**Sense of a Self, Emerging:**

**Nomadic Trajectories in Dance**

**By**

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**Thesis submitted for the award of PhD**

**Declaration of Authorship**

I, Alan Duffield, declare that in the following thesis the work presented is my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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**Sense of a Self, Emerging: Nomadic Trajectories in Dance.**

**Abstract**

This thesis considers a sense of self as an emergent, embodied process in somatically oriented UK contemporary dance. Central to this examination is the physicality of the dance form, with the body as a site of discourse, supporting embodied cognition and opposing mind-body dichotomies. Proposals are made concerning the emergent, processual and nomadic trajectories of a sense of a self through dance. Conditions for a process of an emergent self are linked to ideas of presence and place, which are themselves seen as emergent, plastic, mutually dependent and sustaining. Alterity and agency both stem from and are contributory towards this process.

Overall this thesis adopts a post-humanist rather than a post-modern position and uses cross-disciplinary support from writers such as Elizabeth Grosz, Rosi Braidotti, Antonio Damasio and Tim Ingold, as well as from recent work in neuroscience on action understanding and how the body in action shapes the self. Regular reference is made to the work of Moshe Feldenkrais on bodily self-awareness. Consideration is given of the sometimes controversial claims made concerning the part played by mirror neuron systems. A general discussion of theoretical material and positions established from it is then further developed and interrogated using case studies of material from practitioners Rosemary Lee and Yael Flexer - in particular Lee’s ideas concerning the intelligent body and Flexer’s on the in-between, ‘un-home’ and hybridity. This is followed by an examination of original dance work made in collaboration with dancers in training, exploring embedded and embodied possibilities for an emergent self. Analysis of particular dance works is supported by material from interviews and email exchanges with practitioners and some of the dancers involved, including an investigative dialogue between the author and Jonathan Burrows. This thesis closes by drawing together trajectories established in the preceding narratives about the idea of a self, emerging within the dancer-as-nomad.

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**PART 1**

# INTRODUCTION

## Tracing Narratives

The body at all times communicates the progress of its movement within and through environments, marking it as a site of meaningful discourse, both a meeting of and the origin for multiple subject trajectories. The moving body is a dynamic presence, not one caught and set within the idea of ‘I’, although it is still charged with narratives of identity. This thesis explores contexts in which dance encapsulates and reveals those narratives and why such expression, rooted in movement, can be explained as emergence of a sense of a self. A sense of self is firmly interwoven with ideas of place and presence, and proposals are made throughout, arguing for an interdependence of meaning between them.

The language of the dancing body is not contained within a particular syntax, even though that might be indicated by the lexicon of specific genres. José Gil, in *Metamorphoses of the Body*, argues that as dance is beyond syntax it does not relate to meanings outside of body movement and that “everything is displayed in expression, there is nothing hidden, no background” (168). He considers dance “a sort of levitation that carries within it and presents to everyone the key to the intelligence of the body” (169). Gill maintains that this is true whatever score is imposed, or is required of the dancer and that dance always exudes a “residue that is not formalizable” (169). He goes on to claim that: “Dance is the quintessential mockery of signs and forms that set themselves up in place of meaning of the body” (169). This is not to suggest that there is some meaning beyond meaning, as it were, that dance achieves through a transcendental state. What it does point to is the possibility that the embodied form that is dance is itself a form of resistance - a position that will be developed as the thesis progresses. This thesis also supports the argument that the material body is the site of discourse, rather than supposing dance to be a form of reductionism, through which it is movement that is reduced to symbols. The progress through environments that dance speaks of is also “the dancers’ energy, their flair, their singularity, their self-investment” (165).

This opening statement developed from the starting point of further investigating the way in which the dancing body communicates. It is a question that has been of personal interest for some time, made increasingly relevant by a growing unease with the postmodern turn, and the way it appeared to diminish the vitality and material presence of a notion of subject in performance. New questions and directions became necessary, or presented themselves from this initial position. As a result, this thesis is itself made of emerging nomadic trajectories, which have enabled an inter-disciplinary approach.

The body is the essential focus, through the idea of body as a site of discourse, in part prompted by initial readings of Elizabeth Grosz’ *Volatile Bodies*. Questions that follow from that, though not in a tidy linear narrative, concern what the discourse is and how such a discourse is placed within a non-binarised environment. If the body is the site of discourse how is that discourse made vital and material? Consequently, the research is concerned with investigation of notions of self and the difficult idea of presence, in particular through a move away from binarised ideas of ego driven individuality. Somatic practice in dance, with its attentive awareness of the body, provides a way to engage with vitality and materiality. Questions then emerge concerning the site itself – where the body is situated, what embeds it and how embodiment is understood as a result.

It is from this combination of questions that proposals concerning an interdependent, interactive linking of self-place-presence proceed, with self as subject of the narrative. Further linked questions concerning environment and the elusive concept of habitation give rise to investigation of un-home, the in-between and a processual engagement of the self. The work of Tim Ingold on the “ecological context of people’s interrelationship with the environment” (171), starting from *The Perception of the Environment*, is of continued importance in locating questions of self-place-presence.

The direction of the research and the way in which the aims and questions above are addressed, adopts a Posthuman approach, influenced by the work of Rosi Braidotti. It is an approach characterised by affirmation, vitality, and plasticity – the possibility of multiple becomings rather than fixed identities, of affect and alterity, rather than absence and anonymity. Posthumanism invites a cross-disciplinary approach, coupled to promotion of the mutuality of mind/body. It encourages the idea of trace and intertwining trajectories, and this is in evidence in the way the thesis is structured.

The emergence of a sense of self, as an embodied presence, is not fixed but in continual processes of becoming. In *Choreographing Difference*, Ann Cooper Albright writes of an interest in “cracking the glass bubble of mystery” (17) that enmeshes the idea of presence within what she suggests is too often seen as something magical, imbued with mysterious and above all unknowable qualities. She comments that presence: “has often been romanticized as a magical, ineffable quality that can transcend the specificities of movement style, cultural context, and historical moment” (17). In order to move beyond such flights of fancy, however, a materialist view of embodied presence and subjectivity is adopted, as opposed to ideas of a confined and simple physicality.

Dualistic thinking which separates mind and body and has recourse to notions of the ‘unknowable’ is opposed in this thesis. Dance, as a form that is most concerned with the body and its physical expression, is well suited to promoting thinking that opposes those passing dispensations of mind-body dualism. Through the arguments offered in support of an anti-dualistic position, alternative perspectives emerge that are more immediately relevant to and representative of the material presence of the body in the current moment. An emergence of a sense of self is seen as one of a singular presence that is not fixed, but in continual processes of becoming, incorporating self, place and presence into an autopoietic view of a sense of a self. This approach also opens up relevant opportunities to examine material that investigates the systemic character of living cells in relation to embodiment. The discussion of work on mirror neurons that follows in Chapter 2 makes use of these opportunities. This also, perhaps surprisingly from some points of view, adds to the weight of evidence supporting a non-linear, constitutive, dynamic view, rather than a reductionist and binary approach. Research into mirror neurons, as well as more general theory stemming from the field of neuroscience, is one theoretical ingredient supporting proposals on emergence of self. It is not without some elements of controversy - and care is taken to represent this.

The work presented here builds on foundations laid in the 1960s and 1970s which deconstructed and reconstructed concepts of representation. Ramsay Burt in *Judson Dance Theatre: Performative Traces* (2006) suggests this resulted in a plurality of meanings through what he described as “allegories of the ordinary and particular” (92). These provided metonymic shifts from the universal to the sometimes subversive particular. The effect and continuing influence of that period can be detected in the growing importance of the somatic approach since the mid-1970s, developing understanding of the importance of bodily movement in self-awareness and consciousness.

Somatic practice is diverse but there are shared elements that identify it. Increased, more acute awareness of movement is central and is based on exploration of an embodied source, on remaining receptive and responsive to the body in movement rather than on completion of the ‘correct’ or ‘right’ movement. In order to move beyond those constraints the idea of the intelligent body takes precedence. Dancers ‘listen’ to the body, sometimes using focused rest, and movement visualisation to help identify fixed patterns, habits and responses. Touch is used as an important constituent of proprioceptive alertness through a variety of methods including contact improvisation, and body exploration. Somatic practice promotes increased kinaesthetic awareness and a more acute understanding of embodiment. This in turn results in an ability to recognise, change and transform established patterns of movement through a heightened understanding of the sensory feedback the body provides. Somatic practice helps explain and show how self through movement can be seen as vital and material, in processes of constant emergence, interactive with and responsive to environments. Examples of the wide range of current somatic dance practice can be found in the 2015 collection *Attending to Movement: Somatic Perspectives on Living in this World*, edited by Sarah Whatley et al.

A variety of somatic practices links the three dance practitioners chosen for detailed examination here. In Chapter 3, Rosemary Lee’s work, in which she sees dance as transformative and touch of importance, examines the states of fully attentive, alert awareness that she looks for and seeks to develop in dancers who work with her. In Chapter 4, Yael Flexer’s work explores the importance of the body to her practice, her use of contact, and the way she views somatics as part of the in-between of everyday and performance. Chapter 5 shows how methods used in research and development for *Emerging Never Arriving* encourage dancers to look beyond training and expectation. Chapter 6 analyses Jonathan Burrows’ comments on what the body remembers, what dancers know at the physical level, how this knowledge re-emerges and how he identifies it in himself. In this thesis, somatic practice in dance is linked firmly to, and helps locate proposals concerning the body as a site of discourse and to the integration of mind/body.

It is evident that the examples and practices of somatics above have a clear link to and are influenced by the Feldenkrais Method. His identification with and influence on current somatic practice since the 1960s is widely acknowledged. Martha Eddy, for example, places him as one of the somatic pioneers in the inaugural publication of *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*, 6 August 2009. She points to his “inward road of exploring the body” and specifically to “auto-suggestion, self-imagery and the workings of the unconscious mind”. The key to his relevance both to somatic practices in dance and to this thesis lies in the movement-centred system of personal awareness at the heart of The Feldenkrais Method. Feldenkrais helps towards an understanding of the ways in which movement is vitally concerned with processual emergence of self.

Feldenkrais’ carefully structured, movement-centred system is based on his belief that greater awareness of movement allows new movement potentials to emerge and consequently that positive developments in self-image, which is never static, can be achieved. In *The Elusive Obvious*, Feldenkrais writes “it is … necessary to think of better movement rather than right; the right movement has no future development” (92). He proposes that the unique personal experience of the environment’s effect on our nervous system, expressed through movement, gives rise to a sense of self that is neither fixed nor predetermined. He considers the brain to be changeable and not hard-wired – a position now largely accepted in neuroscience.

The range of Feldenkrais’ relevance to the thesis is wide. In Chapter 2, for example, his position on the role of the nervous system, the way in which we image movement, how we can delay the realisation of a movement between intention and execution, and how this contributes to self-knowledge is used to give support to the interpretation offered of the role of mirror neurons, as well as to Antonio Damasio’s ideas on the body as mind. Feldenkrais is used to alongside Lee’s ideas concerning the intelligent body, body awareness and transformation through dance in Chapter 3. In Chapters 4 and 6, Yael Flexer’s body centred approach to her work, her dancers’ testimony to her promotion of self-exploration, and her transformative work with Three Score Dance Company are all examples of the applied influence of Feldenkrais. My own work with dancers examined in Chapter 5, though not claiming to be Feldenkrais Method, clearly owes a great deal to his views on exploration of self-image through movement.

In seeking to make a contribution to a developing understanding of the relationship between movement, self-awareness and consciousness, arguments are advanced in this thesis that propose the emerging self as subject of its own narrative. This supports the posthuman view of multiple nomadic subjectivities within the notion of movement as affect.

As this thesis is located within a posthuman, anti-dualistic approach, it argues for ideas of mutuality and plasticity as vital constituents of emergence of a sense of self in dance and its relationship to materiality of the body. In this context, the suggestion that any part of what is generated by and through the body can be ‘unknowable’ is consequently rejected. The body is described as a site of discourse both from within, and as an interactive part of a dynamic environment. It signals body/mind as an active indissoluble principle - a position that is increasingly adopted by both practitioners and theoreticians alike. The examples used as the thesis develops are representative of work by such practitioners and writers, who are most often associated with somatic practices. Discourse, in this context, also points to the processes of the body being in continual dynamic exchange with the material conditions of its own emergence, providing the means for becoming subject of its own narrative.

I intend this thesis to make a particular contribution to a growing move away from the postmodern turn in cultural analysis, with its draining of individual significance from human self-place-presence, to the processual, emergent dynamism of posthumanism. As Rosi Braidotti writes in *The Posthuman*, the posthuman subject is: “materialist and vitalist, embodied and embedded” (188) and is far removed from the “mournful vision of a subject… attached to the conditions of its own impotence …” (189). The posthuman subject is always in a dynamic process of becoming, and I argue throughout that dance is eminently fitted to the idea of the emergence of nomadic self-presence through multiple subjectivities.

The title of the thesis suggests a number of linked possible readings, and this is associated with the idea of nomadic trajectories. However, I do not intend this to provide the opportunity for those trajectories to be either random, or disconnected, nor for the idea of the nomadic to indicate a form of rootlessness. This is discussed in more detail when considering Yael Flexer’s views and use of the notion of ‘unhomed’ and of hybridity in Chapter 3. The idea of nomadic trajectories in dance is concerned with a processual unfolding of possibilities, in keeping with the emphasis placed on emergence, plasticity, and interdependence. This is always anchored by an insistence that the moving body remains the irreducible centre of an emergence of a sense of self in dance. Whatever trajectories, movements, becomings, traces or shifts of ground occur, the nomadic textures associated with these trajectories emanate from and in some senses return to the body and its materiality within an environment. This is presented here as habitation. Arguments are made for habitation itself to be the fleeting moments of emerging self in a series, but not a regularity, or linearity, of pulses of affect.

There is clear recognition here of the depth and breadth of already existing literature concerned with space, place, and development of self and notions of presence. In this thesis, a contribution is made to that body of knowledge in the proposal concerning interdependence of self-place-presence in dance. The proposal extends the connection of posthumanism to dance in general, not least through its application of an applied understanding of the nomadic, of affect and of multiple subjectivities.

The thesis presents a very particular, singular combination of theory and practice in order to develop understanding of self-place-presence through movement. Reflection on existing dance work, tempered by first-hand commentary and explanation from practitioners, is added to responses from dancers themselves and is further enriched through dance work made for - or influenced by - the research. Nomadic trajectories in dance are seen to belong to multiple approaches.

Adoption of an inter-disciplinary approach is a necessary feature of the research. It brings together an innovative grouping of knowledges, an example of which is the inclusion of recent neuroscientific study to add support to ways of understanding connections between movement and development of self. The inclusion of neuroscientific material further explores mutually supportive investigation between the humanities and sciences. No claim is being made for this as an example of the first use of neuroscience in some aspects of dance analysis. References occur in other literature, for example Susan Leigh Foster’s *Choreographing Empathy* published in 2011. It is also the subject of several research papers, an example being ‘Neurocognitive Control in Dance Perception and Analysis’ (2012), written by Emily Cross who has carried out a number of research projects in the field. In this thesis, however, a different approach to, and use of neuroscientific material is made.

## Methodology

The thesis is in two parts. The first part locates and examines the role and contribution of influential theoretical material, while the second part offers supporting evidence, consideration and interrogation of key ideas in the context of particular, somatically linked case studies. Threads are drawn together from sources outside dance to interact with the professional expertise of current choreographers, dancers and acknowledged writers and theorists on dance.

The Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 form the first part, in which theoretical positions are located, identified and explained and neuroscientific material introduced and made relevant. Finding threads that weave through different types of knowledge requires entering the different languages involved in those knowledges. These are especially present within specific subject terminologies and the underlying intentions involved in those terminologies. From this it is argued that an inter-disciplinary approach is similar to an act of translation, seeking to find cross-fertilisation rather than in the strict application of those different specific terminologies. As Walter Benjamin writes in *Illuminations*: “all suprahistorical kinship of languages rests in the intention underlying each language as a whole – an intention, however, which no single language can attain by itself but which is realized only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other” (74). Material chosen to illustrate and support an interdisciplinary approach comes in the main from writers who are themselves proponents of such a method, offering the opportunity to avoid what Benjamin points out as “[t]he basic error of the translator” in preserving “the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue” (81).

The second part is directly concerned with dance practice through the choice of practitioners Rosemary Lee, Yael Flexer and Jonathan Burrows, each of whom bring specific support for, as well as challenges to the ideas being presented. The selection of these three practitioners and the choices from their respective bodies of work proceeded from the way in which the questions and aims of the thesis developed. They were not selected in advance and the choices do not demonstrate some of the expected reasons which might group practitioners together. The questions and aims of the thesis intertwine and interact, and are best seen as trajectories of enquiry rather than routes: as emerging, though not random or unconnected paths. Similarly, the choice of practitioners reflects that approach and provides ways of following traces and paths, rather than analysis of specific examples of practice as matters of proof. What binds them together and gives the choices contextual coherence is an essential focus on the body, of its materiality and of the indivisibility of mind/body. Each practitioner provides particular routes into ways in which the body becomes a site of discourse and is linked to proposals made concerning self-place-presence. These apparently disparate choices also contribute to investigations into how and why dance is a sense of a self, emerging. Each of the choices can be placed in a developing posthuman discourse and each practitioner uses or is directly concerned with somatic practices. Each of the practitioners sees the dancing body as part of an interactive, dynamic, developing environment and so link positively with Tim Ingold’s views on environment, acknowledged to be influential in the thesis.

The initial choice of Jonathan Burrows was prompted by the publication in 2010 of *A Choreographer’s Handbook*, in which Burrows posed questions that were also emerging in the early stages of this thesis. Of particular interest were those questions concerning dance as a form of negotiation with what the body thinks, its patterning of images, and of temporal and spatial understanding. Through a series of emails in which he elaborated on, or reset some of the questions posed in *A Choreographer’s Handbook*, Burrows helped stimulate new directions in the early stages of the thesis. It was important that this discussion provided the opportunity to become indirectly involved in *Rebelling Against Limit*. This involvement, plus the valuable opportunity to see its first performance and hear the following discussion at an invited preview, led to its selection from Burrows’ work. In the second half of Chapter 6 this is discussed in detail and the notion of the self emerging in dance as a form of resistance is proposed.

Rosemary Lee and Yael Flexer both regard dance as transformative, though through different methods in their practice. Both are concerned with awareness through body movement. Both want their practice to have a potential to be transformative for both the dancer and the spectator. Flexer’s has a particular relevance to posthuman thought on the body and to ideas of the nomadic. In particular, her work asks questions of the relationship of performance to the in-between, and provides insights into the idea of un-home, of struggles for entry and identity, and of the instability of habitation and environment. These in turn offer ways into problematizing proposals of self-place-presence, given even greater relevance by her commitment to opposing conventional and gender biased views of the dancer’s body. The choice of the triptych *Shrink’d, Doing Done and Undone,* and particularly *The Living Room*, stems from these considerations, analysed in full in Chapter 4.

Rosemary Lee offered the opportunity to further investigate the idea of the intelligent body and what she describes as an “arrival” into a “rawer sense of self”. That choice was cemented by ideas stimulated in a long discursive interview and later by observing rehearsal of *Melt Down*. Lee links her work to the environment, her upbringing and the way this informs her practice. Of the three practitioners chosen, her work seems at first to be most clearly oriented within somatic practice. In conversation, she suggested a correspondence to Ingold’s views of the body within its environment and, like Flexer, she gives importance to touch and to what might be revealed through kinaesthetic awareness. If Burrows suggested ways of investigating resistance and endurance, and Flexer shifting ground and the idea of unhome, Lee provided ways into exploring place through an embedded and vital understanding of embodiment. As a result, the following examples of Lee’s work were chosen and are discussed in Chapter 3: *Boy*, with its acute sense of an individual suffused in their environment; *Melt Down*, with its exploration of movement melting into and through proprioceptive limits; *The Suchness of Henie and Eddie* looking at the intelligent body, self and kinaesthetic awareness/empathy and *Common Dance* which Lee sees overall as apiece about what it is to be human, crossing gender and belief systems. It is a transformative piece, using touch in various ways and it enables unique singularities of self to emerge from within an organic group.

An active approach was taken to the inclusion of these practitioners. Direct contact was made with each of them in order to focus material within the needs of the research. With Rosemary Lee, this resulted in being invited to watch rehearsals at Cecil Sharp House before the Granary Square performance of *Melt Down*, followed by a long interview at her home. Jonathan Burrows entered into an email exchange between February 2103 and July 2013, part of which made a contribution to *Rebelling Against Limit.[[1]](#endnote-2)*

In the case of Yael Flexer, an association going back to the start of her work in the UK over 20 years ago was built on with a number of contextualised interviews and conversations. Flexer also gave access to her own doctoral research material, and invited me to assist in the capacity of dramaturg, in a project with which she was involved.

In order to further support the research, cooperation was sought from some dancers involved in the case studies. Dancers’ own comments are a source that is still not that often encountered, though it is not entirely absent. In this thesis dancers who wished to contribute offered their insights both into their own work and how they saw it in relationship to this research. Dancers did not always wish to respond formally, but the combination of email, interview and general conversation provided material that was particularly relevant. Where no individually attributable material was offered, these conversations still fed generally into the research. In the case of Aya Kobayashi, who dances with Flexer, access was also given to her Master’s dissertation. The dancers involved in the author’s own original work all made contributions as part of their involvement in that work.

Chapter 5 focuses entirely on work made by the author in collaboration with staff and past and present dancers from the dance department of the University of Chichester. This work was purposely designed to provide direct, practical investigation of the ideas driving the research and also provided opportunities to put into further context material from the three major practitioners. There were two dance pieces made over the course of a twelve month period, performed in the summers of 2013 and 2014 respectively. The two pieces were *Motion Traces ii*, performed in Chichester cathedral on 14 July 2013, and *Emerging Never Arriving*, performed across various sites at the University on 16 July 2014. Participation of the dancers concerned in the two pieces was as partners in collaborative ventures, so that their voices emerged as important sources of evidence and creative influence. Valuable expert support was given in both pieces by long term colleague and lecturer in Dance at the University of Chichester, Fiona Wallis. Digital choreographer and lecturer Natalie Rowland also collaborated in *Emerging Never Arriving* and she both filmed the piece and curated an archive of photographs from research and development stages.

The two specially shot video versions of *Emerging Never Arriving*, named in the contents list as ‘Director’s Edit’ and ‘Photographer’s Edit’, and clips from *Motion Traces ii*, as well as the photo archive, can be accessed at: [www.emergingneverarriving.wordpress.com](http://www.emergingneverarriving.wordpress.com/)

In addition to the material available online, photographs taken by the author are used to support analysis of *Melt Down, Emerging Never Arriving,* and research and development stages from work with Yael Flexer and Three Score Dance. The authenticity of recorded material of live performances being used as evidence, in particular still images, is open to considerable debate. Amongst the main considerations are the camera operator’s intentions, authorship of framing, selection, positioning, and later editing and re-framing. This is much tempered by the changes of technology that currently place the constant use recorded images in daily life into a quite different perspective. Despite Guy Debord’s warning in *Society of the Spectacle* that: “When the real world is transformed into mere images, mere images become real things – dynamic figments that provide the direct motivations for hypnotic behaviour” (11), and despite the fact that these images are themselves at the mercy of manipulation by the owners and managers of their product systems, there still remains a positive difference in the way that images can be made and deployed. Debord‘s incisive analysis that images as spectacle involve their “estrangement from the acting subject” and that “the individual’s gestures are no longer their own; they are the gestures of someone else who represents them to him” (16), is here approached from a different direction. Kaja Silverman asserts in *The Threshold of the Visible World* that: “The camera is less a machine, or the representation of a machine, than a complex field of relations. Some of the relations are extrinsic to the camera as a technological apparatus, others are intrinsic” (136). Silverman goes on to point out that the way an image is viewed includes “an appetite for alterity that is capable of seizing upon even the most fleeting metaphoric or metonymic connection” (181).

Photographs, digital recordings, are part of a shifting ground of flows and intensities, providing possible and potential narratives. Each encounter with the photographic image provides an opportunity for new connections, an accumulation of perspectives, or another trajectory for narrative. Benjamin, in *Illuminations*, points out that: “The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only in that moment … A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength” (90). In this sense, photographic images can more profitably be assimilated in the form of a virtual story. When approached in this way, the image as evidence avoids becoming seen, as Benjamin warns, as representative of “the unique value of the “authentic” work of art … the location of its original use value” (226). In this thesis, photographic evidence is not being used solely as a form of representational authenticity. It is offered as potential for points of debate. It provides the possibility of continuing narratives of engagement and alternative, not necessarily confirmatory readings. A major reason for their inclusion is to provide such interactive possibilities and through this inclusion, a more dynamic and engaging relevance.

## A Brief Guide to Chapters

**Part 1**.

There are three chapters in the first part, including the Introduction, reviewing key areas of theoretical influence and their impact on the central investigation. They serve as a platform for case study based material that makes up the majority of the second part. The chapters are complementary in setting out, as well as arguing for, the cross-disciplinary approach used throughout the thesis. Examples are given from writing and research across the range of knowledges represented and explanations offered concerning the extent and manner to which they have influenced the thesis.

Threads from sources outside dance are combined with the expertise of choreographers, dancers, writers and theorists on dance. Links with more specialized dance theory and commentary - the majority located within a somatic approach - are made throughout Part 1. The work of Moshe Feldenkrais is also used frequently as an important reference point for connecting the somatic to contemporary dance, supportive of individual uniqueness and the distinctive sensory experience. The other writers given prominence represent disciplines that include research and theory in neuroscience, material from social anthropology, gender studies, critical and cultural studies, movement based education, philosophy and dance.

