Ven, F. (2009) *Body Weather Amsterdam*. Available at:  
<http://bodyweatheramsterdam.blogspot.com/> (Accessed: 11 December 2009).
- Van Manen, M. (2006) *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. Second edition. Ontario, Canada: The Athlouse Press.
- Virilio, P. (1993) "The third interval", Translated by Tom Conley in Conley, V. A. (ed.) *Rethinking Technologies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Vogel, S. (1996) *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Volk, T. (1995) *Metapatterns: Across Space, Time and Mind*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- (1998) *Gaia's Body: Toward a Physiology of Earth*. New York: Copernicus.

- Wallis, B. and Kastner, J. (2005) *Land and Environmental Art*. Phaidon Press, Ltd.
- Warren, K. (ed.) (1996) *Ecological Feminist Philosophies*, Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Waterton, C. (2003) "Performing the Classification of Nature", in Szerszynski, B., Heim, W. and Waterton, C. (eds.) *Nature Performed: Environment, Culture and Performance*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 111-129.
- Watts, A. (1976) *The Way of Zen*. UK: Pelican Books.
- Whitehead, S. (2005) "Walks to Illuminate", *Untitled States.net*. Available at: <http://www.untitledstates.net/walkstoilluminate/public.htm> (Accessed: 11 December 2009).
- Williams, D. (1996) "Working (in) the in-between: contact improvisation as an ethical practice", *Writings on Dance: The French Issue*, 15, Winter, pp. 22-37.
- (2001) "Navigating the Currents: David Williams interviews Basia Irland", April. Available at: [http://www.unm.edu/~basia/BIRLAND/site/HTML/essay\\_3.html](http://www.unm.edu/~basia/BIRLAND/site/HTML/essay_3.html) (Accessed: 11 December 2009).
- Weiss, J. (2005) "Inserting a Bit of Nature into our own Asphalt Jungle: Jennifer Monson/Bird Brain takes its final flight", *The Brooklyn Rail*, October [Online]. Available at: <http://www.brooklynrail.org/2005/10/dance/inserting-a-bit-of-nature-into-our-own-a> (Accessed: 15 October 2008).
- Westra, L. and Wenz, P. (eds.) (1995) *Faces of Environmental Racism: Confronting Issues of Global Justice*. England: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- White, D. R. (1998) *Postmodern Ecology: Communication, Evolution and Play*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Whitehead, A. N. (1926) *The Concept of Nature*. London: Cambridge University Press.

- (1969) *Process and Reality: an Essay in Cosmology*.  
Reprint. USA: MacMillan Company.
- (1997) *Science and the Modern World: Lowell lectures, 1925*. Reprint. New York: Free.
- Wilkie, F. (2002) "Mapping the Terrain: A Survey of Site-Specific Performance in Britain", *New Theatre Quarterly*, 18 (70), pp. 140-160.
- 'William Forsythe Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye' (2003) Second edition [CD-ROM and booklet]. ZKM Digital Arts Edition.
- Williams, B. and Montefiore, A. (eds.) (1966) *British Analytical Philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Wimhurst, K. (2005) *Love Fragments* [Song lyrics]. Music & Dance Exchange at Dartington, Dartington College of Arts.
- Wolfe, C. (1998) *Critical Environments: Postmodern Theory and the Pragmatics of the "Outside"*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wolfe, D. (2003) "The Common Erasure of Space and Nature: Communication as a Bridge Between the Discourses of Designed Space and Ecocentred Identity", *The Trumpeter*, 19 (3) [Online]. Available at:  
<http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca/index.php/trumpet/article/view/80/80>  
(Accessed: 22 August 2009).
- Wolff, J. (1983) *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Wong, G. J. (n.d.) "Symbiosis: Mycorrhizae and Lichens", *University of Hawaii* [Online].  
<http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/faculty/wong/Bot201/Symbiosis/Symbiosis.htm> (Accessed: 8 September 2008).
- Wood, B. and Constantino, P. (2004) "Human Origins: Life at the Top of the Tree", in Cracraft, J. and Donoghue, M.J. (eds.) *Assembling the Tree of Life*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 517-535.



- Wood, D. (2003) "What is Eco-Phenomenology?", in Brown, C.S. and Toadvine, T. (eds.) *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Wooten, C. (2009) "Navigating Liminal Space in the Feminist Ballet Class", *Global Approaches to Dance Pedagogy-Research and Practice. The Congress on Research in Dance*. De Montfort University. 25-27 June.
- Worster, D. (1993) *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (1994) *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*. Second edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- "Wrights and Sites" (n.d.) Available at: <http://www.mis-guide.com/> (Accessed: 12 December 2009).
- Zahavi, D. (2001) *Husserl and Transcendental Intersubjectivity: A Response to the Linguistic-Pragmatic Critique*. Translated by Elizabeth A. Behnke. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- (2003) *Husserl's Phenomenology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Zambrano, D. (2005) "Passing Through Improvisation Workshop" [Workshop]. Attended by Malaika Sarco-Thomas. Brussels: PARTS.
- Zaporah, R. (1995) *Action Theater: The Improvisation of Presence*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Zelditch, M. L., Swiderski, D. L., Sheets, D. H. and Fink, W. L. (eds.) *Geometric Morphometrics for Biologists: A Primer*. London: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Zerzan, J. (n.d.) *The Catastrophe of Postmodernism*. Available at: <http://www.primitivism.com/postmodernism.htm> (Accessed: 28 May 2008).

Zimmerman, M. E. (1994) *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity*. Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

----- (1985) "The role of spiritual discipline in learning to dwell on earth", in Seamon, D. and Mugeraur, R. (eds.) *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World*. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, pp. 247-256.