Chapter 1 examines key theoretical influences, in particular Elizabeth Grosz on the body, Tim Ingold on environment and Rosi Braidotti on posthumanism and the nomadic. Each is presented as an example of interdisciplinary method opposed to mind-body dualism and its consequent binarized forms of argument. The chapter traces the influence of Grosz’s emphasis on the centrality and materiality of the living body. This is followed by analysis of Ingold’s ideas on environment, the conditions that support emergence and how habitation can be understood. His approach to embodiment and materiality is considered and explanations offered for the overall relevance of Ingold’s views on organic life as active, emergent and part of a total field of unfolding relationships. Ingold’s ideas of a ‘weatherworld’ in which we are suffused and immersed as dynamic and active participants is examined, and connections are made to dance movement as part of the conditions of constantly shifting environments. Sandra Reeve, in the generally accessible book *Nine Ways of Seeing the Body* (2011) succinctly describes this as the body “becoming inherently meaningful as it develops attitudinal patterns through engaging with environmental factors and other bodies” (17).

Rosi Braidotti’s nomadic theory, embedded in becoming and emergence, with its links to hybridity and transversalism, is then introduced. Consideration is given to Braidotti’s ideas on multiple-subjectivity, and the importance of affect and desire. Her ideas on self, the fluidity of ego boundaries, and the rejection of a fixed and singular ego as sovereign subject are explored and their importance discussed.

The closing sections of this chapter give a general introduction to the use made in the thesis of recent and current work from neuroscience, particularly on mirror neurons. The chapter closes with a consideration of the contribution made by Antonio Damasio’s work on the body as mind, as well as general reference to other supporting material.

In Chapter 2, specific dance-based writing, for example by Ann Cooper Albright, Ramsay Burt, Emilyn Claid and Rosemary Butcher, is combined with material from other knowledges, continuing the motif of interdisciplinary enquiry. Attention and analysis is given to the way neuroscientific research into the mirror neuron system contributes to a developing understanding of self, and how this links to ideas on imagery, movement, and what is meant by intransitive movement. Examples are given from work published since the observation of mirror neurons in humans in 2010, for example by Vittorio Gallese, and Giacomo Rizolatti, who are pioneers in the field. The final part of the chapter considers movement as affect, which is of increasing importance as the thesis develops.

**Part 2.**

The chapters in Part 2, as with Part 1, are complementary. They continue to place the material body at the centre of discourse which binds them together, providing continuity between the two parts. Chapter 3, focusing on Rosemary Lee, is used to interrogate her presentation of the intelligent body and how this can be used, on one hand, for dancers to investigate self through movement and, on the other, how identity emerges from within large groups dancing. The works chosen for particular examination are *Common Dance*, *Melt Down* and *Boy*. Similarly Chapter 4, focusing on Yael Flexer, investigates how she works with dancers to uncover shifting senses of self - in this case, through her examination of the in-between of everyday and performance, ‘unhomed’ and hybridity. In these two chapters, the influence of the landscapes of Rosemary Lee’s childhood, interest in places of meeting found in her work, compare and contrast with Flexer’s shifting, fragmented environments of entry and exclusion, isolation and inclusion. Particular attention is given in Chapter 4 to Flexer’s *The Living Room*, part of the triptych that includes *Shrink’d* and *Doing, Done and Undone*.

Both Chapters 5 and 6 present and analyse practical work made by or involving the author. Chapter 5 is solely concerned with the works *Motion Traces ii* and *Emerging Never Arriving*, made by the author to support this thesis. In Chapter 6, a collaborative project with Yael Flexer is used, in part to problematise positions taken on emergence of self in Chapter 5, and continuing a critical thread that runs through the thesis.

Chapter 6 details how ideas of affect and nomadic presence have been adapted and developed in this thesis as part of nomadic trajectories in dance. The series of email and other communications between the author and Jonathan Burrows, and its contribution to the 2013 piece *Rebelling Against Limit*, is examined and used to propose the idea of resistance arising as part of the emergence of multiple subjectivities linked to nomadic presence.

After briefly revisiting the structure and content of the thesis, the conclusion then sets out areas that can be considered as an addition to already existing literature and to new ways of approaching self-place-presence. Finally, the conclusion sets out some possible directions for new research or continued study that the thesis offers. These are seen to correspond to the areas to which the thesis makes some contribution.

# CHAPTER 1: LINES OF FLIGHT

## Introduction.

Consideration is given in this chapter to the theoretical influences that have helped form core questions, influence approaches and method and provide points of departure, difference and development. These influences have been organic and rhizomatic in effect rather than providing a clearly marked path or a collection of readily assembled applications. In shaping epistemological questions concerning a sense of self in dance and in keeping with the inter-disciplinary approach adopted within the discourse as a whole, connections are made between a variety of sometimes apparently disparate sources and approaches. Process and plasticity are at the heart of the enquiry. The two are interdependent. Process should not be mistaken for a simple, passive categorisation of components or constituents and plasticity is not confined to pliability or malleability. In *The Three Ecologies*, Félix Guattari writes that:

Process … strives to capture existence in the very act of its constitution, definition and deterritorialization. This process of ‘fixing-into-being’ relates only to expressive subsets that have broken out of their totalising frame … overcoming their referential sets and manifesting themselves as their own existential indices, processual lines of flight. (44)

As Guattari indicates, process is concerned with flows, intensities and durations. They are applied here to a somatic mode of analysis that sees the body as the site of a varied discourse, a discourse from which it also emerges as a focus for non-binarized knowledges. It is over a decade since Helen Thomas, in *The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory*, warned that: “Dance, as a somatic mode of attention, has been virtually ignored by the academic community” (63), and that, in general, dance was most often used as a vehicle for examining “some other social activity” (63), in which all too often “theories of the body seemed to posit a static, immobile body” (63). The theoretical material presented here is located in and associated with the move away from such approaches that has taken place since Thomas made those claims.

This thesis also aligns itself with Guattari’s conclusion that: “Structuralism and subsequently postmodernism has accustomed us to a vision of the world drained of the significance of human interventions” (41). I seek to go beyond the fractured postmodern turn by proposing a sense of a self, affectively intertwined with presence and place: a sense of a self full of significance brought about through the intervention of its shifting subjectivities. The dancing body is the subject of its own narrative, from which notions of alterity and agency stem, emerging as pulses of habitation.

In the Introduction the somatic work of Moshe Feldenkrais was signalled as a point of reference throughout, but there are other connections. At the start of *Embodied Wisdom*, David Zemach-Bersin suggests that:

Today, a new paradigm is taking hold in neuroscience, psychology, and rehabilitation: the concept of brain plasticity, or neuroplasticity, which posits that throughout our entire life span, our brain has the capacity to modify its organisation and responses through experience and learning. If Feldenkrais were alive, he would find today’s research supporting neuroplasticity a sweet validation. (xii)

He goes on to write that Feldenkrais’ ideas “have relevance in domains as diverse as neuroscience and theatre, psychology and dance, physical therapy and music” (xii). Feldenkrais’ work is synonymous with the most radical thinking on the unity of mind and body and the role of movement in awareness. Feldenkrais was in the forefront of thinking about the plasticity of the brain and the possibility of its continual modification through learning, even potential regeneration, promoted through acute awareness of movement.

In *Embodied Wisdom,* Feldenkrais writes of temporal, spatial and kinaesthetic feelings as contributing towards the self-image as an integrated whole. Feldenkrais is describing a processual interaction, one that can continue to change and develop. He writes that: “To complete and clarify one’s self-image by paying attention to the spatial and temporal orientation of one’s body can bring about a growth in self-knowledge” (14). He links this to creative expression, suggesting: “Creative artists … attempt to enlarge and clarify their self-image in the particular area of their speciality” (14). He sees the physical and mental aspects of the process as mutually sustaining through “physical function which supports the mental process” (21).

Feldenkrais was not working from any idea of future perfection or the possibility of some point at which development is no longer needed; and of course there is no suggestion of an ultimate or originary state that unites us all. Feldenkrais makes no claims for generally applicable ideas of correctness, only what is beneficial to each individual. He saw each individual as distinct and their awareness as bound up in ecologies of movement particular to them. He emphasised this difference as integral to our awareness of self and wrote in *The Potent Self* that: “An important particularity of the human cortex consists in that no two human adult brains are exactly alike. Exciting similar spots in two different brains does not produce the same effects; somehow the history of individual experience is written into the cortex” (70). This view has important implications for ideas of alterity and agency.

Current work in neuroscience is increasingly in step with Feldenkrais’ thinking.

Research concerned with neuroplasticity, mirror neuron systems, and with the connection between action understanding and how the body shapes the self, introduced and discussed both in this chapter and the next, provides evidence of the links to be made with Feldenkrais. Although Zemach-Bersin regards research on neuroplasticity as a validation of Feldenkrais, there is no suggestion here that that such validation is necessary. It does, however, provide concrete evidence of positive interaction between knowledges.

It continues to be the case that science is characterised as objective - producing hard evidence resulting from targeted and observed research - rather than the more ‘intuitively’ based enquiries and conclusions attributed to the Arts and Humanities. Often bringing such evidence into these areas can be misinterpreted as indicating a necessity to validate what had previously been unsubstantiated theory. I reject such a model and I suggest that what is to be currently observed is the inevitable breakdown of barriers between methods of enquiry and investigation that have, historically, been opposed. Quite apart from scientific theory conferring validity from on high, we see the whole profile of such separate knowledges being redrawn, so that an interactive principle is being established, through which scientific method is open to influence from other forms of enquiry; and examples of this are apparent in the work of Norman Doidge, Alain Berthoz and Antonio Damasio. This is an important distinction because without it the scientific discovery of mirror neurons, for example, is misunderstood as a self-contained, enclosed, definitive, hard-wired system, rather than an added perspective on how we understand the plasticity of mind/body.

Damasio has been of particular importance to this thesis in providing theoretical material that links mind and body from a neuroscientific perspective.

Selection of the mirror neuron system for particular analysis in this thesis has relevance to the major aims and questions set out in the Introduction. It was coincidental that 2010 was both the year when mirror neurons were first confirmed in humans and Jonathan Burrows’ *A Choreographer’s Handbook* was published. The influence of that book has already been discussed. Burrows wrote of patterns that the body thinks, of negotiation with those in the creation of dance, of the brain looking for patterns to copy, of the trace elements of movement that remain in the body. These statements, and others of a similar direction, intentionally stimulate enquiry, as Burrows always does. However, how the body thinks, what patterns emerge, how these might operate, in what way the brain looks for patterns is left open. The material on neuroscience included in the thesis, in particular that concerning mirror neurons, is a contribution to engaging with those questions, part of the rich material that make the body a site of discourse.

Understanding processes of movement, listening to and being aware of the body, affirming possibilities for transformation, or positive change through dance movement, above all tracing the emergence of a sense of self in that movement, opens the way for interdisciplinary work, in this case involving neuroscience. It is consistent with a posthuman approach, and is signalled in, for example, Rosi Braidotti’s *The Posthuman*, and *Metamorphoses: Towards a Material Theory of Becoming*. Elizabeth Grosz also signals it at the start of *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* in her comments on neurophysiology and the links that can be made with processes of becoming.Gabriella Giannachi for example, comments on the neurological foundation of presence in the 2012 *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being* and there are many more examples in current work and research, for example by Emily Cross, of applications of neuroscientific material to dance.

Links are made throughout to the work of Feldenkrais, an extended example of which can be seen above These links support his ideas on imaging of movement, the ability to both image and delay movement, and how this contributes to the constantly changing, unique patterns of self through movement. The proposals concerning self-place-presence are given new paths of investigation as a result.

A vitalist, material approach is taken to the way the mirror neuron system, discussed and problematised in detail in Chapter 2, is shown to be part of interdependent flows of movement contributing to the emergence of a sense of self. Mirror neurons themselves are explained in their material, active form, with mass and structure. Contributions of the mirror neuron system within processes of movement are linked to the whole ecology of the body, interoceptive and proprioceptive, and support indivisibility of mind body. In this way the inclusion of material explaining mirror neurons and the current thinking on their role and function in the establishment of a sense of self, meets the major aims and questions of the thesis.

The approach to, and use of mirror neurons in the thesis contributes in the same manner as all the theory introduced in Part 1. It helps to uncover new pathways and trajectories and, even when not in direct consideration, leaves its traces on the way in which the ideas being presented interdependently weave through and within each other. Relevance is through fluid and interactive association as well as by direct application.

The body in movement is in a continual process of emergence - a central motif in this thesis. Emergence suggests a dynamic property of continual process, shifting ground, renewal, but also interrelatedness and interdependence and has strong links to ideas of becoming. Emergence also signals the material emergence of *something*, not some disembodied concept, but a moment, a pulse of affect, associated with processual unfolding and dissolution. A sense of a self, consciousness of being subject in a non-linear, though nevertheless specific narrative of becoming, is rooted in modalities, affirmations, possibilities.

Elizabeth Grosz, in *Space Time and Perversion* argues that:

Given the prevailing binarized or dichotomized categories governing Western reason and the privilege accorded to one term over the other in binary pairs (e.g. mind over body, culture over nature, self over other, reason over passions), it is necessary to examine the subordinated, negative or excluded term *body* as the *unacknowledged condition* of the dominant term *reason*. (31-32)

The importance of a continuing critique of mind-body dualism is of course a crucial part of Grosz’s work, introduced in *Volatile Bodies* when she declares that: “Only when the relation between mind and body is adequately re-theorized can we understand the contribution of the body to the production of knowledge systems, regimes of representation, cultural production” (19).This thesis seeks to add something to the re-theorizing of that relationship. Ideas of representation and cultural production in dance are part of a complex of interconnected and interdependent knowledges emerging from and entwined with bodies. The “*unacknowledged condition*” about which Grosz writes is revealed in this thesis through the processual unfolding of a self through the way the body is in an integral affordance of and with the environment. The pulses of self-place-presence locate from and return to the body in a flux of interchange and affect. As Ann Cooper Albright, in *Taken by Surprise: A Dance Improvisation Reader,* writes:

If the world is already inside one’s body, then the separation between self and other is much less distinct. The skin is no longer the boundary between the world and myself, but rather the sensing organ that brings the world into my awareness. In this intersubjective space … the heretofore unquestioned separation of individual and the world (or me and you) becomes more fluid. (262).

Such an approach makes it necessary to argue against mind-body dichotomies and, in so doing, against other binary oppositions that flow from that initial separation.

It is here, in embracing the need to oppose mind/body separation that ‘lines of flight’ begin to emerge. It is important for a number of reasons to embrace the idea that knowledges cross pre-set boundaries and that they can inform and interrogate each other conceptually, but I consider that it is an inevitable consequence of following a path that rejects binarized positions. This is nowhere more broadly so than in the traditional and entrenched dichotomy between the so called ‘soft’ humanities and ‘hard’ sciences. Identification of the humanities with supposed female qualities opposed to the phallocentric idea linking objectivity, reason and knowledge with a male principle has consequences for any work seeking to promote unity of body and mind. Insights offered by advances in neuroscience, with relation to notions of self applied to dance movement, demonstrate conceptual interaction between knowledges, opposing assumptions of determinism and essentialism that are often associated with the sciences and following Gregory Bateson’s proposal in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* that: “Ecology in the widest sense, turns out to be the study of the interaction and survival of ideas” (490).

## **Dynamic, Active, Reactive: Grosz and Body as Discourse**.

Elizabeth Grosz is Professor of Women's Studies and Literature at Duke University.[[2]](#endnote-3) Grosz’s seminal 1994 work, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* offers a critical review of dominant approaches to corporeality and subjectivity, in which she problematizes mind/body duality and provides the ground for an alternative approach to notions of sexuality. She sees the body as colonized by various discursive practices and is concerned with “establishing models, concepts, categories, and methodologies that tie subjectivity irreducibly to the specificities of sexed bodies” (208). When Grosz declares that the body “must be regarded as a site of social, cultural, and geographical inscriptions” and that “it is itself a cultural, the cultural, product” (23), she is pointing to the sort of discursive practices that the body as a site of discourse must suggest. Neither a *tabula rasa* nor, for that matter, a golem, the body is not simply inscribed, overwritten, or modelled. Grosz observes that: “All of us … are caught up in modes of self-production and self-observation; these modes may entwine us in various networks of power, but never do they render us merely passive and compliant” (144). The body is constantly dynamic, active and reactive, and wholly engaged. Its plasticity is both a result of and a precursor for processual becoming. That does not mean that it cannot be made the object of inscription, the object of conformities within power relations operating on the body, but that it is at the same time a continuing locus of resistance through what Rosi Braidotti in *Nomadic Subjects* presents as “the embodied subject … in a process of intersecting forces (affects), spatio-temporal variables that are characterised by their mobility, changeability, and transitory nature” (112). In Chapter 6 the nomadic subject is analysed and proposals are made concerning the idea of dance as a form of embedded resistance.

In contrast, ideas proposing abstraction of the body, and attempts to neutralise its individual presence lead to the body’s materiality being consigned to a continual absence, accompanied by a potential denial of specificity, opposing the view that the body is always already subject, continually reshaping alterity through the operation of agency within shifting environments. Whilst acknowledging the need to combat the voyeuristic male gaze, abstraction of the body itself becomes an approach that fits easily within a phallocentric organisation of the world. The male gaze is only interrupted, put on pause, while the female body is removed altogether. I suggest that a number of aspects about the physical role of male and female, adopted within some dance, are evidence of a deep rooted, almost unconscious or assumed phallocentrism. Examples of this can be found in surprising places. Analysis of *The Suchness of Henie and Eddie* in Chapter 3, for example, reveals the sedimentary accumulations of movement tropes more associated with received gender responses. Paradoxically, and perhaps encouragingly, it is through the investigative interaction of intelligent bodies that these layers are revealed. Grosz describes the body as a surface on which varying forms and degrees of inscription are made, representative of “cultural and personal values, norms and commitments according to the morphology and categorization of the body into socially significant groups – male and female” (142). She goes on to claim that the naked body is “still marked by its disciplinary history, by its habitual patterns of movement, by the corporeal commitments it has undertaken in day to day life” (142).

Grosz’s reading of corporeality is concerned with change and adaptation but, above all, emphasises the role of alterity. She explains this as follows:

Bodies themselves, in their materialities, are never self-present, given things, immediate, certain self-evidences because embodiment, corporeality, insist on alterity, both that alterity they carry within themselves … and that alterity that gives them their own concreteness and specificity … Alterity is the very possibility and process of embodiment: it conditions but is also a product of the pliability or plasticity of bodies which makes them other than themselves, other than their “nature,” their functions and identities (209).

While agreeing with the role of alterity presented here, I question what is meant by bodies that can be “other than themselves”. It is not at all clear what is meant by nature in this context. Is there a suggestion of a purer, more complete, less inscribed state, something essentially present under functions and identities? In Chapter 3 Rosemary Lee talks about trying to reach a more fundamental state through dance and this presents similar difficulties with its suggestions of originary forms. I do not see these qualities, functions and identities, as separate within the body, but as mutually co-extensive. I argue that self and presence are the interaction of these and important to an understanding of self-place-presence as a process through which a performed, but still affective pulse is drawn from performative potentials. In Chapter 4 a detailed analysis of Yael Flexer’s ideas on the in-between and hybridity is undertaken. As part of this analysis, the relationship between self-place-presence and ideas of performative potential and performed self is further discussed.

In *Space, Time and Perversion*, a collection of early essays from her work, Grosz points to the fluid nature of her writing and the revisions that had taken place in the course of her essays and papers presented in the volume, some of which she refers to as “painfully, embarrassingly dated”(3). In re-affirming her “positive commitment to transforming the ways in which bodies are conceived”, she links this commitment to new ways of approaching knowledges in re-thinking the body. She concludes that:

If what differentiates humans from each other, from other species, and other materialities is the specific configuration of bodies, if it is bodies in their morphologies, rather than the hidden or inferred depths of reason, the psyche or interiority that particularize women and men, then those knowledges – the humanities and the social sciences – that take subjects as their object of investigation must also be reconsidered (3).

Grosz makes a virtue of seeing the potential for different trajectories which interdisciplinary method might bring. It is an approach that offers permission to undertake judicious journeys into other areas, giving space for provocations over rigidity towards cross-fertilisation of knowledges. This is most marked in the use made of particular developments from neuroscience, particularly from Parma University that gives increasing evidential support to theories of mind/body integration and mutuality – evidence that can, at its worst, be greeted with an ingrained oppositional stance from the humanities and expressive arts. The most characteristic opposition to the use of applied sciences in this context is found in assertions of determinism or reductionism. Scientific evidence is sometimes regarded as too closed, suggesting definitive and unchanging truths.

It is not solely in the fact that Grosz too refers to neuroscientific material with interest and openness that theoretical support for reference from across knowledges is found, but that she uses and encourages the validity of thematic connections from many areas of investigation. The sciences - applied or pure - are acknowledged for their difference certainly, but not confined because of it. The chapter ‘Body Images’ in *Volatile Bodies*, for example, looks at the impact of some neurophysiology, albeit with an important caveat that

“the body that is generally addressed by neuro- and psychophysiology is implicitly the male body” (71). Yet she concludes the chapter by asserting that: “The body image does not map a biological body onto a psychosocial domain, providing a kind of translation of material into conceptual terms; rather it attests to the necessary interconstituency of each for the other” (85).

Grosz opens such possibilities for cross fertilisation between areas – not in itself a unique approach, but an important re-affirmation which enables her to offer fresh understanding, new perspectives. Grosz’s commitment to interrogating and problematizing the way that bodies are conceived from a variety of directions brings with it a continual challenge to how the body in dance is understood. In response to this challenge, and prompted by Grosz’s lead, notions of the body in dance, and of the self that emerges, are examined through revisiting ideas of presence, space and place, refocused through the temporal nature of becoming, deterritorialization and the processual.

Grosz’s analysis of Deleuze, Bergson and the anti-Oedipal turn in *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature and Power, Becoming Undone* and *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* is of continuing importance in helping to shape proposals on process, the processual, duration and becoming in connection to dance. In *Chaos, Territory, Art* Grosz, analysing Deleuze, suggests that: “Art is the art of affect more than representation, a system of dynamized and impacting forces rather than a system of unique image” (3) and that:

the forces of living bodies, by no means exclusively human, which exert their energy or force through the production of the new and create, through their efforts, networks, fields, territories that temporarily and provisionally slow down chaos enough to extract from it something not so much useful, as intensifying, a performance, a refrain, an organization of colour or movement (3).

In *Time Travels: Feminism Nature and Power*, Grosz considers the link between Deleuze’s work on space and place and Bergson’s on the concept of duration, prompting questions concerning perception and the imaging of materiality and how these can be relevantly pursued in connection with corporeality, subjectivity and notions of self. Grosz’s asserts that: “My body is distinguished from other objects not because it is the privileged location of consciousness but because it performs major changes in other objects relative to itself, because of its central organizing site through which other images are ordered” (98). There are connections here with the relationship between objects and the body that James J Gibson develops in his notion of affordances. In order to distinguish what Grosz means by objects Gibson’s theory is one direction that would be useful. It is not only in the use that we make of objects that affordances might arise, but also in the use they make of us.

Ecologies, in Gibson’s view, are interactive sites of affordance, always already dynamic before the intervention of any specific “privileged location of consciousness”. Inter- connectedness and inter-dependence are at the heart of process. I suggest that understanding of object and location, indeed of place, carry an imperative to develop them within a wider awareness of ecology: in the case of this thesis, that of a dancer, emerging through the dancer’s hard won, but fleeting agency and alterity of their movement.

Grosz does not write directly about dance, except in the sense that it is part of a wider analysis of art, in which music, visual art and other forms of composition have co- equal potentials. In *Chaos, Territory, Art* Grosz looks at the ontology of art, through its material and conceptual structures. It is in the way the way these structures impact on and are impacted by the living body that significance emerges. Grosz examines the relationship of excess, chaos and framing, and “sensations, affects, percepts, intensities – blocs of bodily becoming that always co-evolve with blocs of the becoming of matter or events”(9). Grosz writes that “art itself is equally a project that disjars, distends and transforms frames, that focuses on the intervals and conjunctions between frames” (18). This transformation and disjunction is considered both in Chapter 3, where Rosemary Lee speaks of dance as a transformative art, and Chapter 4, where Yael Flexer is concerned with the framing of performance, the in-between of the everyday and the performed. In both cases, their dancers are concerned with a materiality of becoming that Lee calls an ‘arrival’. Grosz asks that we consider art, and I would wish to substitute that word with dance, as something that: “engenders becomings, not imaginative becomings … but material becomings … in which life folds over itself to embrace its contact with materiality” (23).

## Figure and Ground.

“Bathed in light, submerged in sound and rapt in feeling, the sentient body, at once both perceiver and producer, traces paths of the world’s becoming in the very course of contributing to its ongoing renewal”(12). This quotation from anthropologist Tim Ingold’s *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* suggests itself as a possible alternative way of describing dance in process: the affective materiality of the dancing body. Ingold is examining the nature of habitation, the way in which we are present in the world and it is possible to add the way we remain in it. A sense of a self in the dancing figure has much to do with wresting moments of habitation, reaching for the pulse of present subject that enables perception and production to be in some senses synonymous. In coming to a more fluid and interdependent view of habitation and environment Ingold’s writing has been of particular importance. This is not least because Ingold presents incisive arguments about what is meant by materiality, affectivity and embodiment. Ingold is, in many ways, an apt fit with Grosz as a significant influence in this study, sharing with Grosz a methodological approach that embraces the interdisciplinary and a development of new trajectories, imposing a need to look with fresh perspective on notions of place, habitation and environment as Grosz does of the centrality of the body.

Ingold’s *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* offers a challenging reading of how we perceive our surroundings, how we find habitation, develop skills and produce an emerging, and continually adapting culture. Ideas of environment and landscape are re-drawn in opposition to the polar ideas of the “naturalistic view of the landscape as a neutral, eternal backdrop to human activities” or the cultural landscape as “a particular cognitive or symbolic ordering of space” (189). In Ingold’s writing there is no empty space, waiting to be filled or ripe for interpretation as a passive constituent of cultural production. He sees the two terms landscape and environment as potentially synonymous, often interchangeable. The body or organism is in a relationship of complementarity with them in which “each implies the other, alternately as figure and ground” (193). He suggests that:

The forms of the landscape are not … prepared in advance for creatures to occupy, any more than are the bodily forms of those creatures independently specified in their genetic make-up. Both sets of forms are generated and sustained through the processual unfolding of a total field of relations. (193)

It is in this idea of a processual unfolding, a relational correspondence between things involving an holistic view of contributory factors, that Ingold’s work initially made its most decisive impact. In this thesis, environments are connected to what are proposed as emerging sites of performance for the self as a protagonist. The relationship of the body to the environment, which is the site of its habitation, is a process of mutual becomings paralleling the relationship between mind and body. As Ingold writes in asserting the mutuality of mind/body: “Body and mind are … not two separate things but two ways of describing the same thing … the same process – namely the environmentally situated activity of the human organism-person” (171). Ingold goes on to make an important and challenging statement on embodiment, a concept that is under frequent debate in dance when he writes: “I regard embodiment as a movement of incorporation rather than inscription, not a transcribing of form onto material, but a movement wherein forms themselves are generated” (193). Environment, body, embodiment are each presented as interlocking elements in a wider conception of ecology of total movement and becoming. In my work the complementarity of body/mind and environment is a key concept in seeing the interdependent flow of body, place, and self. Presence becomes the environmentally situated pulse of self-place.

In Chapter 3, I describe the way in which the environment of Lee’s upbringing is present in her work. In interview, she spoke specifically of the landscape of the East Anglian coast, full of distant horizons, long uninterrupted horizontal lines, and how she found herself fascinated by the detail of the waterline, the organisms to be found there, the changes of light and texture. She also spoke of the atmosphere, long drawn-out silences and sudden interruptions associated with her Quaker background. She became fascinated by the underlying stillness that she found in the Meeting House. Ingold brings varied perspectives through which to look at influences like these, and within those works chosen for more detailed examination many examples are evident of how these varied perspectives can operate in furthering analysis: the play and intimacy of *Boy* to his immediate environment on sand dune and sea shore, extended horizontal and vertical movement in *Common Dance*, the dancers literally melting downwards in slow duration, assimilating the texture of the ground they are on in *Melt Down*. Ingold, in *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, writes: “An environment … does not exist in and of itself. It exists only in relation to the being whose environment it is” (77). It is through the application of ideas like this that a sharper focus can be brought to bear on the relationship Lee sets up between her dancers and their environments.

Ingold poses a recurring and pervasive question about our understanding of environment when he argues that we remember how we are suffused, and immersed in the sensations of light, sound, touch, each interrelated in what he describes at times as a “weatherworld”. He writes that we “must imagine ourselves in the first place as participants, each immersed … in the sunlight we see in, the rain we hear in and the wind we feel in” (129). In addition to providing routes for analysis of individual practitioners like Lee, Ingold’s work on environmental perception and understanding has been of benefit in extending the possibilities of a situated self. He explains that: “the environment that we experience, know and move around in is not sliced up along the lines of the sensory pathways by which we enter into it” (132). Because of this: “The world we perceive is the *same* world, whatever path we take, and in perceiving it, each of us acts as an undivided centre of movement and awareness” (132).

Ingold suggests that the environment is continually under construction and full of movement from the elements that contribute to it. It is important here to understand environment as a constant becoming that is not removed from materiality. Regarding becoming as something never realised, not allowing presence, works against the idea of solidity of environmentally situated self-presence, allowing no possibility for habitation. It is in the tension between flow and remaining, with its generation of affect, that I suggest self- presence establishes place in dance. The mutuality and interchangeability of the terms coalesce in that moment. For it to then develop processually it must first *be*.

Ingold warns against thinking of place as something that exists within space. He in part supports Doreen Massey when she asks in *For Space*: “And what if we refuse that distinction, all too appealing it seems, between place (as meaningful, lived and everyday) and space (as what? the outside? the abstract? The meaning*less*?” (6) I want to avoid the possibility that place emerging through dance is seen as filling some amorphous spatial potential. Rather, as Ingold asserts, it should be regarded as emerging through particular

acts of “an undivided centre of movement and awareness” (132). If it is relevant, as alluded to earlier, that we should be guarded against thinking of embodiment as inscription, it is equally necessary to say that the environment does not inscribe itself on embodiment.

Ingold proposes that “we would be wrong to suppose that sensory experience is embodied” (134), and justifies this by conflating the experience of light and sound with an encounter that seems to operate independently of the site of that experience. I do not entirely agree that, as Ingold suggests: “Far from being enfolded into the body – as the concept of embodiment would imply – they [sound, light] take possession of it, sweeping the body up into their own currents” (135). Indeed, embodiment can be seen as the means by and

through which the sensation of being swept up in the currents of a “weatherworld” occurs. It is relational to and coextensive with the environment of the body, rather than something

passively visited by or overtaken by it. It is then possible to understand embodiment as a process through which pulses of self-presence and environmental “unfolding of a total field of relations” operates as a Mobius strip. Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam write, in *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*:

Our claim is not just that life is unscripted, but more fundamentally that it is unscriptable … it cannot be fully codified as the output of any system of rules and representations … This is because life does not pick its way across the surface of a world where everything is fixed and in its proper place, but a movement through a world that is crescent (12).

Embodiment, then, does not emerge as a result of picking its way across fixed surfaces, tying experience to a specific unchanging ground, halting process. I suggest a series of pulses that self-presence carries within it, constantly being refreshed and re-established through the embodied form of dance.

In Chapter 4, the actions of the dancers are analysed against a background of individuals attempting to gain a purchase on the always slippery and changing ground of possible habitation. They are presented as transient and processual, but at the same time seeking a stability of place where they can remain and become protagonists in their own narrative, occupying a site of performance. Their sense of self is bound up in a desire to remain. At first glance this would seem to indicate that self here is linked to ideas of the individual, that alterity is a creative uniqueness and agency the *possession* of ground. Each of these can appear to indicate a movement towards discovering and becoming reconciled with an originary design, a realisation of pre-conditions. Countering such a view, Ingold provides possible theoretical approaches in the collection *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, where he suggests that the person *undergoes* social life. They do not make societies but because they live socially, consequently they make themselves. The process again is relational and the emphasis is on the breadth of relational connections rather than the concept of relativity itself. Flexer’s work shows her dancers living socially. The societies they attempt to *consciously* construct, particularly in *The Living Room*, founder on a form of inscription or imposition, while paradoxically through these attempts, their self-presence and alterity emerge. [[3]](#endnote-4)

In *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, the anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup writes that: “social worlds have no existence outside of practice and performance” (193). She sees social life and what she terms individual action as intertwined with “anticipation and creativity”. She points to “a reality of unique, unrepeatable events” (194), in which events “exist only in the moment of their realisation and our experience” (194). There is some similarity here with my suggestion of pulses of self-presence and also with Ingold’s view of the individual making themselves as a consequence of living socially.

This section closes with reference to Ingold’s volume *Lines: A Brief History*. This book looks at the idea of the line from points as seemingly diverse as calligraphy, music notation, lace making, and genealogy. Ingold provides examples of where and how we have begun to see the environment through the impositions of metropolitan life. He suggests that the line has been divested of its continuous movement, and has been fragmented “into a succession of dots” (75). He compares this to storytelling replaced by the pre-composed plot, and he suggests that:

It has also transformed our understanding of place: once a knot tied from multiple and interlaced strands of movement and growth, it now figures as a node in a static network of connectors. To an ever increasing extent people … find themselves in environments built as assemblies of connected elements. (75).

Ingold points to the fact that people still continue “to tread their own ways through these environments, tracing paths as they go” (75). He emphasises that “people do not just occupy but inhabit the environments in which they dwell” and suggests that “we might do better to revert from the paradigm of assembly to that of the walk (75). The art theorist Jane Rendell makes a similar proposition in *Art and Architecture: A Place Between*. Problematizing ideas of space and place she writes of “rethinking place as unfixed and site as performed” (185). Rendell considers that artists seem to have a fascination with walking, perhaps as a way of “engaging with concepts and experiences of place, space and site” (185). She shows a clear correspondence with Ingold when she writes that:

Walking provides a way of understanding sites in flux in a manner that questions the logic of measuring, surveying and drawing a location from a series of fixed and static viewpoints. When we walk we encounter sites in motion and in relationship to one another… by intervening and moving through a site, walking proposes a design method that enables one to imagine beyond the present condition without freezing possibility into form. (188)

Here Rendell proposes that moving through an environment, a body in motion is in a process of reciprocal becoming. This works against “freezing possibility into form” and goes beyond ideas that enclose, inscribe or fill spaces. In doing so she suggests the basis of habitation.

In my work the analysis of self-place-presence through dance, with its vital connection to agency and alterity, owes a debt to the way that Ingold promotes the necessity for taking account of inter-connectedness. The continuous motion of the line is, as it were, the story rather than the plot, the place rather than the terminus, the walk rather than a series of destinations. I am concerned to apply this to my work so that self-place- presence is not seen as locked into ego-driven ideas of identity. It is not in *the* place, of *the* presence, about *the* individual that I am proposing we locate the dancing figure and their sense of a self. It is in the transitional moments, what Flexer sees as the in-betweens. In *Dance in the City*, Andrew Ward, in the aptly titled chapter *Dancing Around Meaning*, asserts that: “it is no longer appropriate to approach this or that dance as if it had a message to reveal, or as if it was a discrete narrative moment, or if it was the mirror of, or cipher for some more real or fundamental … phenomena” (18). Ward concludes this declaration by proposing that dance should be thought of “as a form of life or as a way of being” (18). This hopeful, almost celebratory position, pictures the dancer as involved in what I describe as a narrative of continuous motion, and from this perspective, the dancer becomes a nomadic, multiple subject.

Shifting, Complex, Multiple: Braidotti and the Nomadic

Rosi Braidotti is a Philosopher and University Professor at Utrecht University as well as director of the Centre for the Humanities in Utrecht.[[4]](#endnote-5)

Rosi Braidotti’s nomadic theory is concerned with hybridity, transversalism and transdisciplinary connections which she sees as constitutive of non-Oedipal creativity - ontologically monistic rather than dualistic. In the introduction to *Nomadic Theory* she writes:

Politically, nomadic thought is the expression of a non-unitary vision of the subject, defined by motion in a complex manner that is densely material. It invites us to rethink structures and boundaries of the self by tackling the deeper conceptual roots of issues of identity. (3)

Braidotti sees subjectivity with affect and desire at its core; and when she writes of “fluid ego boundaries”, she is referring to the possibility of multiple subjectivities. When examining ideas of a self, the fixed singularity of an individual as ego is not relevant. There is no sovereign subject, no universal, self-contained, self-referential ‘I’. Becoming and emergence are embedded in Braidotti’s presentation of the nomadic. In *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming,* Braidotti writes that:

the nomadic subject is shifting, partial, complex and multiple. It exists in the shifts and the patterns of repetitions … the nomadic subject is flows of transformation without ultimate destination. It is a form of intransitive becoming; it is multiple, relational, dynamic. (86)

Braidotti’s nomadic theory has clear connections to and sympathies with other strands of theory that run through this thesis. Echoes of Grosz’s positions on multiplicity and of Ingold’s idea of immersion within and through a storied world are examples of this.

Another of these strands is the necessity to reconcile further terms that have become divided, such as body, self, subject. The pulses of self-presence that have been suggested help in such reconciliation, and are moments of resistance because they assert the self as subject, as present and dynamic within the nomadic flows of becoming. Paraphrasing Braidotti, self is a process of negotiations between conditions that are both material and potential – between the power associated with material and the potentials of desire. As Braidotti concludes:

Whatever semblance of unity there may be is no God-given essence, but rather the fictional choreography of many levels into one socially operational self. It implies that what sustains the entire process of becoming-subject is the will-to-know, the desire to say, the desire to speak as a … vital, necessary

… desire to become. (76)

Another strand that interweaves through this thesis is concerned with the processes of action understanding and recognition. These involve the ability to understand movement as both representative and symbolic, which is explained in Chapter 2, and as an imagery of movement in dynamic relationship with an emerging environment. These processes, which are considered alongside movement as representative and symbolic, are relational processes giving permission for shifts between the actual and the metaphoric, between what is perceived and what is desired. Braidotti’s perspective on this is summed up when she suggests that: “Becoming nomadic means that one learns to re-invent oneself and one desires the self as a process of transformation. It is about the desire for change and shifts of multiple desires” (84).

A similar idea of a transformational process between performativity and the performed will be developed here in which performativity is the potential for an emergence of a performed pulse of self. It is in this notion of the transformational process, entwined in movement arising through the bodily intelligence of the dancer, that moments of habitation emerge; and it can be maintained that they also become moments and expressions of resistance. It is a process that desires nomadic affect - affect of the kind that Kathleen Stewart, in *Ordinary Affects* locates in the operation of the ordinary, and that is presented here as a mutually dependent process. Analysing Deleuze, Braidotti writes that:

Resonances, harmonies and hues intermingle to paint an altogether different landscape of a self that, not being One, functions as a relay-point for many sets of intersections and encounters with multiple others … not being burdened by being One, such a subject can envisage forms of resistance and political agency that are multi-layered and complex … transcendental sites of becoming (75).

The examples of dance that have been used, each different in realisation, are loosely joined through somatic principles. The examples suggest that in these forms dance is indeed nomadic, minoritarian, deterritorialized by and continually charged with the potentialities of affect. Braidotti writes of “arousing an affirmative passion for transformative flows that destabilise all identities” (41). This can be clearly seen in the way, for example, Flexer’s work shifts between expectation and desire, between what she sees as the performative and the everyday, between power and potential, when the dancer still “desires the self as a process of transformation” (41).

Braidotti argues that the humanities have anthropocentrism at their core and that this is no longer sustainable in the face of a subject identity that is non-unitary and has multiple allegiances. She asserts in *The Posthuman* that: “Posthuman subjectivity reshapes the identity of humanistic practices, by stressing heteronomy and multi-faceted relationality, instead of autonomy and self-referential disciplinary purity” (145). This view supports the breakdown of conventional boundaries between knowledges, and in particular the relevance of science and technology to understanding the body and its capacities, which are capable of “multiple ecologies of belonging” (193).

The nomadic, posthuman subject, which, according to Braidotti, is both materialist and vitalist, is also firmly located **somewhere**. She points out that the subject needs to be: “part of contemporary culture, embodying and embedding the subject of this particular world” and asserts that “far from being a flight from the real, posthuman thought inscribes the contemporary subject in the conditions of its own historicity” (189). Braidotti considers that: “matter, including the specific slice of matter that is human embodiment, is intelligent and self-organizing. This means that matter is not dialectically opposed to culture, nor to technological mediation, but continuous with them” (35). She suggests that this is representative of a view of monism that is concerned with becomings, is anti-dualistic, open-ended and inter-relational. Braidotti sees this as an inter-relationality that takes account of technological mediations of the body, which is not a direct concern here, except in the sense of understanding that the body is advanced by technology through observation of previously invisible processes, like, for example, the mirror neuron system.

In *Deleuze and Philosophy*, edited by Constantin Boundas, Braidotti writes of a subject that is “physiologically embedded in the corporeal materiality of self, but the intensive or nomadic subject is an in-between: a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding-outwards of affects” (135); and it is here, in the particularity of material and affect that Braidotti has been of most influence in this research. As an example, Braidotti’s suggestion of the way external influences and resulting affects interact, makes analysis in Chapter 4 of Yael Flexer’s use of the in-between in her work more understandable. In Chapter 6, this analysis in turn contributes to a reading of affect within an overall understanding of the nomadic presence of the dancer. It helps point to the forms of resistance that arise from the dancer’s multiple subjectivities.

Braidotti sees multiple subjectivities as concerned with radical immanence and a shift towards biocentrism, as opposed to the anthropomorphic presentation of the humanist subject. She suggests in *Metamorphoses* that radical immanence is a materialist theory, encompassing the body at all levels as “a deeply embedded vision of the embodied subject” (63). She points to the particular relevance of the biological body in this respect and that the levels she refers to include the cellular. She proposes that: “Neurosciences have increased our understanding of memory and the extent to which the storage and retrieval of information is essential to the progress of the self” (63). Rejecting the essentialism that can bedevil neuro-scientific claims as much as the instinctive critical stance of some intellectuals, she asserts that this is “evidence that cannot be ignored” (63), and that it contributes to the constant transformations that are associated with consciousness.

Braidotti continues: “Consciousness needs to be redefined … in terms of flows of variations,

constantly transforming within patterns of continuity … Processes, flows, in-between-status

have to be taken into … conceptual representation” (63).

The final section in this chapter introduces and explains the influence of Antonio Damasio and his ideas on consciousness, self and the interdependency of body and mind. Braidotti’s conviction that consciousness needs to be redefined, or more accurately undergo continual transformations, finds some concrete expression in Damasio’s linking of consciousness, mind and a developing self. Damasio also provides positions from which the relevance of mirror neurons to a developing self through movement, as discussed in Chapter 2, is placed and understood. The strong connections that Braidotti points to with radical immanence, flow, duration and affect are further explored. Through this inter- disciplinary analysis, neuroscience is used to support the centrality of material embodiment and corporeality to a developing comprehension of self.

## Against Separation: Damasio and Body as Mind.

In his neuroscientific work, Antonio Damasio has offered strong opposition to the separation of mind and body. In *Descartes’ Error* he challenges Descartes’ “abyssal separation between body and mind … the suggestion that reasoning, and moral judgement

… might exist separately from the body … the separation of the most refined operations of the mind from the structure and operation of a biological organism” (251). Damasio’s opposition was not only aimed solely at this enduringly influential view. He also suggests that traces of Cartesian dualism that can be found in the work of neuroscience, when it points to mind as completely understandable through the operation of a brain independent of “the organism and the surrounding physical and social environment”(251). In particular, Damasio questions the separation of emotion from cognitive functions and points to this as part of a modern variation of dualism in “the idea that the mind and brain are related, but only in the sense that the mind is the software programme run in a piece of computer hardware called brain”(247). He is equally opposed to the view the body only provides life support for the brain. Damasio’s work provides further support across knowledges for the possibility of multiple subjectivities, suffusion in an interactive environment and the dynamic place of affect. It also helps understand the contribution of neurons to *self-* conscious minds at the cellular level, involved in all aspects of the brain. The emphasis here is on *contribution*, not on responsibility. At the end of *Descartes’ Error* Damasio declares: “The truly embodied mind I envision … does not relinquish its most refined levels of operation, those constituting its soul and its spirit, it is just that soul and spirit … are now complex and unique states of an organism” (252). Whether “soul and spirit” are terms I would support is debatable, but it is acceptable that they are used here further to suggest that the body is indeed the site of discourse.

In his 2010 book *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*, Damasio proposes that conscious minds and a process of developing self are interdependent. He suggests an interrelated progressive process of proto, core and autobiographical selves that results in the brain’s “ability to produce not only mental representations that imitate reality

… but also representations that symbolize actions and objects and individuals” (290). Damasio is linked to the other theorists looked at in this chapter by his emphasis on the importance of interaction between body and environment, and as with Grosz, he considers the living body as the central locus:

The body and the surrounding environment interact with each other, and the changes caused *in the body* by that interaction are mapped in the brain. It is certainly true that the mind learns of the outside world via the brain, but it is equally true that the brain can be informed only via the body. (91)

Damasio himself was influenced by Rudolfo Llinás, one of the founders of current brain sciences. In his book *I of the Vortex: From Neurons to Self*, Llinás claims: “The central generation of movement and generation of mindness … are in fact different parts of the same process” and that “mindness is the internalization of movement” (5). In effect, Llinás considers that internalization of movement is part of a continual exchange of flows from the outside in and the inside out. Nothing in this process is closed or ended. Llinás states that: “in the case of muscle, all possible behaviours in us arise from activation of the motor neurons that activate the muscles that ultimately orchestrate our movements” (10). Llinás explains his central definitions of mind, or ‘mindness’, by emphasising that he sees mind and brain as “inseparable events” (1). He concludes that:

Mind or the mindness state is that class of all functional brain states in which sensorimotor images, including self-awareness, are generated. When using the term sensorimotor image, I mean something more than visual imagery. I refer to the conjunction or binding of all sensory input to produce a discreet functional state that ultimately may result in action. (1)

He goes on to remind us that we are endoskeletal animals, and for him the implication of having our skeletal structure on the inside is that we are “aware of our muscles from birth”(4), with the consequence that we can see, register and feel their operation and how this relates to the body in general.[[5]](#endnote-6) Llinás presents this as a fundamental awareness of physicality, fundamental in the sense that it is connected to our basic and developing muscular awareness, that Damasio in turn describes as “proto self”. There are connections here to Rosemary Lee’s use of the term ‘intelligent body’ discussed in Chapter 3 below.

Llinás points out that the opposite is true of the organ we call our brain and of the major nerve highway of our spinal cord which are in a sense exoskeletal, necessarily protected inside the body and so not available to immediate awareness. However these too, and all their functions, are physical. The neuronal structures that underpin our existence are themselves not ephemeral impulses, but made of organisms with a mass and physical definition, a life of their own, from the central protected nucleus along the membrane covered axons and dendrites through which electrical signals ripple in the constant intercommunication between neurons which operate our action potentials and assist our action understanding. These are not simply reactive or limited servo-systems, but the core of what Llinás proposes as a state of mindness, which is predictive. It ultimately produces images that can function as abstracts, helping provide the ability to select, act or not act, compare internally generated images with real-time information from whatever part of our environment we are experiencing them. Llinás concludes that our ability to predict underlies perception and is “at the very core of brain function” (3). He points to processes in the thalamocortical system as contributory in our ability to predict, processes that relate “sensory-referred properties of the external world to internally generated motivations and memories” (126).

In Llinás’ explanation, it is a dynamically changing, reverberating flow of neural activity that produces an emergent property of consciousness or self. Self, for Llinás, is the result of a binding function in the thalamocortical system producing what he terms “temporal coherence” from “the fractured components of external and internal reality” (126). A self as mindness continually emerges as states of coherence bound together out of a vortex of neural information. Movement within a multi-celled organism is an holistic process involving constant interdependent exchange within and without. When making such considerations, there is a temptation to make comparisons with machines and the currently pervasive idea of soft and hardware functions. However, neuronal systems are not uniform constructs, they are autopoietic: adaptive and predictive, organic and dynamic and as such, while similar in design from person to person, capable of huge variations of detail within, a base for singularity of a self.

In *Self Comes to Mind* Damasio proposes that:

The nonverbal narrative of perpetually occurring events spontaneously portrays in the mind the fact that there is a protagonist to whom certain events are happening, that protagonist being the material me. The portrayal in the nonverbal narrative simultaneously creates and reveals the protagonist, connects the actions being produced by the organism to that same protagonist, and, along with the feeling generated by engaging with the object, engenders a sense of ownership. (203)

In Damasio’s view, the protagonist, the self, “comes to mind” as images that continually refresh a narrative of singularity through our engagement with the world of objects. Objects are all of those things that the sensorimotor processes encounter; and the images that result from these encounters are not confined to what is experienced through sight alone, but are an interactive amalgam of the neuronal system’s processing of all the senses. It is proposed that action understanding, an important element in a sense of a self through movement, does not depend on a lexicon of stored pictures, but instead the more flexible potential of image patterns, allowing the attribution of potential meaning to physical action.

Both Llinás and Damasio suggest that within the flows and exchanges of our organic and dynamic neuronal systems, layers or accumulations of image-based information resulting from physically engaged movement within shifting environments emerge and cohere. The resulting internally processed motivations and memories are accessible but not static. Though the word ‘layer’ might suggest sedimentary strata that can be revealed in some kind of ordered process through a time line, the suggestion here is that it is more accurate to use the word as a reference to accumulations that interact, and in this sense it is the interactive potential it is possible to stimulate or reveal, an aim that Rosemary Lee feels is present in her work.

Damasio considers interaction with environments of importance to the mutuality of mind and body, transmitted at the cellular level through interacting neuronal systems. This is indicative of a process of emergence of self through an overall continuity of interacting flows within shifting environments. Damasio, within what he terms the “framework [that] must interconnect behaviour, mind and brain events” (19), points to the potential plasticity of neuronal systems as the result of processes of learning that are produced by an organism’s activities. Damasio considers that this “suggests how a brain architecture that features convergence and divergence of neuron circuitries plays a role in the high-order coordination of images and is essential for the construction of the self” (19). There is a direct link here with Feldenkrais, who writes in *Awareness Through Movement* that: “The possibility of creating the image of an action and then delaying its execution – postponing or preventing it altogether- is the basis of imagination and intellectual judgement” (45). Both Damasio and Feldenkrais show here a compatibility with Braidotti when she describes becoming-posthuman as a process of re-defining attachment and connections within a shared world, the “multiple ecologies of belonging” (193).

Damasio proposes that the brain carries out an incessant mapping, resulting in patterns constituting images. He claims that: “The images in our minds are the brain’s momentary maps of everything and of anything, inside our body and around it, concrete as well as abstract, actual or previously recorded” (70). These images are representative of “physical properties of entities and their spatial and temporal relationships, as well as their actions” (70). He goes on to suggest that some images arise through the brain making, as it were, maps of maps and that this gives rise to abstract images, and to images that in turn become what could be termed creative activity. He proposes that: “Minds are a subtle, flowing combination of actual images and recalled images” (71), which are based on the physical interaction of objects with the body. I suggest that objects here are best understood as not solely what comes into contact with the somatosensory system, but also what impacts on other senses, the totality of which Ingold describes as necessary for our perception of environments and includes what we hear, what we see and what, like weather, we become immersed in. Damasio maintains that the maps and image patterns committed to memory are open to imaginative recall whilst the “body is the central object of brain mapping the very first object of its attention” (92). The body is in continual movement, and in consequence so too is its relationship to shifting environments, resulting in what Damasio describes as: “Body and brain … engaged in a continuous interactive dance” (95). It is a continuous dance of mapping and image patterning that contributes to embodiment. Ingold suggests that this is a necessary step in fully analysing the process of embodiment. It is synonymous with the development of the body as the human organism in its environment.

There is a relationship between Damasio’s view of brain mapping resulting in image patterns that are firmly linked to a particular body in movement, and emergence of a sense of self that is in a constant process of becoming and yet retains a unique presence.

Throughout this thesis, I present the idea of self-presence through dance as an intense and concrete moment expressed as a series of interconnected pulses, growing out of and feeding into each other processually. Damasio provides a possible process for this in his analysis of the production of images, concrete and abstract, from brain mapping. It is a process Damasio links to alterity and agency, and in *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* he writes: “Ownership and agency are … entirely related to a body at a particular instant and in a particular space … Agency … requires a body acting in time and space and is meaningless without it” (145). Linking time and space to agency, in other words to the located, embedded body, suggests that alterity emerges from it. The correspondence of alterity and agency then leads to a view of self as protagonist within one’s own changing narratives. In effect, the way we interact with the circumstances and objects that attend our process of engagement with the world form an extended, experientially based system of affordance. Ingold, analysing Gibson’s theory of affordances in *The Perception of the Environment*, points out that it offers “a way of thinking about human-environmental relations that dispenses with the conventional dichotomy between naturally given and culturally constructed worlds” (168). In this model: “Meanings are not attached by the mind to objects in the world” but rather they “take on their significance - or, in Gibson’s terms they afford what they do – by virtue of their incorporation into a characteristic pattern of day to day activities” (168).

Damasio proposes that our process of engagement with the world, the objects and events of our experience, the motor responses, adjustments and textures involved, are multi-layered and inclusive. He suggests that:

even when we … think about an object, we tend to reconstruct memories not just of a shape or colour but also of the perceptual engagement the object required and of the accompanying emotional reactions … the images you form in your mind always signal to the organism its own engagement with the business of making images. (148)

Movement, always our engagement with environments, is experienced on many sensual and emotional layers and we particularise these through our imaging of them. In doing so the potential for specific self-presence becomes possible. Damasio consistently points to the plasticity and dynamism that his analysis of interdependence of mind/body requires, and this parallels the approaches shared with Grosz, Ingold and Braidotti. Damasio, as well as having a broad contiguity with other theorists considered in this chapter, also provides a model for locating the role of mirror neuron systems within emergence of self through movement – and this is examined in the next chapter.

## Presence in the Moving Body.

There is understandable caution over how presence is understood when referring to the individual performer. Indeed, to use the term in the context of theatre, for example, one would be likely to encounter a response that made presence a simple set of performance tactics, through which the actor is able to take control of an audience, a straightforward matter of learnt tricks of the trade. Presence can be a slippery term. Used in this performance context, it can give rise to, for example, ideas of transcendence. As Ann Cooper Albright says when considering dance performance in *Choreographing Difference:*

This notion of performing presence – the power of physical beingness - is an integral part of dance. Unfortunately, it has often been romanticized as a magical, ineffable quality that can transcend the specificities of movement style, cultural context, and historical moment to posit a universal aesthetic *communitas* between audience and performer. (17)

Cooper Albright here critiques the lack of definition in using presence in relation to performing dance, while still allowing for presence as a special condition of dance. In the complexity of contributing factors that constitute dance, I suggest that the acute sense of physical presence is not only important, but also inevitable. Some of this can immediately be attributed to elements of display, to a particular specular regime or expectancy, often centred on an essentially voyeuristic exchange. Cooper Albright cites Yvonne Rainer’s 1965 *No Manifesto* and subsequent work developed from it as a point marking conscious efforts, not solely to counter such assumptions and set practice, but to open the ground for a new understanding of the body in movement, shorn of expectations that attach to it – for example narrative, rhythm, seduction. The effect of this was to concentrate attention on the

body moving, as clearly evidenced in her *Trio A* (part of *The Mind is a Muscle*), the 1966 performance at the Judson Church where the movement of the body alone was validated.

The figure dancing, shorn of all the trappings Rainer lists, is still an encultured body. The movement that emerges under this new regime of asceticism cannot exist independently of the constituents of its occupation of a moment in time. The conditioning circumstances of cultural expectancy that gave rise to old understandings and claims fall away only for others to appear. The dancing figure, the moving body, is alive with meaning as a condition of its presence. Ramsay Burt reminds us in *Judson Dance Theatre: Performative Traces* (2006)*,* that Rainer produced *The Mind is a Muscle* after the showing of a Vietnamese prisoner shot dead on TV. Burt’s purpose in returning to this, despite Rainer’s insistence that it had no bearing on the generation or execution of the work, is to contextualise the moment. He comments that “the same feeling confirmed the rightness of creating and performing a work that valued the actual weight, mass and unenhanced physicality of the minimal dancing body” (87). Looking again at the filmed version of *Trio A* from 1978, what is now striking is the familiarity of the piece. The bare floor, the ubiquitous black clothes and soft shoes, the loose movement, reminiscent of everyday movement dissected and re-assembled, these often remain as identifying factors of modern dance today. However, the presence of the moving body had become its own narrative, an embodied performance. Emilyn Claid expresses this defining performative shift in *Yes? No! Maybe … Seductive Ambiguity in Dance* when examining the idea of *jouissance*, and what she termed ‘jouissance dancing’:

A physical inner force of imagination erupts through the dancer’s body to influence the movement, creating dancing that is multiple, fractured, varied and non-hierarchical. Moving this way, the inside becomes the outside. Dancing involves a process of unlearning, making gaps, allowing an effervescence of jouissance to flow through, rather than a process of constructing a stylized play of surface illusions … The language and the dancer’s body converge through a vulnerability, formless-ness and anatomical intelligence. (90)

Dance is such a varied and fugitive form that it seems implausible to ask whether there is a set of specifics to uncover that identifies particular forms of movement as dance. Despite this, every investigation continues to do so in one implied way or another. Though definitive answers may not be appropriate, Claid’s suggestion that through a form of anatomical intelligence a “physical force of imagination” emerges, serves both as a marker and an example of how dance in recent decades has supported and sustained recognition of the body as a site of continuing discourse. It will be seen in the Chapter 3, for example, that Rosemary Lee places particular importance on aware anatomical intelligence, as a quality dancers must show when they work with her.

This is an area literally explored, for example, by Rosemary Butcher in *Body as Site, Image as Event*, of which she writes in *Border Tension: Dance and Discourse*: “I looked at the body almost as a place, as a site, and I wanted to place this body in an environment – so that the body as site was itself put in a site” (365). Butcher’s overriding interest is in form and structure as her continuing dynamic engagement with the dancing figure, and Ann Nugent in *Two Tall Women* writes that: “the dancerly self is surrendered to the work … the movement rejoices in the right to explore space, shape and weight. That freedom is … structured and sequenced … and every work is revealed as a model of sculptural clarity and control” (23). What here constitutes a dancerly ‘self’ that distinguishes it from any other self? Nugent goes on to say that: “The odd thing about Butcher’s dancers, who must impose nothing extraneous, is that they cannot help but leave personal traces on the dance” (23).

The body in movement continues to show emergence of a self, traces and pulses of self- presence not least in effects of gender difference, articulated by Elizabeth Grosz in *Volatile Bodies* when she talks of sexual difference as “the horizon that cannot appear in its own terms but is implied in the very possibility of an entity, an identity, an other and their relations” (209). Grosz also challenges the legitimacy of possibilities of neutral representation of the body, seeing this as one of the “ways in which a corporeal “universal” has in fact functioned as a veiled representation and projection of a masculine which takes itself as an unquestioned norm” (188). Recognising the body as a site of discourse sees it as a dynamic part of a wider narrative that cannot be placed, arranged and set – given a “stylized play of surface illusions”. Butcher’s dancers showed a sense of self emerging because she deliberately encouraged their anatomical intelligence to enter into a dynamic exchange with specific environments, recognising them as co-extensive. Valerie Briginshaw in *Dance Space and Subjectivity* writes that:

Different spaces for dance … hold connotations and associations. They are not empty. Like bodies they can be gendered, ‘radicalized’ and sexualized. What happens when dance is set in such places? What effect does this have on the choreography?; on the spaces?; on the ideas concerning subjectivity? (6)

These are questions that will be considered in detail in forthcoming chapters on Rosemary Lee and Yael Flexer in the context of the idea of a self, and of physical presence. Initially I am proposing that this has to be carried out in the light of emerging material concerning the way we perceive and understand movement, so that the psychophysical dualism of body and its location is fused into the idea of embodied cognition.

Jonathan Burrows’ book *A Choreographer’s Handbook*, frequently returns to aphorisms, sometimes deliberately contradictory, about time, place, performance, space, and meaning. In a series of email exchanges with Burrows which will be looked at in more detail in Chapter 6, some of these contradictions were further explored. His challenging text, almost mischievously called a ***Choreographer’s*** *Handbook* [my use of bold], promotes reflection on the very questions that I am suggesting. Here Burrows encourages an inquisitive, alert, interrogative approach to the idea of making dance. Amongst many thought provoking comments one stands out for me when he writes: “Every act of dancing is a negotiation with the patterns your body is thinking” (69). Burrows refers to the way the brain learns movement patterns, how it looks for “existing patterns to copy”, how proprioceptive systems provide information for comparison with possibly stored available patterns. What are these systems thought to be in the light of current developments and what sort of negotiation is taking place between the “patterns your body is thinking”? A different way of asking this question might be: what separates the patterns your brain is recognising about movement, that lead to an expression of dance? Burrows refers to the way the brain learns movement patterns and this is important to the negotiation that takes place. I maintain that in recent neuroscience, the seeds for further understanding of how movement patterns are learnt and understood and how they relate to a plastic and processual sense of a self through movement are being sown. In the next chapter some of that research, including some which claims to have dance as its starting point, is presented and explored. The material is examined critically, suggesting where it advances or supports new lines of enquiry.

# CHAPTER 2: MOVEMENT TOWARDS A SELF

## Introduction.

This chapter looks in detail at the contribution neuroscience and current understanding of mirror neuron systems makes to processes involved in the emergence of a sense of self through dance movement. More general explanation of ideas concerning imaging movement, ‘thinking movement’ and what this implies, introduced in Chapter 1 and continued at the start of this chapter, are analysed and problematised in detail. Particular reference is made to specific research projects, some using dance, and how these express and advance current views on understanding movement. Particular attention is given to research on the mirror neuron system, explaining its relevance to this thesis. Its links to other lines of enquiry and practice, and the way in which it adds to understanding aspects of somatic practice, particularly empathetic understanding of movement and unique singularity in emergence of self through movement, are fully examined and analysed. In this chapter proposals are made that neuroscientific material enhances, but is not used as proof for already existing positions. Attention is drawn to the potential and support offered by this material for non-binarised understanding of mind/body. The operation of mirror neurons, having mass, weight and motion, is firmly placed within a vital, material perspective. This material is used to emphasise the whole, inclusive form of the discourse that the body is the site of, and which the operation of mirror neurons is a part of.

In the first email of the series exchanged with Jonathan Burrows, he wrote that: “the area of body/mind perception has become popular recently, and the role of dance as having been at the forefront of this human exploration is often overlooked … But it’s very easy as a dancer to forget or undervalue what one knows at a physical level, because it’s invisible within your own body” (email. 27 March 2013).

The previous chapter signalled and supported the potential offered through extending interaction between the humanities and the sciences when considering dance. This chapter furthers the aim in its discussion and analysis of developments surrounding the mirror neuron system. Specific focus is given to an examination of its particular contribution to understanding emergence of self in the context of movement recognition and action understanding. This is not confined to simple identification processes, but involves empathetic responses to movement and makes a contribution towards how embodiment might be further understood. The work on mirror neurons potentially extends the foundations laid by the long observed and accepted role of motor command neurons firing in the frontal lobe when engaged in physical action. When Burrows writes of what dancers know “at a physical level” which is “invisible within your own body”, he is providing an opening for inclusion of mirror neuron developments in exploring how the invisibility of processes related to dance movement within the body can be investigated.

Sometimes controversially, the mirror neuron system has been presented as a system supporting motor theories of action recognition and action understanding on both an inter- and intra-relational bases. It is an important development in the way movement is understood because it suggests the idea that motor resonance is central to understanding observed actions and making inference from them about observed action goals in others.

This, in turn, opens up new approaches to understanding of self and other as part of a fluid exchange rather than as a constant affirmation of difference. It also opens up a path beyond a simple mimicry of observed movement, important though that is, because, as Anna Gibbs writing in *The Affect Theory Reader* suggests: “Mimetic knowledge may be the earliest form of knowledge of both self and other” (196). Gibbs extends this when she writes of “embodied simulation” and, in making reference to the work of Vittorio Gallese (further analysed as this chapter develops), explains that: “a sense of understanding that seems to be the basis for empathy … is true of the kind of feeling generated by “embodied simulation” made possible by the mirror neuron system”(196). Gibbs points out that through this empathic response “we may actually experience something of what it feels like to perform the action” (196). Gibbs further explains that: “When we watch someone performing an action, the mirror system in human beings evokes both the “sensory description” of the stimuli and the motor schema of the action itself” (196). As this chapter develops, the significance of these possibilities is examined in relation to development of self through movement.

Damasio’s proposals concerning brain mapping and its resulting images support mirror neurons as a significant addition in the shift from mimetic function alone to both mimetic and metaphoric roles: the possibility of abstract images suggesting metaphoric and empathic understanding of the potentialities of movement. The mirror neuron system is a system through which this shift takes place. In *Self Come to Mind*, Damasio writes “the fact that the body of a given organism can be represented in the brain is essential for the creation of the self” (104). He goes on to point out that: “ because we can depict our own body states, we can more easily simulate the equivalent body states of others … and the significance they have acquired for us can be transferred to the simulated body state of others” (104). It is a view that is also consistent with Feldenkrais’ idea of delayed action execution, through which the ability to create an image of an action becomes the basis for creative, intellectual judgement. In *Awareness Through Movement*, Feldenkrais claims: “The possibility of delaying action – prolonging the period between the intention and its execution – enables a man to learn to know himself” (46).

Claims for mirror neurons have increased exponentially since they were discovered, and consequently have entered popular reference before the theories and experiments associated with them have covered anywhere near the ground popularly claimed. Note will be taken of the range of arguments set out concerning mirror neurons and care taken to exclude the more exotically speculative conclusions that have been put forward. Terms like ‘action understanding’, ‘action resonance’, and ‘action recognition’ can be contextually variable, but in this chapter they are consistently located in processes of embodiment associated with mirror neuron system activity. Nevertheless, it is the contribution of that activity to an idea of emergence of a self rather than of an individual, of process rather than fixed states, accumulations and trajectories rather than definitions that remains of most relevance. As a consequence, it is helpful to restate from time to time that care is needed not to mistake the idea of a ‘system’ for a hardwired, unchangeable servo-process. In the case of the mirror neuron system it is autopoietic: self-organizing, relative, and plastic. It is a contributor to a materialist, vitalist process of embodiment that is implicit in a posthuman view of becoming.

It is useful here to recall briefly the partial influence a phenomenological view of embodiment has had on a posthuman understanding of it. In phenomenological terms embodiment could be described as a concrete moment, emerging from the physical organisation of several interacting conditions and, in part, a merging of the body-in-the- world with its possibilities as a performed self. Merleau-Ponty, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, suggests that: “Movement is not thought about movement, and bodily space is not space thought of, or represented. Each voluntary movement takes place in a setting, [and] against a background which is determined by the movement itself” (159). Merleau- Ponty sees movements as performed “in a space which is not “empty” or unrelated to them, but which on the contrary bears a highly determinate relation to them” (159). He considers that: “movement and background are, in fact, only artificially separated stages of a unique totality” (159).

Elizabeth Grosz, in *Volatile Bodies*, referring to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*, explains this as: “The body … able to move, to initiate and undertake actions, because the body schema is a series … of possible actions, plans for action, maps of possible movement the body “knows” how to perform” (95). Grosz goes on to propose that this is “the field in which the subject’s cohesion and identity as a subject and its intimate incarnation in and as a particular body take place” (95). A sense of physical presence is one that is rooted a “unique totality”, and the possibility of mutuality between movement and environment. Tim Ingold, in *Perception of the Environment*, gives further support to this when he writes that: “Organic life … is active rather than reactive, the creative unfolding of an entire field of relations within which beings emerge and take on the particular forms they do, each in relation to the others” (19). For Ingold, as for Grosz and Merleau-Ponty, this indicates that: “Every being is caught up in the process and carries it forward, arises as a singular centre of awareness and agency (19). The trajectory that is shared between them is of Merleau-Ponty’s “unique totality”, Grosz’s “subject’s cohesion and unity” and Ingold’s “singular centre of awareness and agency”.

Relational context between movement and environment is in process whether the movement is in the concrete or abstract register, and Yael Flexer makes use of this in her choreography, switching between what she perceives as the abstract and concrete.

Merleau-Ponty writes: “the background to concrete movement is the world as given, whereas the background to abstract movement is built up” (127) and “the abstract movement carves out within that plenum of the world in which concrete movement took place a zone of reflection and subjectivity” (128). Concrete movement is described as centripetal and concerned with the actual, while abstract movement is described as centrifugal and concerned with the virtual. Whether or how the body in movement “carves out” such a zone is important to understanding what is meant by a relationship of “unique totality” within a processual engagement with the environment. The idea of abstract and concrete registers will be returned to in Chapter 4, with particular consideration given to the possibility of dance movement as an abstract, intransitive movement form. Merleau-Ponty suggests that while “The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life … at other times, elaborating from their literal to a figurative meaning, it manifests through them a core of new significance: this is true of motor habits such as dancing” (169).

The same processes that support life functions also support what Merleau-Ponty describes as “figurative meaning”. What the posthuman autopoietic view supports, as Braidotti affirms in *The Posthuman*, is that: “The key notion is the transversality of relations, for a postanthropocentric and posthuman subject that traces transversal connections among material and symbolic, concrete and discursive lines of relation” (95).

Interdependence is the key concept, the abstract in the concrete, the creative as constant affect.

## From the Inside Out?

The abstract to Blasing, Bettina, Beatriz Calvo-Merino, Emily S. Cross, Corinne Jola, Julianne Honisch and Catherine J. Stevens’ 2012 paper “Neurocognitive Control in Dance Perception and Performance” makes an important claim concerning the integration of movement and cognition when it observes that: “The multiple aspects of embodied cognition involved in performing and perceiving dance have inspired scientists to use dance as a means for studying motor control, expertise and action-perception links” (300). Setting out the ground as it now exists in the case of mirror neurons and the mirror neuron system, enables a clearer selection of areas where scientific study can be effective and relevant.

Proceeding from an assumption of agreement about particular constituents of dance as an art form, Blasing et al state that:

Dancers … must learn complex movement sequences by … reproducing movements they observe, which can include the transfer of visual and verbal information into motor action. Dancers modify movements with respect to direction in space, speed rhythm and amplitude … dancers refine movements according to aesthetic and expressive affordances of the choreographer and/or the dance style. (301)

These observations, and others relating to dancers working within an ensemble, are to a greater or lesser extent applicable to various forms of dance. The reference to carrying out the aesthetic requirements of a choreographer, however, continues the view of the dancer, however skilled, as a body to be inscribed, ordered, and scripted, rather than dance having the transformative potential which Rosemary Lee seeks for and is explored in Chapter 3. The relationship between the choreographer and the dancer is often presented in this form, in both neuroscientific research and dance studies. It is as if the choreographer has subsumed the old notions of brain as separate from body, with the dancer’s body an inert medium for use. The quotation is most pertinent in raising aesthetics in relationship to movement. A plastic system of imaging that contributes to this, and that Damasio describes as brain- mapping, is constantly in process through the operation of mirror neurons.

V.S. Ramachandran, in his 2011 book *The Tell-Tale Brain*, advances what he terms the “Nine laws of aesthetics” (240) and makes the observation: “Humans excel at visual imagery. Our brains evolved this ability to create an internal mental picture or model of the world in which we can rehearse forthcoming actions” (242). Feldenkrais’ idea of delaying action after creating an image of it as a necessary base for imagination is again recalled here. However, Feldenkrais would not distinguish between this image creation and any supposed other real world. He is always concerned with the self as the real world, never separated from it, set aside, or delayed. Dance is concerned with an imagery of movement, and that imagery is located within specifically generated environments even though those environments are not, as this thesis examines, on stable, neutral or empty ground, but based on a dynamic interactive principle of environmental exchange. In this respect, dance

is always embedded in the ‘real’ world. Ramachandran suggests that “art … may be nature’s own virtual reality” (243) and that it operates as a form of communication between the oneiric right hemisphere language and the “more literal” left hemisphere. Ramachandran is using ‘art’ here in its general sense, though he is elsewhere in the book almost always concerned with visual art. He makes the following proposal:

Art conveys nuances of meaning and subtleties of mood that can only be dimly apprehended or conveyed through spoken language. The neural codes used by the two hemispheres for representing higher cognitive functions may be utterly different. Perhaps art facilitates communion between these two modes of thinking that would otherwise remain mutually unintelligible and walled off. (243)

Movement as imagery in dance suggests metaphoric connections through which action understanding goes beyond the functional. When Blasing et al list the properties and actions they identify as central to dance, these are more productively understood within the conception of movement as imagery rather than a collection of fragments of practice that can be pieced together to fulfil an outside aim. The visual artist too realises the artwork through a physical practice of which only the lines and surfaces remain as traces of the movement that produced them. In the traces that remain, the totally embodied nature of the art work is lost, leaving a painting, a sculpture, an installation. And yet, the body whose movement made those material traces is usually overlooked. The artwork, as with dance, required a complex of body movement, a physical, material expression: a direct physical engagement with actual materials. In an ironic reversal, dance is often seen as an embodied art form which becomes absent as it is performed. In performance, dance melts away.

Andre Lepecki, in *Of the Presence of the Body*, sums up this apparent paradox when, in analysing writing about dance, he points out the tension between seeing dance as “translatable from code to steps, and from steps back into code again” (127), which, to some degree, is represented in Blasing’s paper, and “an understanding of dance as elusive presence, dance as the fleeting trace of an always irretrievable, never fully translatable motion” (127). In following a posthuman approach, however, I am arguing for a trajectory that loops away from these apparent polar positions. In emphasising the role of imagery in

movement processes, there is no separation implied between the dancer’s capability for motion and the potential for symbolic affect.

## Action Understanding.

Since the actual observation of mirror neurons in humans in 2010 some of the most recent work has been concerned with their role in how action shapes self. Examples of this work come from two papers published in 2011: “How the Body in Action Shapes the Self” by Vittorio Gallese and Corrado Sinigaglia, and “Through the Looking Glass: Self and Others” by Sinigaglia and Giacomo Rizzolatti. Before coming to a specific consideration of these and other sources, it is important to look in general at the proposals for the mirror neuron system in relation to action understanding, what is meant by that, and what other terms are associated with it. During this analysis, reference will be made to neuroscientific work specifically directed towards dance - in particular, Ivar Hagendoorn’s 2004 paper “Some Speculative Hypotheses about the Nature and Perception of Dance and Choreography”. Hagendoorn’s paper is given particular relevance because of his connections to Merce Cunningham and William Forsythe, amongst others.

Such work needs to be placed in the context of certain received wisdoms about the understanding of the function of the brain and set against the idea that scientific enquiry is necessarily reductionist or essentialist. The mind/body dichotomy is a long-running and familiar debate to which this thesis makes a contribution. As entrenched, and equally influential, is the idea that we learn from birth at a rapid rate, peaking at particular points and then sealing off the brain in a permanent state, which thereafter does not alter and is condemned to a long slow decline. Until very recently, brain damage, either from birth or as the result of trauma, has equally been represented as absolutely irreversible. What we are, and what we become is most often presented as hardwired from a brain that is machine-like in its make-up - a very complex machine perhaps, but one that cannot change itself. The design of this machine is described by the term ‘localized’. Localization has resulted from the mapping of the areas of the brain that are specific to particular functions and processes, and this is important because the peak period of development is seen as the period when these localized and assigned areas are confirmed. Once in place, as with the whole idea of the hardwired brain, the localization has, historically, been presented as set and inflexible.

It is important to this thesis that ideas of plasticity, process and interdependence underpin its methodology. With this in mind the idea of the hard-wired, localized brain is strongly challenged by a growing understanding of the brain as plastic and dynamic, in a constantly shifting and changing process, environmentally relational and above all not isolated and disembodied. Norman Doidge, in the Preface to *The Brain’s Way of Healing*, notes that the brain developed millions of years after bodies and as a support to them. He points out that: “the brain is always linked to the body and, through the senses, to the world outside” (xx). The way we emerge as a self-presence within the world is traceable through that link. The idea of plasticity that Doidge proposes indicates that the brain is adaptable, potentially all-purpose and opportunistic. In *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Doidge explains that: “The brain is a far more open system than we ever imagined and nature has gone very far to help us perceive and take in the world around us. It has given us a brain that survives in a changing world by changing itself” (26). Doidge calls this ability of the brain to change “neuroplasticity” and he presents a number of cases where remarkable progress has resulted using developments in treatment that the idea of plasticity has brought about - for example, in treating trauma and specific conditions like autism. He sets out the principles of the theory of plasticity through these cases.

Understanding the way the neuronal system functions within this theory has shown that the operation of neurons is equally plastic, in the sense that they adapt their detailed function, but also in the way they operate as part of the dynamic flow of sensory impulses from the outside in to the inside out. Neurons themselves can become trained and more efficient, as they also operate in the constant flux of mapping capacities. Where skills are not practised, the differentiated area of the brain concerned is filled by other activity.

Doidge writes that: “The competitive nature of plasticity affects us all. There is an endless war of nerves going on inside each of our brains. If we stop exercising our mental skills, we do not just forget them: the brain map space for those skills is turned over to the skills we practise instead” (59). Though at any particular moment neurons may have specific ‘operational’ functions, these are within a dynamic plasticity that constantly allows for variations. In this way neurons, as well as the areas they fire to, have both specificity and potential at the same time. Even so, the more specific the function, the more practised, the more accurate, fast and economical the neuron becomes. Space given over to the flood of neurons in the first stages of learning new skills adapts as the number of neurons reduces through their increased efficiency. Doidge points out that: “education increases the number of branches among neurons. An increased number of branches drive the neurons farther apart, leading to an increase in volume and thickness of the brain. The idea that the brain is

like a muscle that grows with exercise is not just a metaphor” (43).

The overall picture of neuronal activity within the brain that according to Doidge, is “like a muscle”, is one of vital materiality. Quite apart from neurons being some form of disembodied signal system, they have mass, weight, and disposition. They adapt and respond to changing requirements and conditions and develop more appropriate physical properties to meet them. They are observable, part of systems that are themselves plastic in their distribution and function. This is the neuroplasticity that Doidge speaks of and describes as an aspect of embodiment, a contributor to the materiality of the body. Doidge also proposes that: “imagining an act engages the same motor and sensory programmes that are involved in doing it.” He goes on to observe: “we have long viewed our imaginative life with a kind of sacred awe: as noble, pure, immaterial, and ethereal, cut off from our material brain” declaring: “everything your “immaterial” mind imagines leaves material traces. Each thought alters the physical state of your brain synapses at a microscopic level”. Doidge goes on to suggest that: “Each time you imagine moving your fingers across the keys to play the piano you alter the tendrils in your living brain” (213). It is clear that the same applies to what happens when you imagine, perform, experience, or see a dance movement. However, it is your thought, your experience, and your material brain whose physical state alters. It is an aspect of an emergence of your sense of self.

For some time research has demonstrated the existence of mirror neurons. They are so called because of their property of firing during both the observation and the execution of a specific action. Mirror neurons play a role in action understanding and in “The Mirror Neuron System”, a seminal paper published in 2004, Giacomo Rizolatti and Laila Craighero, wrote that: “Mirror neurons represent the neural basis of a mechanism that creates a direct link between the sender of a message and its receiver … actions done by other individuals become messages that are understood by an observer without any cognitive mediation” (183). Rizolatti and Craighero also indicate a possible critical link between mirror neurons, action understanding and social organization as the system fires in humans for both transitive and intransitive action.

The use of the term ‘intransitive action’ has relevance with regard to movement in dance. At the basic level, transitive movement would be seen as a movement taken to achieve a specific goal, for example lifting a pen, reaching a cup. The goals become more complex to describe as the movement required to complete them becomes more complex. Ideas of peri-personal space and notions of affordance also add to the complexity of what the object of a movement might be. Distinguishing between the two presents difficulties, and there is a case for saying that no movement is without an object. Rizolatti and Craighero are referring to the possibility that mirror neurons fire when an action has no specific functional goal except for the possible execution of the movement itself. In part, the exploration of ‘pedestrian’ movement in dance examines the range and potential of movement imagery by extending further what had been seen as purely functional movement forms.

In the 2007 paper, “The Human Mirror Neuron System: A Link Between Action Observation and Social Skills”, by Lindsay Oberman, Jaime A. Pineda and Vilyanur S. Ramachandran, the writers suggest that a broad network in humans matches “perceptions of the environment to internal sensorimotor representations” that “may play a key role in multiple aspects of social cognition from biological action perception to empathy” (62).

Oberman et al go on to speculate that the intentions, thoughts and feelings that motivate actions and accompany the physical action itself may themselves have been an evolutionary “bootstrapping” that provided “the foundation for arguably unique human social skills such as theory of mind, empathy and language” (62), and this suggestion finds strong support in the work of Damasio, Berthoz, Doidge, Ramachandran and others. In effect, the debate around mirror neuron systems has contributed to the weakening of the hierarchical distinctions between cognition and motion and helped strengthen claims for understanding the central importance of the body and embodiment in perception and understanding.

This, and other material about mirror neurons did not go unchallenged, as seen in Gregory Hickok’s 2008 paper “Eight Problems for the Mirror Theory of Action Understanding in Monkeys and Humans”, an important and regularly quoted critique of the role of mirror neurons. Other more recent critiques can be found in Alfonso Caramazza, Stefano Anzelotti, Lukas Strnad and Angelika Lingnau’s 2014 paper “Embodied Cognition and Mirror Neurons: A Critical Assessment”, in which they question the data that supports a distinction between embodied cognition and what they term “classical cognitive accounts”. Another example can be seen in Sebo Uithol, Iris van Rooij, Harold Bekkering and Pim Haselager’s 2011 paper “Understanding Motor Resonance”, in which the contributors “aim to clarify the troubled debate on motor theories of action understanding and the role mirror neurons play”, pointing to the wide range of variance and imprecision in the use of terms like action understanding itself. Action understanding as a definitive term is not precise and I suggest that its full significance lies in the process of understanding action, rather than in a simple formula for interpreting an action.

Hickock interrogates the interpretation of action understanding and in particular the core ideas of action semantics that can be accessed by others observing the same actions. He asserts that: “In order to make a serious case for the mirror neurons as the basis of action understanding, one has to show that they are qualitatively different from other sensory-motor cells … specifically that they are coding more than just a sensory motor association” (1231). Hickok points out the chain of assumptions which had been made on the basis of what might constitute differences between humans and other primates. Indeed, he saw the importation of data from experiments on monkeys to a human focus without other empirical support as a critical weakness. He points to this as a block to other possibilities, asking: “But what if the mirror system evolved in humans is such that it now supports imitation but no longer supports action understanding? Perhaps humans evolved a more sophisticated semantic system?” (1234) Hickok raises other queries concerning the range of possible meaning associated with an observed action, for example the extent to which action understanding is dependent on the motor system. He suggests that there is strong evidence against the “motor theory of speech perception and consequently the mirror neuron generalisation of action understanding to the speech domain” (1238). Hickok states firmly: “A motor representation cannot distinguish between the range of possible meanings associated with … an action” (1240).

The objections that Hickok raises continue to be debated - as seen in the other more recent examples given above. Despite the weight of Hickok’s interrogations, evidence for the role of mirror neurons in processes of action understanding, empathy and self through movement mount, and continue to confirm ideas expressed by Feldenkrais, Damasio and others referenced in this thesis. Nevertheless, the admonition to avoid using mirror neurons as a magic trick, a sort of biological equivalent of the god particle, would be well given. It is important to stress that mirror neurons are contributors, albeit sometimes key contributors, rather than exclusive owners of explanations for a wide range of behaviours, and especially within an action observation network.

The first actual verification of observed mirror neuron activity in humans came in 2010 and was announced in the paper “Single-Neuron Responses in Humans During Execution and Observation of Actions” by Roy Mukamel, Arne D. Ekstrom, Jonas Kaplan, Marco Iacoboni and Itzhak Fried. Mukamel et al concluded in their paper that their “findings suggest that multiple systems in humans may be endowed with neural mechanisms of mirroring for both the integration and differentiation of perceptual and motor aspects of actions performed by self and others” (750). They continue: “The critical feature of mirror neurons is the functional matching between a motor response and a perceptual one” (753). Conditions of the experiment with the patient group reveal that purely visual explanations for action-execution are not supported, since auditory tones were used in some controls.

One of the conclusions from this is that responses during action-execution may well represent proprioceptive processing. Evidence also shows that “during action-execution, a memory of the executed action is formed, and during action-observation this memory trace is reactivated” (754). Mukamel et al state that: “Mirroring activity, by definition, generalizes across agency and matches executed actions performed by others” (754). They point to the differentiation of actions by self and others and its possible mechanisms, suggesting that:

Taken together these findings suggest the existence of multiple systems in the human brain endowed with neural mirroring mechanisms for flexible integration and differentiation of the perceptual and motor aspects of actions formed by self and others. (755)

It is from this point that the actuality and function of mirror neurons in humans accrues a greater level of certainty and substance. The paper by Mukamel et al provides material supporting the idea of embodied cognition, as well as the theory of plasticity. Movement from inside out, and outside in, is an ongoing process continually exchanging sensory data and experience. Doidge in *The Brain That Changes Itself* writes: “our brains are so plastic that even when we do the same behaviour day after day, the neuronal connections responsible are slightly different each time” (208). This supports my assertion that, both from the outside in and from the inside out, action understanding is a processual engagement with and through materiality of movement.

## Self and Other in Motion.

A highly developed sense of self and other is a sense from which social understanding of human activity stems and from which unique human activity develops. It is the sense from which our perception of ourselves in relation to others operates, understands, perceives and interprets movement. As Moshe Feldenkrais writes in *The Potent Self*: “in no other species is there such a variety of difference between one individual and another” (62). He goes on to refer to the prolonged childhood of humans and the effect of this in relation to the influence of unique personal experience of the environment on the nervous system. He writes: “The body itself may be considered as part of the environment of the nervous system”; and: “All manifestation of life is expressed through movement and nervous activity” (71). A sense of self is neither fixed, nor predetermined. It is a dynamic sense, always concerned with movement and contributory to embodied cognition. In the area of cognition and motion, mirror neurons serve to promote understanding of the actions of others from the inside out. We encode the actions of others within the parameters of our own motor possibilities, but this encoding is not a one-for-one simulation, but instead, the engagement of an accumulation of movement imagery.

A sense of self based on recognition of the actions of others lies in the ability to understand the meaning behind those actions. Action understanding is distinct from movement mirroring, as Corrado Sinigaglia and Giacomo Rizzolatti in their 2011 paper “Consciousness and Cognition” state: “in movement mirroring, the visual information concerns simple movements: in contrast, action mirroring implies the encoding of the motor goal of the observed act” (68).

While re-stating that the mirror neuron system is a key contributory process, rather than an exclusive owner of action understanding, it is important to understand that what makes it different is that a sense of self based on action recognition is located in the body’s movement rather than in a separation between the idea of movement and its act. In “Through the Looking Glass: Self and Others” (2011), Sinigaglia and Rizzolatti explain the distinction as follows: “the mirror mechanism clearly indicates that (i) in order to be attributed either to the self or to the others, actions should be represented as actual motor possibilities for the agent and (ii) the distinction between self and other should stem from their shared goals and motor intentions” (69). It is on the basis of shared motor ground that we are able to differentiate our own narrative from that of others.

Recognition of otherness, through observation from inside our own motor repertoire is not simply knowledge of similarities. It is the ability to compare from the basis of a defined viewpoint, rather than from mimicry alone. Leonardo Fogassi in “The Mirror Neuron system: How Cognitive Functions Emerge from Mirror Organisation” (2010) supports this view and widens it to a more general application of meaning, suggesting: “understanding actions and the internal states of others can be achieved through an automatic process that matches biological sensory input with internal motor knowledge of the observer” (66).

There is a central role played in this by internal motor responses “because they represent the personal knowledge through which every individual assigns meaning to the external world, in this case to the biological stimuli present in it” (66).

A capacity to ascribe motive to action, and to recognise the possible internal states of others, infers a clear ability to distinguish viewpoints, and to ascribe social meaning to action. Motor action as personal knowledge physically present in a meaningful, mediated and incorporated world, rather than a system of reactions to physical conditions, also supports the ability to shape individual physical presence. Embodied cognition is not, of course, a set state but a continual process of becoming. The mirror neuron system should be seen as part of that continual state of becoming of the human body. As I have already shown, Tim Ingold, in *The Perception of the Environment*, sees incorporation as the key element of movement to embodiment, through which material forms are generated, rather than inscription or transcription onto material taking place.

In conclusion to the 2011 paper “Interpreting Actions: The Goal Behind the Mirror Neuron Function”, Brenda Ocampo and Ada Kritikos conclude that: “by organising our own actions along parameters that are broad enough to encapsulate different motor outcomes, we can have direct experience and comprehension of the actions we see that surpass a purely visual analysis of these acts” (265). They go on to assert that: “This is vital to everyday life, where it is necessary to obtain a continuous and accurate interpretation of others’ behaviours and to co-ordinate our own responses appropriately” (265). It is in the ability to conclude why an action has been made and make response from our own experienced repertoire, that a sense of a self, emerging, is located. A reciprocal exchange of recognition and understanding also makes the idea of transmission and creation of a shared culture at the level of physical action an important possible contribution of mirror neurons in humans.

In the 2011 paper “How the Body in Action Shapes the Self”, Vittorio Gallese and Corrado Sinigaglia look again at what we understand by proprioceptive awareness, and what proprioceptive awareness actually means. They ask whether “it [should] be interpreted in a broader sense as a kind of bodily awareness, which goes beyond the distinction between intero- and exteroceptive awareness belonging to any sensory modality?” (118) Gallese and Sinigaglia divide proprioception into three areas: proprioceptive systems, the channels delivering information about the state and performance of the body; proprioceptive information providing all available information about the body: proprioceptive awareness seen as conscious experience of the body from inside. They comment that: “From the physiological point of view, proprioception is a functional property of part of the somatosensory system” (119). The range of receptors at the periphery of the body within muscles, tendons and joints convert and transmit the mechanical energy of and for movement into action potential through the nervous system. This includes the inner ear, with its central function in spatial awareness and organisation. The paper further explains the scope of proprioceptive information by linking the physiological description of action with environmental placement of the individual towards which and through which self-specific, or “ego-receptive” information is processed, making reference to Gibson’s ideas on sensitivity to the self in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception.*

In affordance theory, the world is perceived not only in terms of the shape or disposition of an object in-the-world or in the spatial relationships involved, but in the possibilities that these afford for action. Gibson qualifies these possibilities as follows: “The perceiving of an affordance is not a process of perceiving a value-free physical object to which meaning is somehow added in a way that no-one has been able to agree upon; it is a process of perceiving a value-rich ecological object” (140). He goes on to say that:

An affordance … points two ways, to the environment and to the observer. So does the information to specify an affordance. But this does not in the least imply separate realms of consciousness and matter, a psychophysical dualism. It says only that the information to specify the utilities of the environment is accompanied by information to specify the observer himself, his body, legs, hands, mouth. (141)

The idea that action drives perception is consistent with Gallese and Sinigaglia’s explanation of action possibilities. Gibson’s theory of affordances provides, through understanding objects in terms of what is offered by and through them, a complementary relationship between action and environment. Gallese and Sinigaglia emphasise how the motor system enables us to perceive objects in terms of actual possibilities for action, in other words as those complementary relations of possibility between self and environment. This is extended to the individual being aware of a range of possibilities for action, crucially when none are intended for immediate consideration, an aspect of intransitive action.

Possibilities for action are not solely goal orientated, but perceived within an understanding of intransitive action as imagery of movement. Our manifold of action possibilities, our sense of a self as a potential for unique human activity is also the ability to perceive what a complementary relationship between action and environment might be.

This is a view that is consistent with Braidotti’s ideas on a nature-culture continuum, in which the posthuman subject develops “a dynamic and sustainable notion of vitalist, self- organizing materiality” (82). She goes on to point to the need for critical theory to “visualise the subject as a transversal entity encompassing the human, the genetic neighbours and animals and the earth as a whole” (82). I suggest that this is a political dimension that can be identified throughout the thesis.

There is a horizon of our own action possibilities and that is constituted within ideas of bodily space, itself possible to understand as proprioceptively experienced. Bodily space is also expressed in three ways: personal, peri-personal and extra-personal. Personal space as cutaneous space is a basically accepted definition, but research is now beginning to show that peri-personal space, that space which is within immediate reach, is multi-sensory and body centred. “How the Body in Action Shapes the Self” suggests that: “the actual space of our bodies exceeds its cutaneous boundaries, encompassing everything that is literally ready-to-our-hands” (10). Reaching out, using tools as extensions, acting and re-acting to multi-sensory stimuli re-define personal space, eliding it with ideas of the peri-personal or blurring the boundaries between them, making it body centred and motor based. Gallese and Sinigaglia comment that: “Taken together these findings clearly indicate that peri- personal space is bodily space characterized by an action-dependent dynamic plasticity” (11). Body space becomes situational rather than positional. Intransitive movement as a symbolic or metaphorical extension of action possibilities needs to be seen in such a situational context.

Gallese and Sinigaglia link the mirror neuron system with a contribution to “bodily self-awareness”. If a sense of self is promoted by the ability to distinguish an action as one’s own, then one applied function of mirror neurons in both action and action observation is to promote self and other bodily awareness, with horizons of action possibilities, affordance and spatiality also located initially in the motor system. Gallese and Sinigaglia suggest that: “The motor system … provides … the common ground for and the distinguishing criterion between self and other bodily awareness. Self-other interactions are shaped and conditioned by the same body and by the environmental constraints in which it operates” (13).

A sense of a self that action recognition provides, through a specific viewpoint from which to make that recognition, opens the way to providing possibilities for what sort of self that might be. From recognising social meaning to the potential for shaping and transmitting cultural exchange, the view of the world from inside, and from the immediacy of physical presence in action execution, layers and enriches our capacity. As Sinigaglia and Rizzolatti conclude: “The richer and more diversified … a motor repertoire is, the more … individuals will be able to be mutually reflected by their own motor possibilities, thus coming to a more and more fine-grained understanding from the inside of each other”(71). They go on to propose that: “The richness of our motor repertoire does not depend only on the fineness- of-grain of motor goal representation: rather, it essentially relies on our capability to represent from the inside more and more complex goal architectures” and that: “this capability critically contributes to shaping our experience of ourselves and of other selves, providing us with a multi-layered motor representation both of our own and others’ action possibilities” (71). Sinigaglia and Rizzolatti develop this further by suggesting that multi- layered experience pave the way to more complex levels of self-awareness, not just as “acting selves” but also as “intending selves”. As intending selves selecting social action at the core of embodiment, we shape our immediate presence. Sense of a self is also the ability to encode action within environments, and to develop awareness of the peri- personal and extra-personal as part of action understanding and perception. Personal agency stemming from a developed sense of self, derived from the ability to understand, match and attribute motive to the actions of others, is at the centre of the way we interact with the world and the way we present ourselves as unique presences within it.

Blasing et al’s “Neurocognitive Control in Dance Perception and Performance”, introduced at the start of this section, considers areas where dance offers opportunities to increase understanding of movement and cognition. In their abstract the authors list these as: motor control, timing/on-line synchronization, sequence learning and memory, visual and motor imagery, insights into action perception and neuroaesthetics. It is a formidable list. The writers demonstrate that rigorous training to develop motor control revealed improvement in somatosensory functions. In some instances it appears to shift the balance from vision towards proprioceptive sensorimotor dominance, showing improved results when only proprioceptive information was available. This should come as no surprise. Increased training and physical sharpness for any specifically designated activity, requiring balance, spatial integration and awareness as well as developed peri-personal/extra-personal tuning, would seem to be certain to lead to similar conclusions. However, I suggest that a sense of a self through dance is revealed in the translation of these skills to an understanding and use of body imagery, as well as adaptability to external visual and/or acoustic cues, through developed/engaged motor synergies.

Blasing’s et al present material showing the link between increased or enhanced motor abilities through specific training, and how this is demonstrated at the level of action prediction and higher performance memory. The comparisons between the levels of structure and conclusions drawn regarding both the dancer’s and audience’s fluency of perception are summed up in the conclusion to the paper which claims: “Performing and perceiving dance epitomize embodied cognitive processes including those based on somatosensation, learning, memory, multimodal imagery, visual and motor perception and motor simulation” (306). It is in many respects atypical of controlled neuro-research using dance as it focus which appears schematic on the surface. This is a characteristic that does not in general recommend itself to consideration of dance, although it can offer support to increasing understanding of the embodied nature of a sense of self and other encoding actions in social environments.

The intention of the work broadly remains within developing an understanding of embodied cognition. As Ramachandran rightly points out in *The Tell Tale Brain*, showing the way in which the brain functions is not antipathetic to cultural experience and understanding and, as Drew Leder writes in *The Absent Body*, “as humans we are mentalized embodiment” (149). In this respect, the work on mirror neurons delineates a phenomenological vector, which “is a structure of experience that makes possible and encourages the subject in certain practical or interpretive directions, while never mandating them as invariants” (150). Leder goes on to describe a phenomenological vector as involving “an ambiguous set of possibilities and tendencies” (151), assuming definite shape with various cultural contexts.

## An Ecology for Dance.

From the inside out to the outside in, our perception of an environment in which we are in-the-world is intimately concerned with movement from the microscopic, most elusive traces of our apparently absent body to the full extent of our proprioceptive sense. While evidence and material from the laboratory model sometimes used to measure and quantify dance movement is encouragingly supportive of the idea of embodied cognition, it needs to be adapted to the overall need to promote notions of becoming and emergence, rather than simple measurement and conclusion. A sense of a self, emerging through movement, is processual and immanent. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, maintain that:

Movement has an essential relation to the imperceptible; it is by nature imperceptible. Perception can grasp movement only as the displacement of the moving body or the development of a form. Movements, becomings, in other words the pure relations of speed and slowness, pure affects, are above and below the threshold of perception. (308)

Deleuze and Guattari present a shifting idea of space, alternating between the smooth and the striated, where the striated, the “measure of the world” (544), forms and dissolves within and amongst the smooth space where form is within connections and transitions. In a volume marked by its own rhizomatic structure, Deleuze and Guattari write earlier that: “Perception will no longer reside in the relation between a subject and an object, but rather in the movement serving as the limit of that relation, in the period associated with the subject and the object” (311). Dissolving physicality within duration, and duration into a relative state, is echoed by Andre Lepecki in *Of the Presence of the Body* when he writes: “we arrive … to an understanding of dance as elusive presence, dance as the fleeting trace of an always irretrievable, never fully translatable motion: neither into notation, nor into writing” (128). Lepecki goes on to explain that: “Inscription fails the test of the new regime of perception, which announces and pursues a new ontological grounding for the presence of the dancing body” (128). Lepecki is clear that presence is of central importance and that presence unfolds “as a mode of being”, but that it is a presence “haunted by invisibility” (128).

The elusive presence of dance Lepecki comments on here is part of the overall structure of a postmodern understanding of performance which is always in the process of becoming absent. In *Site-Specific Performance*, Mike Pearson comments on this relationship in a different, more dynamic way suggesting that: “The site itself became an active component in the creation of performative meaning, rather than a neutral space of exposition” (36). Considering the dancing body as a site of discourse parallels Pearson’s idea of a “creation of performative meaning”. However, the idea of a site for performance that replaces a “neutral site for exposition” does appear to ignore the fact that no space is empty and the performative does not overwrite, but emerges from and through an environment.

The body, always in a state of both interoceptive and exteroceptive becoming, emerges as a self in moments of specific, singular presence. It is a presence through which a sense of a self is so potent that it suffuses both itself and the presence of others. This is not to be mistaken for an impulse which Gregory Bateson in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* links to and dismisses as the nonsense of “psychic energy” (318). What is being described here is a material pulse of self-presence. Equally it is not to be confused with individualism, or with the continual commodification of self in the choices offered by late capitalism. Instead, it suggests possibilities for an ecology for dance akin to what Braidotti describes in *The Posthuman* when she asserts: “The posthuman recomposition of human interaction that I propose is not the same as the reactive bond of vulnerability, but is an affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others” (50). It is a flow of relations that is not solely anthropomorphic.

In its basic sense, ecology refers to the relation of organisms one to another in the physical environment that nourishes them, and in human terms the overall interaction with their environment. Gibson claims that ecologists have “a concept of a niche” (128) which refers to *how* rather than *where* life takes place, but revises that with his concept of a set of affordances. Gibson points to the relational and located aspects of ecology. He is not suggesting “separate realms of consciousness and matter” (141), but that “exteroception is accompanied by proprioception - that to perceive the world is to co – perceive oneself” (141). Ingold suggests something very similar in *The Perception of the Environment*, when he writes that: “we now recognise that such processes as thinking, perceiving, remembering and learning have to be studied within the ecological contexts of people’s interrelations with their environments” (171).

Applying the term ecology to a specific art form, even an art form which has movement at the heart of its practice, invites questions about what form of interaction takes place between the art form and its environment. Ingold warns about seeing the environment, particularly a cultural environment, if such a separation can be made, as layered with human significance. He suggests that what he calls “metaphors of cultural construction” (208) simply produce a covering over of the world. He writes that: “such blanketing metaphors actually serve to create and perpetuate an intellectual space in which human ecology can flourish” (208). Instead of an environment that nourishes, provides habitation, it has become something on which to practice a form of cultural colonisation. Ingold suggests that the more accurate and fruitful way of seeing this is that interaction is relational, a revealing of meaning, an “opening up” of the world. My proposal of an ecology for dance, resides in the essentially physical manifestation of dance as movement, and the fundamental part movement plays in a sense of self as a being-in-the-world expressed in embodied cognition. Ingold suggests that: “If the body is the form in which a creature is present as a being-in-the-world, then the world of its being-in presents itself in the form of landscape. Like organism and environment, body and landscape are complementary terms: each implies the other alternately as figure and ground” (193). Ingold goes on to suggest that the landscape is not “prepared in advance for creatures to occupy, any more than are the bodily forms of those creatures independently specified in the genetic make-up” (193). He considers that environment and the organisms within it “are generated and sustained in and through the processual unfolding of a total field of relations” (193).

There is an emphasis on the processual and on becoming rather than on occupation and inscription. The body’s movement becomes recognisable as it draws a habitation from presence, becomes a means through which the non-specific spatiality of dwelling can emerge. Incorporation produces a texture in the surface, a confirmation of the mutuality of human activity and process, so that: “Every being, as it is caught up in the process and carries it forward, arises as a singular centre of awareness and agency” (19). As Ingold later considers, the body, giving itself through movement, carries its own immanence as well as its intentionality. Embodiment, since the body is the human organism, is the development or manifestation of the human in its environment. An ecology for dance is a process of exchange, a presentation of the processual unfolding of relations. In *Archaeologies of Presence*, Josette Féral writes: “It is the body that perceives, but it is equally the body that filters. Through the body’s mediation, the act of recognising presence achieves the same experience as the subject within the world” (45). Féral sees a “friction point” between the self and the world outside, whereas I consider that friction point is also a condition of relational becoming, rather than an idea of separation from a world in some way outside experience. In this sense, the body, in its performative physical presence, offers its own emerging physical environment. It nourishes its own emergence. Emilyn Claid asserts that: “Dissolving the perspective of space also dissolves the separation between performer and spectator, the space of objective reasoning” (196).

As signalled at the start of the Introduction to the whole thesis, a sense of self, discussed in this chapter, is placed within the context of understanding the body in movement, its indivisibility with mind, and the processes involved. Overall this supports embodied cognition, as opposed to mind/body dualism. The material in this Chapter has interrogated action observation and action understanding, and shown how they contribute to an emerging sense of self as a narrative of singularity. The focus of the chapter has been on the contribution of recent research work in neuroscience, specifically mirror neuron systems. Proposals that the dancer’s physical presence works through movement as imagery, in dynamic, interactive relationship with an emerging environment have been considered. Within an emerging environment, action observation and understanding triggers associative responses between dancers themselves, as well as between dancers and spectators. Beginning with Rosemary Lee, succeeding chapters will now focus on how practice contributes to understanding further the interactive relationship between self-place-presence and its contribution to an emerging sense of self.

**PART 2**

# CHAPTER 3: INTELLIGENT BODIES

## Introduction.

The body as a site of discourse is a crucial strand throughout the thesis. The discourse as a whole is placed within a context of becoming and of dynamic, vital materiality associated with the interrelationship of self-place-presence. Each chapter in Part 2 traces and explores specific aspects of that discourse, through which a sense of self is argued to be emergent and processual. In this chapter, four examples of work by the choreographer and somatic practitioner Rosemary Lee are used to provide detailed discussion concerning what is meant by the intelligent body and how this contributes to the body’s continuing discourse. The discussion draws on ideas from somatic practice, introduced in Chapter 1. There is a full exploration of the relevance, role and importance of alert, fully attentive awareness, through which the dancer listens to the body, and develops kinaesthetic empathy, expressed through movement. What is meant by narratives of singularity through movement is further analysed, and linked to a processually emerging sense of self. Explanatory connections are made to examples of Feldenkrais’ work as well as to examples of dance research connected to neuroscience.

The four examples of Lee’s work selected in this chapter are *The Suchness of Henie and Eddie*, *Common Dance*, *Melt Down* and *Boy*. Each example provides evidence of Lee’s understanding of the intelligent body and, in different ways, how this is linked to a developing, inclusive environment. Of the four, *The Suchness of Henie and Eddie*, with its accompanying commentary by Lee, is most concerned with directly exploring the intelligent body, specifically through touch. *Common Dance* and *Melt Down* both provide examples of large numbers of dancers dancing in and interacting with specific sites. In both these examples the large numbers of dancers provide a focus for discussion of narratives of singularity. *Boy* provides the most intense and concentrated example of interaction with a developing environment. Supporting and critical evidence is provided from direct contact with Lee in conversation and interview, through observation of rehearsals of *Melt Down* and its performance in Granary Square, through comments from a dancer involved in both *Melt Down* and *Common Dance,* and fromreference material taken from publications on-line, in print and on DVD.

Rosemary Lee regards dance as a transformative art form and maintains that she is in many ways a somatic practitioner. Her work is also often closely linked to specific locations and this indicates a continued interest in the relationship of the moving figure to a particular environment, while not suggesting a static relationship. Her varied, site-specific projects mine the possibilities that shared or common ground offer, especially places where people gather, in both rural and urban settings. Often, although not exclusively working with large groups of people, Lee investigates organic associations between people and locations, and this will be explored in detail in the sections of this chapter that look at *Melt Down*, *Common Dance* and *Boy*.

Lee is clear that some things from her upbringing influenced her both as a dancer and as a choreographer. Brought up in East Anglia, specifically Lowestoft, she remains close to the landscapes of that part of the country, full of long, uninterrupted horizontals, distant horizons and seascapes. In *Beached: A Common-place Book*, a collaborative publication with long-time associate Niki Pollard, she writes that:

The endlessness of living on the shore is very pertinent to me, with its sense of both flight and entrapment. I worked on a film in East Anglia with another artist, Simon Whitehead, and he described feeling incredibly exposed in that landscape, as if he might be blown away without the hills to hold him.

Listening to Simon, I was thinking that this is what I have grown up with …[[6]](#endnote-7)

There is a resonance here between what Lee has recollected and the weatherworld Tim Ingold proposes in his analysis of environment. Lee, in interview with the author, said that she was interested in “collective spaces, heathland, moorland, spaces people felt were theirs” (Lee. Personal Interview. 10 January 2013 and unless otherwise indicated, all quotes directly attributed to Lee come from this extended interview). One such collective zone for her was the seashore, where she spent a lot of time finding things, exploring, looking into shapes and discovering textures. She commented that: “As a child, I was very moved by the site I was in. The beach fascinated me”. She was also fascinated by the differences she encountered, observed and experienced in trips to other parts of the country. She recalled the impact of dry stone walls seen for the first time when visiting relatives in Lancashire: “dry stone walls after fences and hedges, hills instead of horizons”. She explained: “The landscapes of things, awareness of the air, changes of colour, difference is important”. She also described having been brought up in a Quaker community, sitting in hour-long meetings when perhaps nobody would speak. During this time, she observed people closely, watched their stillness and found people in stillness an affecting experience, something which has remained with her. There is a thread that emerges in Lee’s work which is concerned with, amongst other things, revealing a more fundamental physical presence. Another way of approaching this is to say that Lee examines what can be revealed through the intelligent body, a sensitised disposition to embodiment’s possibilities that can be seen in *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie*.

Lee also said that she was interested in what she termed “kinaesthetic sympathy”, which she suggested links dancer, choreographer and spectator. Yael Flexer gives another perspective on this in her aim for a dialogic engagement with spectators, a perspective that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. It is more usual, however, to encounter the term ‘kinaesthetic empathy’, which Tessa Gordziejko, in *Watching Dance Round Table Discussion Laban March 2011* - considers “has a profound potential for informing and effecting change … in the way we understand movement as a primary language for engaging with the world” (5). The two versions would appear to have similarities, although the two terms sympathy and empathy can have very specific connotations and distinctions. Susan Leigh Foster, in *Choreographing Empathy,* traces the idea of both through the “power relations inherent between those who feel and those who feel for or with them” (11). She suggests that historically both sympathy and empathy “served to establish the grounds on which one human being could be seen as differing from another” (11). She also suggests that both are in different ways associated with particular emotional reactions, and that in the case of empathy “its kinaesthetic dimension has more recently been reintegrated in the neuroscientific investigations of mirror neurons” (11). She returns to this later, pointing out that: “neuroscientists are claiming that empathy is the most fundamental capacity of our minds, foundational to the very way that knowledge is acquired” (179). She goes on to explain the argument of neuroscientists that, in the process of establishing “an individuated sense of identity”, we are “constantly inhabiting the worlds of others, and through mirroring their actions, learning to give shape and significance to our own identity” (179). Foster interrogates the use of ideas of kinaesthetic empathy by contemporary dance artists, writing that: “In their efforts to make dances, these artists must contend with the problematics established in the ways that choreography, kinaesthesia and empathy have worked together over time to create dominant and dominating sets of assumptions about identity” (179). By conflating sympathy and empathy, the possibility that sympathy, in particular, is sometimes connected to forms of judgement could be lost. Empathy avoids this since it suggests being involved in recognition and exchange. However, Lee considers that dance is concerned with the entire body and that for the spectator, though it appears that the visual experience dominates, there is a possible shared participation in the movement and feelings through a form of mimesis. This gives a context for her use of “sympathy” and corresponds to Foster when she writes that: “The notion of empathy then theorizes the potential of one body’s kinaesthetic organization to infer the experience of another” (175). This potential was explored in Chapter 2 (90-101), describing a possible neurological basis to empathetic, rather than simply mimetic action understanding.

In interview, Lee used the word “attentiveness” frequently, and in particular in connection to the approach of dancers she chooses with whom she chooses to work. It is a quality she brings herself, and is evident in her sharing of her process in *Beached: A Common-place Book*:

We wrote on slips of paper the names of every bit, every gesture of the material that the dancers had, and kept them in individual bags. I was worried that I might miss things out, that detailed movement fragments were becoming scattered. Having these bags meant that I could lay all the material out in front of me.

She considers that physical attentiveness in the dancer can promote a similar state in the spectator which is similar to some findings in the paper “Neuroaesthetics and Beyond: New Horizons in Applying the Science of the Brain to the Art of Dance” by Emily S. Cross and Luca F. Ticini. (2011). They report that: “The first neuroimaging study to investigate aesthetic responses to dance has demonstrated the active engagement of sensorimotor brain areas when observing dance movements that one finds to be aesthetically pleasing …” (12). The dancer’s state of attentiveness is a part of a method that accesses a greater awareness of a physical self, not dependent on artifice, but on exploration. She sees this as transformative and potentially reciprocal. It is the state that results in her asking: “Why am I moved by certain dancers?” though the relationship between this kinaesthetic empathy and a state of heightened attentiveness in the dancer is not necessarily straightforward. It is a connection that can arise in all sorts of circumstances. Lee is pointing towards a more investigative position than the words immediately suggest, where it is the processes that result from asking the question rather than the experiencing of the feeling itself that is important.

The concept that Lee calls “kinaesthetic sympathy” is demonstrated in the DVD version of *The Suchness of Henie and Eddie* and is seen through the interactions between the dancers, which in turn are commented on by Lee. Lee makes it clear that the use of “suchness”, a word that has the Buddhist concept of Tathata at its root - the ultimate nature of all things expressed in phenomena not language - refers to a possibility of revealing layers of potential within the body.[[7]](#endnote-8) It is important to emphasise that she is not aiming for a supposed originary state. She is interested in the process of what can be seen through aware practice. She describes a basic quality she looks for in professional dancers, exemplified in the people after whom the work is named. She argues that: “they must be trained, skilled improvisers – must be able to play, explore, be attentive, have what I call an intelligent body”. It is through these attributes that she feels it is possible to investigate the possibility of finding or revealing more basal physical states.

The use of the term ‘basal’ is problematic since it does seem to suggest the possibility of reaching some original or fundamental position. “Suchness” could be open to similar interpretation, though I do not suggest that Lee views it in that way. Since Lee is interested in a process that reveals more about the physicality of the dancers involved, it is probable that part of the answer to the problem lies in the way that a dancer’s training can both liberate new ways of exploring possibilities and at the same time silt up the way a dancer responds with set responses learned over years in rehearsal and training situations. Examining this potential dilemma is one of the major purposes behind *Emerging Never Arriving*, discussed in Chapter 5. Moshe Feldenkrais, in *Awareness Through Movement*, writes that: “The negative aspect of learning to achieve aims is that we tend to stop learning when we have mastered sufficient skills to attain our immediate objective” (15). Feldenkrais suggests that as little as 5% of potential is realized and that there is a deep lack of awareness of the body in its fullest sense. It is possible to suggest that even in trained dancers such lack of awareness might be present and that established patterns have come to dominate. Feldenkrais, who links body, feeling and mind so intricately together, writing of changing set habits and patterns, even those accreted from the earliest stages of development, writes it “is not the simple substitution of one activity by another, but a change in the way the act is performed, a change in its whole dynamics” that is effective.

The intelligent body that Lee looks for in her dancers refers to a willingness to explore practice similarly to the way Feldenkrais proposes. Feldenkrais wrote in *Embodied Wisdom: The Collected Papers of Moshe Feldenkrais*: “To complete and clarify one’s self-image by paying attention to the spatial and temporal orientation of one’s body can bring about a growth in self-knowledge” (14). This growth of self-knowledge is something Feldenkrais attributes to “creative artists” (though it should not be confined to that category). There is a possible perspective to bring to the difficult term “suchness” here, in considering the dancers as involved in a growth of self-knowledge, a self that is not conflated with self- regard.

## Aware, Alert, Attentive.

As far as possible Lee approached *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie* without preconceptions. The two dancers were in constant dialogue both with each other and with her, negotiating the possibilities and directions opening up from the different physical situations that arose. Vida Midgelow, in “Nomadism and Ethics in/as Improvised Movement Practices” writes that: “In … danced exchanges between two people, movements, images, patterns, and structures arise that are located in “in-between” – belonging to both no one and everyone” (13), and this in part describes the overall effect of the piece. Lee also wanted to both discover and uncover processes that did not depend on roles that had a traditional gender bias towards male/female physicality. During an interview with the author in 2013, Lee suggested that she wanted to “avoid those associations of a *pas de deux* in classical ballet of the man bearing weight, the formal weight bearing processes”. She emphasised that she had no plans entering the studio other than to find what she could see in the two dancers, repeating that: “My interest was in what I am seeing, what came from them … ”, and what could be revealed about the two of them. She observed that: “It’s my job to make them [the dancers] feel completely safe, not being manipulative, the dancers have to take over”. For Lee, part of this process concerns her own role, her own performance as a protagonist in the processes. She wanted to be equally representative of the qualities she looked for, and to be warm and encouraging, fully attentive. She said that the dancers need to “see me reveal myself, as a part of understanding the presence I am after – being aware, alert, these are at the heart of somatic practice”. She also revealed that the dancers in *Henie and Eddie* had commented: “You’re asking us to be totally open, totally aware, totally attentive and it’s exhausting”. The effort involved in revealing presence, and being present, required a considerable physical commitment and not one that would result in a completion, but a constant engagement with the elusive materiality of the dancer.

Lee indicated that she felt a constant awareness, a consistent concern, over what she saw through the framing of her own eyes - her own construction of images from the dancers’ movement. Despite the paradox of whether, or to what extent, it is possible to ever have a value free approach to any piece of work she felt that as far as possible her attempt to reveal, to peel away layers, remained consistent. Lee’s concerns are in part obviated by the position being developed in this thesis: namely, a sense of a self in movement that enables us to make and respond to images - and that our physical presence is saturated with recognitions, correspondences, and sympathies. In this context, the idea of a removed objectivity seems inappropriate, a vestigial remnant of mind/body dualism. In any event, Lee suggests that: “In the moment, your physical presence is even more noticeable. I think you can see it, but it’s more than that, I think you can sense it”.

*The Suchness of Heni and Eddie* has a complex structure. The dancers are involved in a varied set of interactions and explorations that may, or may not, trigger reciprocal revelations. Lee attempts to maintain a position in which she is variously commentator, animateur and active spectator. She becomes a conduit to other spectators, who are the most apparently passive of the three elements in the structure of the event. Each spectator had been given a card with comments by the performers, and fragments of poetry written by someone watching at another time, prompting certain viewpoints even before the movement began. When Lee started to read out from her notebook words, phrases and associations that were prompted by an earlier stage of the dancers’ on-going examination, I found that a real dislocation occurred. As a spectator the problem was to deal with such a varied and possibly contradictory amount of information imposing itself. The quality of alert awareness so important to Lee had been compromised. There is no doubt that the combination of elements provided a varied and engaging experience for the spectator, but perhaps not one in which the sensing of a physical presence being revealed was possible through the creative white noise that accompanied the performance.

At the start, Lee addresses the spectators in the studio, explaining briefly the project and its politics. The first movements by the duo of Heni and Eddie themselves are commented on and watched by Lee, sitting removed from both the spectators and the performers. This is an ambitious dynamic. The emerging environment to a degree subverts both the traditional way of watching performance and of performing. The dancers’ physical interactions are both invited and self-generated producing shifting focus between the roles of performer, animateur and spectator. A narrative is provided for us through Lee’s spoken accompaniment. Despite her recognition of the possible problems present in her own framing of material, in this case an attempt at framing is deliberately provided by Lee’s commentary. In such a situation, it is legitimate to query the possibility for the dancers to proceed without being influenced by that commentary. I have already queried the amount of varied interpretive information provided for the spectator, but it is as well to recall Rancière’s assertion in *The Emancipated Spectator* that: “in a theatre, in front of a performance … there are only ever individuals plotting their own paths in the forest of things, acts and signs that confront or surround them” (16). The spectator is not in a passive state that needs transforming or animating. Our continual experience is one of negotiating between the everyday, the performed and their in-betweens. Throughout a long explanation at the start of the performance, the two dancers walk, loose bodied, with gaze in neutral but not disengaged. There are elements of a game here and as a spectator one wonders who is leading whom. Looking at this on DVD, the dancers’ seemingly random, relaxed walking, Lee’s positioning as she sits speaking in relation to dancers and spectators, and the seated spectators themselves form a very specific and defined choreography of its own. There are potentially more ‘suchnesses’ than those of Heni and Eddie being revealed and interacting, and there is a developing environment of movement imagery.

During the opening period of loose limbed walking, the two dancers become more clearly delineated. Their own physical signatures, the individual details of how they each carry out this apparently pedestrian task become clearer. As they progress from this to physical contact with each other a dynamic of them as a joined physical organism begins to emerge. What had seemed to be a neutral gaze shifts into a state of expectancy, an expectancy that is echoed in subtle changes in physical tension in both bodies. It is possible that this is simply the expectancy of the spectator that something will develop, that this movement is a prelude to something else, and that this is being superimposed onto the dancers’ actions. There are complex interactions here. Expectancies, more defined states, shifts of perception are each becoming increasingly dependent on continual reinterpretation of the images presented. Abstractions are being made and facilitated through the mind mapping actions of the brain. Emerging environments are partly the result of the mind’s ability to manage and arrange images. Damasio writes of the brain making maps that are also the creation of imagery, and that this is “the main currency of our minds” (63). He asserts that:

Ultimately, consciousness allows us to experience maps as images, to manipulate those images and apply reasoning to them. Maps are constructed when we interact with objects such as a person … a place, from the outside of the brain towards its interior … Action and maps, movement and mind, are part of an unending cycle. (64)

Lee suggests that normally we do not know what is coming next, whereas the dancers do, but that in the context of this performance, we are all sharing an element of not knowing. The dancers have a form of score, but not a detailed choreography. How they explore this score is the supposed unknown and Lee speaks of this as “an arrival”. It is not clear whether arrival is meant to indicate a form of emerging correspondence through interaction, or whether the score she indicates dictates parameters of exploration. Jonathan Burrows, in the text to *Rebelling Against Limit* suggests:

Our tendency is to want to call everything score. This is good if we recognise also that score is nothing. There is an amount of change without which the dancing or moving body seems only to be searching for itself, and it is to avoid this searching that one sometimes turns to a score or structure. (email. 15 July 2013)

Lee describes this early stage of the performance as the dancers “trying to arrive in their own skins” (Lee). This is another difficult statement since it might suggest other skins, not owned, but adopted and Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble* points to the “regulatory practices” that are “socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility” (23). Whilst making this observation it is also important to recall the conversational form that Lee made her comments in. What is most relevant is the sense of exploration that the dancers provide and the way that they investigate their shifting presences. This is a performance in which a male and a female dancer explore the possibilities of what could be revealed through the interactions of their intelligent bodies. This is what is implied in Lee’s comment that they are trying to arrive in their own skins.

Lee asks how the dancers can arrive alone together and how we see that arrival. She goes on to suggest that unlike a more conventional performance, we are watching something unfold in real time. There is a different sense of duration. Like the dancers, we are also arriving, always remaining in a present moment. There are a number of questions that arise from this. The fact that the dancers have a form of score means that they have to sense the moments of transition from one aspect of that score to another whilst also being present in those moments. For them the sense of performing their arrivals and discoveries cannot be entirely independent of the direction the ‘score’ points to. The degree to which the piece is an exploration can, potentially, be limited by the overall structure that has been adopted, even though structure can also present new, more extensive possibilities. The attempt to present the piece as a process occurring initially in a studio seems effectively impossible. And while it is true that the spectators are watching things unfold, watching Heni and Eddie “arrive in their own skin” and then physically negotiating that ‘suchness’ between them, this continues to be mediated by Lee’s commentary and explanation.

The idea of suchness becomes more approachable as the dancers move from the opening point in their loose score. However, there are still strong elements of the conventional male to female roles evident, with the majority of support coming from the male dancer. Lee comments that she is “looking at the essence of what it means to be two people in the space”. She wants to strip down dance form to its basics and see how we orientate ourselves in relation to the other person in the duet. This is partly successful in the opening sections but there is a feeling of a set response to exploration and I asked Lee about the effect of training on somatic goals she sets. She replied: “I’m not looking for a training that produces a certain vocabulary, but I am looking for a training that produces certain states and certain attentiveness”. Given the structure of the performance, which was effectively, at times, an illustrated lecture, it can appear problematic to reach beyond set responses to the form of attentiveness Lee is searching for.

As the performance progresses, the proximity of the dancers to each other does begin to provide imagery through which the unique physical presence of each emerges. The possibilities of the idea of an arrival in their own skins becomes evident in the way decisions about closeness arise and through the accidental collisions that make the process less concerned with physical virtuosity. Unexpected possibilities arise from momentary losses of balance and fluency. It is in a small section where both stand side by side, eyes closed, still but not motionless, that the process of revelation or uncovering that Lee hopes for becomes more apparent. The idea of suchness is easier to grasp through an almost “electric” quality, a word Lee used in the context of preparation to move, to the dancers’ aware stillness. As one leans towards the other, their heads comes to a stop resting on the other’s outstretched hand. In this moment of joining, an intimacy for which Lee searches, the unique physical presence of each contributes to a dynamic physical relationship.

The long section following this is an increasingly complex interaction of touch and intertwining, with the two bodies in constant contact. During this section and from this point on, perceptions of conventionally gendered roles lessen. The dancers keep their eyes closed and this somehow adds another distinct layer to the dancers’ exploration for the spectator. Our experience as spectators is translated through the removal of the visual connection and though we still see the action, it is the touch we acknowledge, not simply the vision of the touch. For the spectators action observation and understanding is filtered through each emergent environment. The spatial organisation of separate elements described earlier between Lee, the dancers and the spectators become absorbed within the movement imagery of Heni and Eddie’s unique physical presences as both individuals and as a mutually supportive organism. There is an emerging environment framed by this imagery out of which the state of suchness that Lee is hoping for emerges processually. Through this state of emergent suchness, the spectator and the dancers become linked in the same movement imagery. Something of the dancers transfers to the spectator. Observation has become understanding not necessarily through interpretation but through a growing kinaesthetic understanding through which Susan Leigh Foster suggests that: “The notion of empathy then theorizes the potential of one body’s kinaesthetic organization to infer the experience of another” (175).

Lee claimed that: “I have a view that there might be a kind of presence in people that if you can get them to a place where they are unafraid, where you are trying to get rid of any artifice … I might get to a rawer sense of who somebody is”. This needs qualification and Lee is quick to point out that there is a very considerable difference between the state she aims for in her dance work and the complexities of the social self of everyday existence. (This is suggested by Damasio’s idea of proto, core and autobiographical selves). Lee’s “rawer sense of who somebody is” is what is potentially being revealed in Heni and Eddie’s interactions, in their decisions, in their succession of arrivals. Lee’s “rawer sense of who somebody is” can be seen to be the consequence of arriving in one’s own skin. What has transferred to the spectator, what has involved them in a shifting image frame through action understanding, taps into what Lee describes as a vocabulary of the senses. We know what it is to touch, what it is to feel and in doing so we know the feeling of Heni’s head coming to rest in Eddie’s hand. The feeling transfers as an affect, adheres within the consciousness of spectator as the dancers act. Both are accessing “rawer” senses of themselves.

*The Suchness of Heni and Eddie* is full of such moments. Lee’s commentary itself, part explanation, part narrative, part emergence of words triggered by what she is seeing, is indeed sometimes an awkward accompaniment, colouring responses. At times, however, it is also an integral part of the imagery of movement, with the sounds, rather than solely the sense of the words, adding their own movement. A creative exchange is reached. In Chapter 4, I examine in detail the way in which Yael Flexer consciously uses the spoken word as part of the pattern and texture of overall movement and weighs its impact on the spectator carefully. In this performance, however, the way that Lee’s commentary becomes words-as- movement is accidental. She has not chosen specific phrases, vocabulary or method of delivery as part of the performance. Instead, it accumulates a momentum that is other than the specific meaning of what is being said, although words are indeed about something. The spoken sounds, the sound of the dancers, their contact with each other and the floor, and the spectators’ own physical sounds become co-extensive. As the performance develops, the initial structural organisation that had the movement of the dancers as its specific focus becomes much more fluid, the roles of performer, commentator and spectator less distinctly separate affording different intensities through emerging environments. The dancers’ bodies intertwining, constantly in contact, move between moments of vulnerability, emotional charge and moments of play that almost become physical games. There is a sequence where one dancer stands on the other’s feet with the consequent effect of allowing moments of clumsiness and fun; stepping on toes is a game most of us have played as children at one time or another.

Lee’s belief that dance is transformative can be seen being realised throughout *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie.* It is not solely in the performance of the dancers that transformations take place, but in the whole complex of interactions, the boundaries of which fuse and bleed one into another. An imagery of movement that the dancers have enabled has given rise to an inclusive, dynamic environment. As Lee said: “If I’m interested in the work being transformative for those who participate in it, I am equally interested in moving the audience – movement that shifts them in some way to be aware of their bodies, to be enlightened in small ways”. *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie* is an example of how Lee applies and activates terms like transformation and enlightenment. They are within the particular context of an environment for dance made accessible, tangible. Through it, the spectator has the possibility of recognising physicality, an embodiment for their own self- presence. The title of the piece may foreground Heni and Eddie, but it invites each person to access their own “suchness”.

## A Common Dance.

Lee’s large cast production *Common Dance* is the main focus of this section. As with *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie,* the version of *Common Dance* used here is from DVD: the 2010 version filmed at Greenwich Dance during Dance Umbrella. *Common Dance* was first performed in 2009 and was commissioned by Greenwich Dance to be performed in the Upper Hall of Borough Hall. Lee suggested that the extensive wooden flooring reminded her of common land, and of the possibilities for gatherings and large social interactions. This is a pre-occupation that Lee retains from her childhood. Lee worked with a large cast that contained a small core of eight professional dancers and over 40 people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. The cast had an age range from eight years old to over eighty. Music and ambient sound was specially commissioned from Terry Mann, and the choral part was performed live by the fifty strong Finchley Children’s Choir. The choir was situated in the balcony that overlooked the open expanse of wooden flooring, with its several doorways on the side and large doubled doorways at the end opposite the banked seating. The ResCen website explains that Lee “sought to create a symbolic common ground in which age, race and gender divisions are less relevant and where what we share in common, as well as our diversity is embraced.” ([www.rescen.net/Rosemary\_Lee](http://www.rescen.net/Rosemary_Lee)).

Sanjoy Roy, writing in *The Guardian* on 3 November 2009, was sceptical about the makeup of the cast and wrote: “the choreography didn’t rise above the good intentions that can prevent community dance becoming good theatre”. ([www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/nov/03/rosemary-lee-dance-review](http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/nov/03/rosemary-lee-dance-review)) He criticised what

he described as “the somewhat hokey mix of science fiction, village green nostalgia and folksy spiritualism” of the opening sequence. He suggested that it was “nevertheless full of inventive dance ideas, suited to the performers and the building”. Roy felt that the movement was too full of shifts and variations, wanting a more concentrated examination of ideas. However, he describes what he saw as a turning point for him in the performance: “One by one, people lying upstage were slowly carried forward and planted upright, like living standing stones. We sensed their uniqueness and multiplicity, as well as their common humanity. It was revelatory” ([www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/nov/03/rosemary-lee-](http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/nov/03/rosemary-lee-dance-review) [dance-review](http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/nov/03/rosemary-lee-dance-review)). Whatever the merits or otherwise of this performance, it does indicate that

Lee’s motifs of meeting places, suggestions of common ground, varied communities were all present from the start. Crucially, the idea of a common humanity was tempered by the individual uniqueness within the group. The review makes a good comparison with my own following analysis.

The opening of *Common Dance* finds the dancers lying down, quite evenly spaced across the whole of the large floor area. Each is lying on their side with knees drawn up. Despite the similar position of each dancer, their proximity to each other also reveals specific differences through each dancer’s shaping of that shared starting position. Some, but not all of these differences are a straightforward matter of variations of size, age, gender. The dancers are not in any sense in a neutral position, or strictly motionless. Evidence of Lee’s suggestion that dance can be a transformative process is present from the start. A familiar everyday position is given a different perspective through which the distinct physicality of each dancer can be observed. The spectators enter by threading their way between these figures. Many of them avoid looking directly at any individual at this point, even studiously avoiding eye contact. The few who do look at the dancers stand out clearly in contrast. This is a form of pedestrian movement based choreography of its own with each person involved in their own mode of physical arrival, both actual and metaphorical.

Roy’s experience of *Common Dance* was of course of a live performance whereas this analysis depends on a DVD recording. The use of recorded material has already been problematised and discussed in the Introduction and I will not return to it here, except to repeat the concluding statement that recorded material as evidence is “not being used here solely as a form of representational authenticity, but as potential for points of debate, continuing narratives of engagement and alternative, not necessarily confirmatory readings” (18).

The opening perspective offered by the DVD is from the banked seating at one end of the hall, looking down on the dancers on the floor with the spectators entering through them. From this position the dancers make a joined organism, an effect that is also present in the opening to *Melt Down* when seen from the Granary Steps. The spectator in this position views the dancers both as this organism and, at the same time, selects individuals to look at just as a spectator present at the live performance. The selection is not random, even though it might appear so. Something of a figure, the turn of a head, the phrasing of an arm, the texture of a shape, the stretch of a hand, the vulnerability of the way feet are arranged attracts our attention, generates affect.

The dancers are lying still and Lee spoke of the importance of stillness. “Looking at people engaged in their stillness is a fundamental experience. In every workshop, I use stillness, look at people being absolutely still” (Lee). The individual differences, unique points of physical expression that can be experienced in the most basic of pedestrian movements was pointed out in the section on *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie.* Apparent stillness also prompts resonances from a spectator and, of course, the apparent stillness is deceptive in the sense that the body continues in motion, through all the interoceptive operations, through breathing, the actual materiality of a physical presence. In every respect, each figure invites kinaesthetic empathy. The operation of the mirror neuron systems continue to facilitate responding images, interpretations that stem from the possibility that they/we all lie on the ground and co-experience the possible textures of the floor, the feeling of people passing in between, the changes in the density of air, the slight brushes of contact. Where movement is concerned, there is a general pattern of recognition and selection continually taking place. It has been proposed that part of this system enables a sense of self and other, organising information from our sensorimotor systems into the awareness of ourselves as protagonist. The attentiveness that Lee seeks for implies a very particular form of conscious awareness, of focus, and above all of flexibility in our action understanding, using our ability to internalize movement and allowing it to operate in a more metaphoric way. The combination of us as protagonist of our interface with every ‘object’ and our ability to map as well as abstract information suggests how we may feel the physical presence of the other, that different kind of presence which opens us to empathic exchanges that comes with affective kinaesthetic awareness.

Lee describes her approach to *Common Dance* as a piece about what it is to be human. She comments:

I wanted to make a piece about what it is to be human and what is the language of that? How can I cross the borders of gender and belief? I had to find images that were somehow about the essential nature of living, of being alive, what connects us all … not to bring that down to just material, the flesh, because I’m not much interested in that, but to be alive, to talk, to feel, to sense: particularly to sense.

She speaks of feeling the essence of another through your skin and that the sense of touch is the most underrated of the senses, while it remains at the heart of somatic practice, and our proprioceptive selves. “Touch doesn’t necessarily have to be skin to object or skin to skin, I’m taking it a little further to resolve things around your skin as well” (Lee). When asked whether this was a transmission of self, she suggested that you got to know a state of self through touch, that it was a release technique. Despite the complexity of what we imagine the selfhood of another person and ourselves to be, at the heart of our communicative processes, our cultural creativity, our social structures is a common mechanism for understanding - or potentially understanding - ourselves in a shared environment. Lee suggested that in the future “we will get in people’s skin and look through their eyes”. She did not elaborate on how that might become possible but added: “So dancing was maybe for me the medium where you might be able to do that” (Lee).

Lee’s attempts to uncover more fundamental bodily states use touch as a critical release and dance as a non-verbal narrative structure. For Lee touch also shows the complexities in the simplest things. The opening to *Common Dance* provides evidence of those complexities, through what has been earlier described as a powerful statement of uniqueness, within the shared opening trope of a figure/figures lying still in a basically foetal position. Through them, one can begin to approach what constitutes physical presence, within the singularity of self continually reinforced, adapted and produced through the processes involved in what Damasio calls in *Self Comes to Mind* “the material me” (203). The singularity, the uniqueness of each of those still figures at the opening of *Common Dance*, makes each a protagonist, a subject with multiple trajectories and a transversality of relations.

What follows the opening stillness in *Common Dance* is an example of how Lee arouses the spectator’s initial awareness of their own bodies from the most basic of shared physical states. Lying, rising, standing are used to reveal a complex of possibilities within those basic movements, some of them chosen to enable seeing the familiar in a different focus. As the figures begin to rise the simple operation of a hand, or an arm moving, is magnified against overall stillness. There is complexity in the way each individual reveals themselves. This is what Lee has described as presence inside their skins and it is emphasised by the echo of the same movement within the overall organism the dancers constitute. Lee challenges the spectator’s expectations as individual figures attempt to help others adjacent to do the same through a nuzzling, gentle pushing with the head. The animal similes are clear. Lee spoke of the “quivering” state residing in the “moment before movement”, the expectation of action, and it is observable in this sequence. With one figure on all fours pushing, animating another prone figure, a variety of associations and recognitions become possible for the spectator as awareness of their own physicality grows, at the core of which is the shared sense of touch in the immediate moment. As a spectator, we may be accessing the movement initially through sight, but the result of that is a more finely tuned proprioceptive alertness. It becomes possible for our own singularity to be reaffirmed through the processes of kinaesthetic empathy. Using Damasio’s approach, the protagonist within our material selves has the opportunity to include itself within an overall commonality of suchness that the dancers offer. We access the imagery of the dancers’ physical presence of self as part of an emerging environment within our own processes of action understanding.

It has already been seen that Lee emphasises attentiveness when describing her requirements in people who work with her and her hopes for the spectators who see her work. It is through this attentiveness, for example, in the explorations of the dancers in *The Suchness of Henie and Eddie* that she feels her aim of bringing people to a rawer, more basic awareness of themselves can be achieved. In *Common Dance* attentiveness is always present in the way the dancers interact. This is evident to the spectator in a number of contexts: through individuals within a group, smaller groups within the whole, and often through touch whether the dancers have eyes closed or open. At other parts of the work, it is there in the explosive runs and lifts, the changes of pace, of intensity and emphasis. It is also there in Lee’s fusion of elements of folk dance she says she often returns to in her work and utilises here in side by side action, shared arm movements and specific stepping patterns. Attentiveness between dancers is fostered by the way Lee patterns the material, enabling degrees of individual response to flourish within the overall shape of the dance.

The individual as a singular presence within the organic shape of the dance is demonstrated in a section where a number of dancers lay prone, scattered across the floor, with a standing figure by each who has previously aided them to reach a prone state. The dancers have established a physical relationship with their partners through touch, which is associated with an attentive gaze from the standing figure in each pair, potentially expanding exchanges of non-verbal intimacy. At all times, the dancers’ gaze remains alert, almost questioning. In the final sequence, when each moves carefully to crouch on the prone figure next to them, their gazes remain attentively open, looking towards a horizon they seem to be setting. This is important since it is not a random gaze into the distance but a clear gaze towards a moment of resolution, a line to immanence. The whole body gazes. Each figure then rises to a standing position on those prone and is gently propelled by the prone figures moving with minimal effort over the floor. The section comes to an end with the standing figures coming back to the floor and then lying in approximate foetal position on the backs of each prone figure. This is a section of considerable power and affective dynamics through its use of physical intimacy.

Lee describes herself as being curious about non-verbal intimacy. “That intimacy is easily forgotten in a fast paced, mediated world. And how do you draw it out of people without it being a frightening thing?” The section detailed above achieves a high level of non-verbal intimacy. In a heavily mediated world currently awash with words, their white noise can wash out the intimacy Lee mentions. The movement described above is an example of a form of physical intimacy that invites entry, provides a point of desire. It is a different kind of presence, a physical presence that arrests our own gaze. It becomes possible to enter and share the attentiveness of the figures, their gaze, to have an appreciation of the weight of the figure being propelled, balanced on the edge of some promise of transformation. The complex systems that internalize movement in ‘mindness’, enable us to occupy both the states of actual and potential protagonist.

Figures in *Common Dance* are often moving from horizontal to extended vertical shapes and back, accompanied by moments of the stillness that Lee often returns to and which offer structural contrast. Lee claims that “The architecture of the vertical figure against a horizontal landscape produces another sort of presence”. Within the abstract intimacy of dance form she sees this juxtaposition of figures as a “structured intimacy”. The influence of her childhood environment, the horizontals and seascapes of East Anglia, are practical compositional elements in her work that contribute to a nourishing environment for her dancers. Lee says: “The structure keeps it safe” - and the safety she refers to is important for the revealing intimacy she aims for. I suggested that there was a deceptive simplicity at times in *Common Dance*, which Lee, perhaps mischievously, seemed to puncture when she said in response: “I’m quite old-fashioned, I like a transformative experience, you don’t get that if it’s too ordinary”. The deliberate conflating of simplicity and the ordinary by Lee was meant to guard against forgetting the complexities that she had already pointed to as underpinning supposedly simple movement. As Damasio points out in *The Feeling of What Happens: Body Emotion and the Making of Consciousness*:

Internal milieu, viscera and the musculoskeletal form produces a continuous representation, dynamic but of narrow range, while the world around us changes, dramatically, profoundly and often unpredictably. Moment by moment the brain has available a dynamic representation of an entity with a limited range of possible states – the body. (1)

Feldenkrais mirrors this statement when he writes in *Embodied Wisdom* that: “life is a fast moving flow of successive states of the central nervous system and … each state, no matter how complex, represents a gestalt, which is indivisible” (24).

Lee’s conception of the intelligent body and of kinaesthetic awareness finds considerable correspondences in Feldenkrais’ work, and her expression of the complexity of the simple is apposite when compared to Feldenkrais suggestion that: “On close examination it becomes clear that erect posture is actually dynamic, with the body frame constantly re-adjusting itself, rather than being held in a fixed and rigid way” (40). When Feldenkrais draws attention to the dynamism of erect posture, the work of Steve Paxton is recalled. Paxton had been working for some time on pieces that, as Ramsay Burt points out in *Judson Dance Theatre: Performative Traces* “defamiliarized the male dancer’s body through passivity, silences and conceptual deconstructions of representation” (110). In 1972 Paxton staged *Magnesium*, a performance that involved Paxton and other dancers in a series of falls, leaps and collisions. This was followed by Paxton's '*stand*' or '*small dance'* which presented the minute movements of the standing body – it’s balancing, its adjustments, its sensing of and responses to the dictates of gravity and the tiny and continual movements that resulted. Looking at the erect figures throughout *Common Dance*, constant re-adjustment is implicit in the way Lee has enabled her dancers to present a dynamic stillness through the set of the head, the focused gaze which suggests individually affective horizons. The image of the vertical figure, gaze set and purposeful, is a recurring motif in *Common Dance*, a motif that provides an example of what Feldenkrais means when he writes that: “our relation with anything outside, beyond what can be explored by the sense of touch, is determined through the movement of the head” (41). Feldenkrais goes on to suggest that our: “relation with the world outside us affects the quality of the movement of the head most of all” (41).

Feldenkrais’ aim is to help people re-educate their kinaesthetic sense, and he frequently reminds the reader of *Embodied Wisdom* such re-education is not about correctness, but about knowledge and awareness. Lee’s approach to her choreography and Feldenkrais’ approach to re-educating the kinaesthetic sense contain broad similarities. Lee presents the possibility of dance empowered to effect change through her belief in the transference of a renewed sense of embodiment between spectator and dancer. This supports her expectation that the attentive dancer awakens a kinaesthetic response in the spectator. Lee’s dancers continually invite the spectator to see and share their relationship with a world outside. When she spoke of a “transformative experience” and of things not being “too ordinary” she was in part referring to a possibility of dance effecting change through the intelligent body.

Commenting on performance in *Embodied Wisdom*, Feldenkrais makes a direct link between the body and emotion. He maintains that: “We cannot become conscious of a feeling before it is expressed by a motor mobilization, and therefore there is no feeling so long as there is no body attitude” (94). Lee questions why she finds some dancers moving, and both Feldenkrais and Lee recognise the connection between movement and feeling.

The link between “motor mobilization” and feeling could be part of the sense of identification that can arise for Lee and for the spectator. The “body attitude” in physical performance that Lee mobilizes in her dancers, which is designed to be movement capable of awakening kinaesthetic empathy in a spectator, has as its transformative trigger a form of recognition of a self-presence in the dancers. This is not limited to appreciation of some athletic trope or pleasing motif, enjoyable though such appreciations are, but an awareness of a self-as-body made possible by the “rawer sense of self” Lee’s wants her dancers to have explored. Lee was very clear on her version of an environment of inclusiveness when she said: “The vocabulary of senses that we all have is my linking point. So I do work with images, kinaesthetic image, transfer of what is seen to what is felt”.

Throughout this section, ideas of a different sort of presence have recurred. It is a thread found in Lee’s comments on the juxtaposition of a figure within a landscape. The combination of horizontal and vertical shaping in *Common Dance* has already been identified as a link with Lee’s own experiences and to some extent her use of the idea of dance as a transformative experience also has its roots there. Lee remembers her upbringing keenly and so the landscapes of her recollection are also landscapes of affect. I suggest that this is an important aspect of what she means by different presences, the way in which affect operates on the senses to make fleeting metaphoric or metonymic sensory connections. Despite the fact that Lee claimed that she was “not interested particularly in materiality”, her conception of presences is not based on insubstantial emanations, but grounded in a materiality which as Elizabeth Grosz points out in *Becoming Undone* is: “the common impetus life carries within it … of materiality itself, the capacity to make materiality extend itself into the new and unforeseeable” (33); and that: “It is the vital indeterminacy of the material world that enables life and that life exploits for its own self-elaboration” (34).

Lee’s interest in the idea of collective space is tangible from the opening of *Common Dance*, with the spectators entering through the dancers lying on the floor. It is continued in the choreographed exits and entrances, the use of light spilling through doors, and the different groupings of the dancers within the ensemble, configuring and re-configuring the large open space of Greenwich Dance. Lee spoke of “trying to respond to the site, its horizontality” – a word that recurs in her explanations. She described the organisation of the groupings within the ensemble as “melting, dissolving, rising, swarming, flocking”, and went on to say that: “We all know those words visually and kinetically. Our selves go through these changes of state, our bodies know kinetically some fundamentals”. Referring to the make- up of the ensemble, she suggests: “Those were the connections between a child of nine and a man in his eighties”. Perhaps also they remain a connection with Lee herself, with those elemental landscapes of her childhood and Lee’s attentive involvement with them.

Lee spoke of “seeing where we belong, whether there is an ownership” and this idea of ownership has its echoes in her own awareness and examination of the environments of her upbringing. She maintains that people can identify with a physical feeling of shared identity with places that have significance for them. Lee speaks of this as feeling “where we belong, where we could feel we are the same as the land in some way”. The use of words drawn from a common vocabulary of experience such as melting, flocking, swarming, added to the idea of feeling the same as the land in some way, is transposed to the spaces where her dances takes place. This is not about possession, but about identity. The use of the word ownership is complex, since it is referring to a fundamental (Lee uses this word often) sense of self-presence within an environment, the awareness of a unique “kinaesthetic image” being established. Collective space is not solely a shared physical location, but a shared physical concept. It also refers, as previously mentioned, to the idea of places held in common, places to gather in, communicate and share, part of, as Ingold in *Perception of the Environment* explains: “[the]ecological contexts of people’s interrelations with their environments” (171).

Lecturer, performer and Feldenkrais practitioner Robert Vesty danced in *Common Dance*, and in email exchanges in September 2015, he provided insights into some of the points raised in this section. When asked about his individual presence within the large cast, he wrote: “Two ways in which my presence was individuated. First where we were enacting some kind of more synchronous or choral movement … Second because more often than not, mostly in fact, we were asked to produce our own movement, motif, or sequence within a particular frame” (email. 30 September 2015). Vesty felt that because, as he expressed it “there was a community being enacted”, the interactions between himself and other performers gave rise to effects, moments, expressions that soaked into the performance. Vesty felt that this also related to the exploration of the building as a social space. He recalled that all his action began from outside what he called “the main space receiving it”. It resulted with him having a clear perception of the whole space. This included those areas not in immediate view, which Lee considers important. Vesty wrote that:

The whole area was explored from the patterned parquet floor … but also the wooden sides, those doors and the big doors at the back. Honouring the interconnectedness of the Borough Hall with the spaces immediately outside it and then the world beyond that. I felt our movement explored that a lot with the idea of swooping, jumping, sliding in from these outside spaces into the main space. (email. 30 September 2015)

Vesty’s comments here match Lee’s own concerns about places of meeting, the importance of the physical environment and the dancers’ relationship to it, its interactive properties. He also shows the qualities of aware attentiveness that Lee encourages and looks for, indeed builds into her approach. Vesty also gave evidence of the link that Lee finds between emotion and movement, that important result of affect. Recalling parts of the performance that he felt particularly moved or affected by, Vesty wrote:

The planting. I love the planting. There’s so much care in that sequence. So much humanity in the way we present ourselves in front of the audience, with such naked simplicity. As if to say, this is me. No airs and graces. Me. And the fact that those of us picking people up from the back and planting them there at the front are also saying, look at this person, simply as they are. (email. 30 September 2015)

This last comment shows clearly the trajectories of commonality and of environmental co-extensiveness, of awareness through movement running through the performance. From that awareness and attentiveness, multiple subjectivities and selves emerge. When Vesty writes that there was “so much humanity in the way we present ourselves … with such naked simplicity. As if to say, this is me. No airs and graces. Me” (see above). He is also giving a clear indication of what is meant by “suchness” and of the “rawer sense of self” that Lee searches for.

## Melting Down in Collective Space.

Lee’s *Melt Down* was performed in Granary Square during Dance Umbrella October 2012, having been revived from its performance in October 2011 in Brunswick Square. It was originally commissioned for Dance Umbrella in 2011 and was one of the four pieces making up *Square Dances*, all created to be performed in squares and other spaces in central London. *Common Dance* reflected the loss of large open and free rural meeting spaces, while *Melt Down* is specifically oriented towards an urban environment. The performance in Brunswick Square had been in a small green space, intersected by public pathways, and the performance took place under the canopy of a large tree. The topography of Granary Square, at the time in the middle of the King’s Cross development, was very different from that of Brunswick Square. Granary Square is a plaza, with a display of fountains designed in a grid pattern, and a backdrop on one side of converted warehouses housing amongst other establishments Central St. Martins School of Art, and on the other the Grand Union Canal, the tow path of which is reached by broad steps flanked by square green public areas and with narrower flights of steps down the centre and to the right facing the canal. The Granary Square performance first took place on the broad areas of the steps. The dance developed over ten minutes with a single bell toll marking the passing of each minute.

As with *Common Dance*, the cast was a mixture of a small group of professional dancers with a majority of amateur, but in this case not inexperienced dancers, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and ages some returning for a second time. Here the ensemble was all male from a range of ethnic backgrounds and ages. Lee felt the piece could be performed by a variety of groupings and that there was no particular significance to the male set up. Lee was at pains to credit Alice Long in the conception of *Melt Down* and the joint work they initially did together. She also spoke of the performance of the piece in remembrance of Gill Clarke in November 2011 in Greenwich Park, and through simultaneous performances taking place all over the world. She felt it was a piece that could be adapted to link with a number of points of focus and uses, mentioning, as an example, anti-war associations. Looking at figure 4, on page 136, which was taken during final stages of rehearsal, the physical shapes of the dancers moving towards full contact with the floor suggests the associations that could be made. Seeing the thirty dancers prone on the Canal Steps emphasised the connection.

Lee said that, in general, she was looking for “a different aesthetic, changing how we look at [the performance in] space.” She commented: “I rarely respond to black boxes now” and that “watching movement now it doesn’t go beyond the fingertips – a new way of you in space.” She questioned whether: “All the energies are now within the body, could that be from an urban environment, small spaces, no gardens, boxes?” For all the solemn fluidity, each of the dancers moved within a set space, confined within the wider perspectives of the performance location. Arms spread upwards, a gesture of supplication in many contexts, gravity takes each down to the final prone position. Though not the original intention, the bell suggested a connection with mortality.

Each of the dancers started from a vertical position during the performance of *Melt Down* and went through a fluent process of dissolving down to the ground. “Dissolving” was Lee’s descriptive word for the whole process and the whole movement took place over a period of ten minutes, punctuated by the bell striking. While all of the 30 dancers completed the same process, and each remained in one location, the specifics and details of each dancer’s progress were individual to each. It is a feature that mirrors Robert Vesty’s comments about *Common Dance* on pages 131-33 above. The dancers dissolved from the top through the core, into the feet and beyond. They had been encouraged to find their own solutions to the task, seeking outcomes that enabled a fluent and sustainable progression that was unique to each individual, but not individualistic. Lee wanted the dancers to be very aware of how they made contact with the floor and to take account of its qualities, so that there was a feeling that movement extended any immediate exteroceptive experience of the surface. The movement travelled into rather than simply onto surfaces, extending peri-personal space beyond the conventional understanding of it as an area reachable with the limbs. Lee’s concern with collective or public spaces takes on an extra property here adding awareness of potential dimensions as well as the actual surfaces. The dancers are not concerned with possession of ground. The collective space that Lee wants to explore is defined by its textures, continually established through movement. It is dynamic and also unstable.

During rehearsals I observed at Cecil Sharpe House in September 2012, Lee prepared the dancers through a series of explorations of texture, and of holding or being in contact with one or more others, placing the hands at various points on the body, examples of which can be seen in figure 1 on page 134. Each of these exercises helped increase an awareness of touch, of the non-verbal intimacy that Lee emphasises her interest in, a quality that each dancer would need to bring to the piece. Robert Vesty, who danced in *Common Dance* as well as two versions of *Melt Down* in Brunswick Square and Granary Square, in response to being asked about the methods Lee used in rehearsal, wrote that he remembered “partner work with touch, so that we might for instance attend to each other’s spines, tailbone and neck. Slow movement. Slow and fine attention being developed” (email. 30 June 2015). Examples of this can be seen in the rehearsal picture shown in figure 1 on page 134.

Lee used the word “rooted” to describe the physical state she wanted the dancers to aim for, emphasising awareness of the texture of the floor that would become integral to the performances. During the process, she spoke aloud and noted down associative words and phrases that both prompted and recorded the explorations taking place. This was done while she moved amongst the dancers, but often appeared to be her own response to what she was seeing, as well as images of movement quality she was suggesting. One particularly memorable example was “trapped butterflies” that seemed to have no immediate connection with what was taking place until Lee explained it as referring to a state of movement rather than an isolated image. Vesty recalls this aspect of Lee’s work as “working with image quite a lot, of nature, of birds” (email. 30 June 2015); he associated it with the overall “fine attention” to touch. These physical states are what Lee means when she speaks of the body knowing fundamentals kinetically. It is the state of attentive awareness she attempts to unlock from her dancers. She said she was: “using group images of melting, rising but animal images too unzipped phrases – allowing yourself to just be”. An example of this in process can be seen in figure 2 below.



Figure 1 Partner work with touch from *Melt Down* rehearsal



Figure 2: Animal images from *Melt Down* rehearsal

The experience of these preparations was taken into the actual rehearsal runs through of *Melt Down*, during which the dancers were asked to identify problems that occurred and to find unforced ways to resolve them. Vesty wrote that he clearly recalls “many practices of the actual meltdowns, so that we would do two full meltdowns each rehearsal … To watch was important. There was a feeling that to do the meltdown was also about finding options, the route” (email. 30 June 2015). Vesty confirms that throughout Lee’s principles of kinaesthetic awareness and attentiveness, and of the intelligent body, were continually to the fore.

The vertical standing position at the start of *Melt Down* that can be seen in figure 3, on page 136, was reminiscent of the opening sequence of *Common Dance* and appeared to signal a state of alert readiness, as well as providing a fully extended position from which to begin. Lee’s maxim of the complex within the simple can be seen in the variance with which each dancer presents their own state of readiness. There is a linking overall image and but no attempt at rigid uniformity.



Figure 3: The opening stage of *Melt Down* in rehearsal

Each dancer’s singularity within the shared image and the succession of images that followed is one of the factors that mark Lee’s ideas of collective space. Vesty, recalling his own response to being part of such an organic piece, wrote that:

My felt position was that I was part of a cloud being watched, no part of it [the cloud] individually … I usually feel watched when I perform and that ‘felt experience’ felt very different here. I felt individual. I’m short. I know how I look. I have an identity. It feels like it remains intact. (email. 30 June 2015)

Figure 4: Stages in the dissolving process in rehearsal



Kinaesthetic awareness, attentiveness, an intelligent body revealing the “rawer sense of self” (Lee), all combine and interact to produce self-presence within a shared environment - just as in *Common Dance*. Alterity and agency present in each dancer’s movement, through which senses of belonging are momentarily though not uniformly present, combine, overlap, and intertwine rhizomatically, processually, to suggest haptic rather than simply optical space. This is not exactly what Lee means when she talks of collective or public spaces, although it is not in any sense oppositional; and Lee wanted the performance to suggest that there was no “green room” but that it was a continuation.

Watching the rehearsals for *Melt Down* was a continual reminder of Feldenkrais’ idea that alterity concerns developing an awareness of self through embodiment. Each performer was demonstrating their unique muscle image, displaying a wide range of individual differences resulting from each individual physical, experiential profile.

Feldenkrais has shown how the self-image is perceived and shaped through movement awareness, and here each dancer, through their muscle awareness, was showing their alterity in the way they were carrying out actions.

Lee recounted a performance of *Melt Down* in Buenos Aires in November 2012, where she had worked with a new group of dancers. She said that the choice of venue for the performance had been, in hindsight, a mistake and that the performance revealed the danger of assuming that movement necessarily crosses between cultures, despite the “kinetic fundamentals” she speaks of. In a city packed with religious imagery and observance, she became aware that to the people in the wide open park space inhabited on the margins, according to Lee, “by drug addicts and the homeless, drop-outs”, their performance was interpreted as an event by a fundamentalist religious group. Lee spoke of the ubiquity there of “religious mafia” who constantly collected money. The performance was initially being seen as another unwelcome manifestation of their presence. She also said that the same people who at first showed their antagonism eventually became involved, initially looking on from the margins but increasingly less so. The experience that Lee describes also indicates that collective spaces can be possessions, fiercely held as a locus for specific identities and behaviours. There was some success in this version of *Melt Down*, however, in that its initial misreading as a colonisation of a space gave way to a growing acceptance that the performance represented something other and more approachable. Cultural differences within similar movements do not themselves immediately dissolve, although this is not to say that they are not capable of producing interactions. Some of the gestures in *Melt Down* echo supplicants, and some of the final positions have similarities to the kinds of prostration that are associated with elements of some Catholic ritual.

When Lee speaks of becoming “the same as the land in some way”, I suggest that this may have to do with the dynamics of affordance and affect that arise from movement within an environment. Considering the affective turn in this connection, Sara Ahmed’s description in *Happy Objects* of affect as “what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values and objects” (29) has relevance when linked to *Melt Down*. Ahmed refers to unfolding bodies into worlds of experiential contingency, which is common to both the experience of the dancer and the spectator, enabling important kinaesthetic empathy to develop as a dialogue of increasing recognition within an environment. Forms of physical inclusivity are potentials to be realised, rather than expected.

Were the performance conditions established for *Melt Down* in its various locations intended to promote an inclusive outcome? The spectators were not formally seated, and people encountered the performances by chance as much as through expectation.

Spectators were not organised into particular groupings and were free to move about, perhaps to stay briefly and then go about their other business of the day, even to walk through the performance. The positioning of each of the dancers in relationship both to each other and the performance location was not random, but was developed as an awareness of spatial organisation between them that could be employed in whichever performance location was used. Lee said that individuals who always positioned themselves on the periphery became aids to setting up particular proxemics. As each performer was involved in an exploration of the body in these circumstances, rather than being part of a fixed uniform choreography, such an awareness of the overall spatial structure was necessary. As an example of the ways the performers approached this question, Lee explained: “We practised trying to be equidistant, not all facing inwards”. Lee acknowledged the very open setting of the Granary Square, compared to the Brunswick Square performance which was much more enclosed and had a large overarching tree that a number of the dancers found “re-assuring and comforting”. Despite this feeling, there were, as well as the hedges and park benches, paths dissecting the site, along which people continued to walk. She decided that the texture of the concrete and the geometry of the steps themselves required set places for the dancers. Lee said that inclusivity was “something I worked on, because you can reach it [in performance] with terrific concentration, if you are concentrating so that you are aware of everything about you, your 3D awareness in your whole body”. Lee acknowledged that the actual placing of spectators was a crucial factor and “to be really included you need to be close enough to start to identify with the men. If you look at it sculpturally only you get bored – I did – you need to get involved in the actuality of the melting”. Lee felt that the openness of the Granary Steps to some extent prevented such a necessary closeness.

Robert Vesty’s experience in performance offers an interesting contrast to this view.

Addressing the differences between the performances of *Melt Down* in the two locations, he wrote that: “I think I was often contrasting the experience of the concrete to the experience the year before under the plane tree in Brunswick Square. It was softer there”. Vesty was not solely referring to the textures of grass as opposed to concrete, but also to the general atmosphere that surrounded the performances. He noted of Granary Square: “This was harder. This felt busier too. Edgier”. He made particular reference to the positioning of the performers and the spectators, and that in Granary Square “it felt like we were on a set. Like we had scenography”, whereas in Brunswick Square there was a feeling of being “scattered in the round”. In relation to Granary Square, he suggested that: “This was proscenium. This felt quite presentational on the canal steps. I had to control it differently. The steps’ edges presented an additional challenge because the landing/laying into the ground had to happen in a more restricted space”.

Lee said of the Granary Square performance of *Melt Down* that: “I don’t really want you [the spectator] to see them go to the green room and I don’t want you to know where they go”. At the nominal close of the performance, the dancers rose and variously dispersed. Lee wanted them to merge back into the general patterns of the immediate location, raising questions concerning how far the organism/environment of the performance might extend, or that it emerges from and dissolves back into everyday life. I suggested to her that if this could have been the case, the performance could be approached using the metaphor of the performance as mycelium, an organic structure within the texture of the surface, with each individual’s peri-personal space as hyphae breaking through ground at any future point. Lee felt there was some accuracy to this and linked it to the performances of *Melt Down* that had already taken place in diverse locations.

*Melt Down* shared with *Common Dance* the fact that a large group of dancers engaged in a fluid, uninterrupted movement experience. What was different in *Melt Down* was that though part of a complex movement organism, each dancer, except for walking to the opening, remained within their own specific positioning. Movement was from the vertical downwards and contained no direct contact between the dancers, quite different from *Common Dance* where contact was a major aspect of the piece. In *Melt Down*, each dancer established a sense of self-presence individually and maintained that throughout. While Lee pointed out that she wanted spectators to identify “with the men” to experience the full dynamic properties of the dance as an inclusive experience, the way that such identification operates was not made clear. Lee’s attempt to encourage the “terrific concentration” from the dancers that she felt was necessary for a full “3D awareness in your whole body” was meant to offer to the spectator a potential for inclusive identification. Responding to that potential, the spectator engages empathetic responses resulting from movement recognition processes described earlier. The spectator is provided with a possibility to respond to a number of performance environments by the dancers, and could choose to shift between those possibilities. This is another form of collective space, though not perhaps in the sense that Lee originally meant it. The spectators become involved in a fluid dynamic of actual and possible exchanges, an incorporation of shared environments.

## Kicking Sand.

The final section of this chapter focuses on *Boy* and as with *Common Dance* and *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie*, *Boy* was viewed in recorded format, the medium for which the dance was originally developed. Each provides a different perspective for interrogating presence, ranging from the intense duo of Heni and Eddie in a small, contained location, the large cast of *Common Dance* within the extensive but enclosed space of Greenwich Borough Hall, the large cast of *Melt Down* with each dancer locked individually to a single position within a large open space in an urban environment, to the vibrant experience of the single dancer within an almost limitless expanse of sea, sand and sky in *Boy*.

Talking about *Boy*, Lee said “one figure in a landscape is much harder, the architecture of a vertical figure against the horizontal. It is again a different presence”. Her use of “a different presence” is given context by her overall suggestion that dance is transformative, and that, as with *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie,* it might be possible to access “a rawer sense of self”. Lee also suggested that: “Presence is about being in the here and now as much as you can be”. In *Melt Down*, Lee had wanted spectators to be in close proximity to the performance, to sense the dancers’ physical presence and to obtain a feeling of inclusivity. In *Boy*, the “vertical figure against the horizontal” is a small boy on expanses of sand dunes and beach. The difficulty and difference she refers to lie in the apparent or relative isolation of the single small figure within such an expansive location. She asked, in relation to *Boy*, whether if one is “in a safe place, what is it like to take away the safety net of what we put around us?” This seems to be in opposition to the idea of taking people to “a place where they are unafraid”, but on closer examination it is possible to see that Lee is talking of habitual, learnt processes as safety nets and that she was looking for a place where someone is unafraid to explore these potential restraints, or put them aside in some way. In *Boy*, the environment of Lee’s own childhood provides such a place.

Sky, sea, sand, hiss of wind through marram grass, intense light, long horizontal uninterrupted horizon lines, the texture of the sand grains, movement of the sand blown across the beach, sand running like water on the dunes - all of these come from the basic influences of Rosemary Lee’s home and are represented in *Boy*, with the single young performer filmed, as it were, in the eye of them all. His movement takes place, as Ingold describes in *Being Alive*, in “a world of incessant movement and becoming, one that is never complete” (141). Lee commented on working with children that they “had an awareness of surroundings, awareness of the other and were not aware of the barrier between self and surroundings … but as we learn to be conscious in our surroundings, we must learn to put up all sorts of barriers to survive in a society”. The figure of the boy does both of these things, both initiating and controlling the imagined alter-ego that appears and, at times, an imagined dialogue that seems to exist between them. A key moment occurs when the perspective of the boy on the dunes, looking down on the supposedly imagined figure on the beach is reversed and for a moment the spectator is given a suggestion that it is the boy on the beach seeing and imagining the other. From this point such interchanges of perspective increase so that sometimes it is not even helpful to try to separate the two, but better to exist within the movement. It is possible to see similarities between this and the relationship of spectator to performance. We are all kicking sand, rolling down the dune, appearing and dissolving in the mirage inducing proximity of the seawater’s thin illusory film on the margins of the sand.

*Boy* also has play at its heart, encouraging us to recall, if we can, that play is a shifting of states, moving without seams between the supposed real and the supposed imagined. When Lee speaks of a child’s facility in dissolving barriers “between self and surroundings”, she is in part describing play. I would add that the surroundings themselves are dissolved, replaced, refigured in an interchange of realities through games of presence. Children make those changes effortlessly by continually re-assigning the supposed realities of the objects they come across. They remake the image structures of their environments and allow themselves to be remade by them. It is where the illusion that we fill or shape our environment is at its most tenuous. In *Boy*, the shifts of perspective between the two figures and the environments they inhabit constitute these re-makings.

Texture is everywhere emphasised in the film. The sound of wind in the various locations, different in each case from dune to shoreline, the varying textures and flows of the sand, the boy sucking marram grass or busily grubbing his fingers in the sand, the waterlogged jumpsuit floating, or kite-flying, the contact of body to each of these, rolling down dune slopes, running in the shallows, the changes of intensity of light and air - the list of the use of texture can go on much longer. Its effect is to make us finely aware of the actuality of the location and it impacts on us as spectator. Lee’s aim to make her spectators more bodily aware is achieved through this textural image-scape, akin to Ingold’s idea of a dynamic ‘weatherworld’. It is a small shift of the imagination to smell these textures - it is part of the closeness to them that *Boy* gives the spectator, even through the medium of DVD.

The sequences of the boy launching himself in glorious leaps off the top of the dunes, filmed from different angles to allow the full feeling of each one, are central to the film. Here barriers dissolve and the boy leaps, flies, soars, impacts, rolls, in a succession of repeated actions. If no other movement images remain, these will endure with their sheer experiential freedom and their gritty sand-showered materiality. For the spectator they are transformative in the sense that substance is given to memory, our physical selves and the boy’s mingle in a combination of recall and recognition. Lee is acute in her use of the most basic movements: standing, running, lying, rolling, leaping, and stretching. They are made in contexts like the beach, or standing on someone else’s feet, or kneeling on a prone figure. They are given juxtapositions, against sand, within changes in light that enable seeing the movements afresh. Our own kinaesthetic empathy is recharged and we know our own bodies a little more. A different sense of a self- presence is made possible in doing so. We regain the role as protagonist in our own narrative. We also kick the sand.

In order to come to the vocabulary of the senses that Lee feels we all have, to release ‘rawer’ senses of self, the process and the performances of Lee’s work is both the prerequisite and the result of engaged awareness and attentiveness. Out of this, particular environments emerge. Lee was clear that she did not let go completely of the shaping of her work. She also suggested that there “isn’t an edge to where a piece finishes – even walls aren’t edges, doors, exits are a sense of the beyond. I don’t think you can separate time and space”. Lee enables her dancers to open themselves out to the full experience of landscapes of becoming. The revealing comment she made (and I quoted earlier) that: “as we learn to be conscious in our surroundings, we must learn to put up all sorts of barriers to survive in a society” points to the sort of unlayering that she aims for, where the barriers are lowered, where the often used motif of raised arms of invocation lose their incipient religiosity and become invitations to be present where one is, and to launch off sand dunes. Ingold, in *Lines: A Brief History* proposes: “To an ever increasing extent, people in modern metropolitan societies find themselves in environments built as assemblies of connected elements” (75), linked by routes, rather than trails or traces. It is a world of edges. For Lee, the transformative power of dance is a melting down of those edges, a re-connection with the possibilities that this might afford for a regained awareness and attentiveness to the intelligent body and its own connections to environments of becoming.

In the next chapter, the dance work of Yael Flexer provides a quite different set of trajectories arising from social barriers, constructed defences, the enclosed nature of a life of routes and destinations with their edges, closed doors and exclusions. It is a world where a slow melting down through surfaces is replaced by sharp energies of contact and breaking away, departure, hybridity and ‘un-home’. Lee’s work provided detailed discussion on what is meant by the intelligent body and how this contributes to the body’s continuing discourse. In the following chapter, Flexer’s work takes ideas of the intelligent body interacting with a developing environment and locates them in the constant tension of the in-between of performance and the everyday. The trajectories encountered here are in a sense of a self, emerging through brief moments of habitation. Where Lee’s dancers are rooted, literally in Melt Down, to wider environments, Flexer’s are involved in a constant search for identity, and are nomadic in the widest sense.

# CHAPTER 4: ROOM FOR LIVING

## Introduction.

In this chapter a sense of self, emerging, is investigated through the in-between of performance and the everyday. Yael Flexer is a somatic practitioner who uses touch and contact frequently. The importance of an intelligent body and the idea of an alert attentiveness in dancers, qualities which are essential aspects of somatic practice, as set out in the Introduction to the thesis, are continued in this chapter. Discussion on how Flexer explores ideas of the in-between takes place by looking at three examples of Flexer’s practice from a loosely linked triptych – *Shrink’d, Doing, Done and Undone* and *The living Room*. Explanation of Flexer’s deliberate use of complex interactions between the dancers themselves and between the dancers and spectators continues the idea of dance as transformative. These interactions are shown to take place within continually unstable and shifting ground, in which interaction with and suffusion in the environment is fast moving, full of tactics of the everyday. In the previous chapter, Lee spoke of how she wanted to reveal what she called a “rawer sense of self”, but accomplish this within a sense of security. In the examples analysed in this chapter the self emerges in a more fractured and fragmentary way. The nomadic trajectories apparent here, are also the nomadic backgrounds of the dancers themselves. These are expressed through the tensions of finding habitation from a sense of unhome. In this chapter, the body continues to be a site of discourse, but the aspect of the discourse revealed and analysed is centred on the self emerging at the membraneous intersection of performance and everyday.

This chapter on Flexer’s work continues investigating the strands concerned throughout with vital materiality, and how this is linked to emergence of a sense of self. Flexer’s work is shown to be directly concerned with kinaesthetic awareness and evidence from two of her dancers places this within a freedom to explore and reveal their own senses of self within the research and development of the work.

Yael Flexer is an award winning choreographer, who has worked in this country for over twenty years. This chapter draws on my association with her for most of that period, during which time as well as working with her I have seen a majority of her work performed. [[8]](#endnote-9)This background is made specifically relevant to the thesis through a number of interviews, conversations and email exchanges. In Chapter 6, I will return to her work in the context of my collaboration with her and with Three Score Dance in Brighton in 2014.

Flexer trained and studied at London Contemporary Dance School between 1992 and 1995 and became choreographer in residence at The Place Theatre in 1993. She formed Bedlam Dance Company in 1995 and won the Jerwood Award for choreographers, while Artist in Residence at Swindon Dance. She now works with installation artist Nic Sandiland as co-Artistic Director of Flexer@Sandiland, making live and digital installation work for a variety of locations and venues. She is currently co-Artistic Director of the University of Chichester touring dance company MapDance. She has made a considerable contribution to dance education, working with students, community groups and amateur dance companies providing workshops, projects and making new work.

Flexer is one of a small group of Israeli dancers/choreographers who have been making and influencing dance in the UK since she herself arrived; Jasmin Vardimon and Hofesh Sheckter are two other notable examples. I asked her whether, because of their shared cultural background, there were similarities in their work. She commented that:

My training was very different in the UK than theirs was in Israel and I left Israel at 18. I am probably more bio-cultural than they are in some ways. There are some dramaturgical elements that are similar – the themes that we deal with. There are some themes that run through that are to do with our personal experience – being Israeli, being Jewish and how you negotiate that within an essentially non-Jewish environment. So there are those tensions. (Personal Interview. 2 February 2014)

The nature of those tensions was discussed again in a telephone conversation on 12 December 2015. Flexer said that: “in many ways my work is to do with an identity and belonging, or never quite belonging”. She felt that this sense of hybridisation was also present in the structure of her work which she described as “not always committing to a particular setting, it has a bit of this, a bit of that”. She pointed out the episodic structure of much of her work, which contained reference to “many aesthetics … it isn’t just one idea, but many ideas”. She drew attention to the role she herself played in her work, “in- between, not fully performer or spectator”, and referred to her use of herself as a kind of quasi-commentator, placed between the spectator and performers, sometimes making personal references, or simply being a disembodied voice. Flexer also spoke of having a sense of identity, but one which was “always in a place of un-home which is in a sense ungrounded, not located”. She felt that as a result her work appears to “have the fragility to just collapse, or shift at any point, so there is no sense of solidity or safety”.

Flexer’s response to being asked about the politics of the body in her work was to point out that when she began “twenty years ago the way I presented myself, the shaved head, was quite radical” (Personal interview. 6 April 2014). I can attest to the impact that made on students at the time, expecting a particular body type and presentation and instead finding themselves faced by and responding to a real sense of powerful agency and energy, independence and vitality. Flexer referred to the cultural expectations of the way a woman moves. She felt that this was to a considerable degree due to the influence of ballet in European dance, which she said was largely absent from her ethnic background. Referring to male and female movement she said: “Not that there are no differences but the choices I make come from the consciousness that the female body has an agency of its own action”. She described the dancers in her work as typically “reflective, distant, but physically committed” and that a certain ambivalence resulted from this. She considered that: “functionally we come to the weight of the body, the way we might look at the body and how we might look at others as they move, allow for a question mark, the element of the pedestrian about it, an absence of illusion about us doing an act of performance”.

The transformative aims of Lee’s work use the idea of the intelligent body to place an unlayering of self within a sense of rooted connection with environments. These are often places of meeting, and also often concern organic groupings out of which multiple subjects emerge. Initially this may seem to be in stark contrast to Flexer’s references to fragility and to the shifting, unstable ambiguity of her dancers. Despite this, however, an intelligent committed awareness of the body remains central for both; nonetheless the sense of self- presence that results from the movement is distinct.

All of the points raised in these recent conversations with Flexer are explored and interrogated in detail as the chapter progresses. Particular focus as a basis for investigation will be given to the triptych *Shrink'd* (2005-7), *Doing, Done and Undone* (2007-9) and *The Living Room* (2010-13). Of these three connected pieces from Flexer’s work, most attention will be given to *The Living Room.* The triptych provides opportunities to examine further the emergence of a sense of self through an environment far more fractured and unpredictable than that which Lee draws on, focusing on Flexer’s concern with hybridity, the in-between and the shifting substance of identity.

Flexer describes her work as occupying a position in-between the everyday and the performance. In her PhD thesis from November 2013 entitled *In-Between Dancing and the Everyday: A Choreographic Investigation* she writes: “My *in-between* position of being both inside and outside the work seems to echo my diasporic position or hybrid entity as an Israeli artist working in Britain over the last twenty years” (175). Flexer’s work is coloured by her own particular sense of restless hybridity though this does not suggest that her work is autobiographical in terms of a narrative of events explored. A feeling of displacement runs through her work that gives particular impetus to her explorations of manifestations of hybridity.

Flexer’s own sense of hybridity and ‘un-home’ is not simply transferred to her dancers through an imposed choreographic structure, though it does provide material from which a particular type of presence is realised. Her dancers are never passive recipients. The development of each of Flexer’s dance works is a dynamic, reciprocal process of exploration, using contact improvisation, challenge, and humorous subversion; and from some perspectives the performances can be seen to continue this process. Humour and game playing is never far away. Flexer consciously plays with her own role as choreographer both in her use of a prologue form, a recurrent characteristic of her work, and on occasion through direct address between the dancers and herself. For example, she describes the prologue to *The Living Room* as: “delivered with a microphone, a device which frames the work as performance or a ‘show'. I am in a sense the ‘master of ceremonies’ , ‘choreographer’ , ‘author’ , ‘director’ , ‘presenter’ , ‘narrator’ , and/or ‘stand-up comedian’ introducing and relaying what is about to happen or what has happened” (172). Flexer is also concerned with the relationship of the spectator to the performance and with “the audience’s potentially claustrophobic embodied experience of being on view and in close proximity to the performers and other audience members” (178). Flexer manipulates proxemics of performance as part of her interrogation of the in-between and in this way also seeks to engage the spectator in a dialogic relationship.

Flexer sees the three works in the overall triptych as “traversing between a formal choreographic approach and an informal mode of presentation”(12) and that “the works are equally concerned with and point to *the everyday*, traversing between *the everyday* and performance through a variety of choreographic and dramaturgical devices” (12). In particular, Flexer’s use of deliberate provocations in relation to role, identity and performativity in her work provide opportunities for looking at the shifting ground of habitation, challenging the spectator’s understanding of self. She is always posing the question: “where is the site of performance?” (Personal interview. 30 September 2013)

Flexer’s aim of providing grounds for a dialogic, perhaps dialectical exchange with spectators leads to her work being packed with forms of direct address. She writes: “my primary … concern is to investigate the different ways in which the traversing *in-between* performance and *the everyday* takes shape and produces meaning within the practical works, informing their inception and creative process and their reception by viewers in performance”(12). Flexer sees the use of direct address as a vehicle for traversing the parameters between performance and the everyday. Some of the spoken interventions deliberately target conventions of dance practice and invite the spectator to share an awareness of the fact of a performance taking place. It is not solely in the use of direct spoken address that Flexer seeks to stimulate exchanges with the spectator. A form of direct address can be seen in the moments when the dancers confront the audience, looking directly at them and allowing the sense of physical effort and bodily engagement to show in their patterns of breathing and physical recovery. Whether it is through an interactive installation, experiment with proxemics of performance, direct address, dancers facing the spectator after a particular section, clearly showing the effects of physical exertion, accessible moments of humour both in spoken dialogue and movement sequencing or the use of the prologue, the spectator is directly involved, and the boundaries between the spectator and the dance are blurred. The above paragraph is a revised form of material from the author’s MA dissertation *Can Movement Speak: The Location of Meaning in the Dancing Body*, which Flexer quoted in original form on page 192 of her thesis.

Elizabeth Grosz, writing in *Architecture From the Outside: Essays in Real and Virtual*

*Space*, makes relevant comments on the idea of the in-between, of unstable ground and fluctuating identities. Grosz writes that: “the position of the in-between lacks a fundamental identity, lacks a form, a givenness, a nature. Yet it is that which facilitates, allows into being all identities, all matter, all substance” (90). She also proposes that: “the space of the in- between is the locus for social, cultural and natural transformations” (91) and far from this simply being a possible site for “movements and re-alignments”, it is “the place around identities, between identities”, a place for “becoming” (91). Grosz describes the in-between as a process of dissolving, and uses words like “fraying” and “subversion” in connection with this process. She writes: “it is the space of the bounding and undoing of the identities which constitute it” (92). Drawing on her own experience Flexer brings into her work an acute sense for an insubstantial ground of identity. As dancer and choreographer, she fills movement with a constant shifting of perspective between tones and textures, mood and register.

In an interview with Flexer on 14 May 2009, she spoke freely and extensively about an environment of exclusion and entry. She identified herself as “an immigrant, Jewish Israeli minority”, and acknowledged the importance of her examination of identity. As an example, during Flexer’s solo in *The Living Room* a text is spoken with autobiographical content, referring to, but not spoken by her. She writes of this that:

While I am the primary narrator throughout the work, in the solo I am silent. The text is delivered by either Karni Postel [the cellist] or Aneta Szydlak [one of the performers] while I perform the movement. This duality problematises the reading as to whose ‘life-story’ is actually being narrated and at the same time, places me in a more vulnerable objectified, ‘muted’ position [similar to that of the other performers who are predominantly silent throughout the work]. (182)

She continued that: “it points to the fact that I, as autobiographical subject occupy both an inside and outside, hybrid or liminal subject position” (183). She points out that: “I am both Israeli and British, both an ‘insider’, a member of Israeli society and a ‘stranger’, someone who has lived away and experienced these events from afar” (183).

There is a complex layering of action and interaction present in her work, a structure to the choreography that is arrived at through the process of negotiation with her dancers. Her work asks questions about identity of herself, her dancers and the spectator. How this identity is located in the body is a recurring motif expressed through her exploration of embodied subjectivity. She feels that identity is performed and that the spectators’ relationship to that performance is a continual dialogue. Her approach to the in-between most often points to shifts between performance and the everyday, and because of these shifts the fragility that she speaks of as being inherent in some aspects of her work becomes more apparent. The dissolving, subversive texture of the in-between that Grosz writes of is always evident.

Flexer herself is never still, almost always on the point of leaving for a different territory. A discussion with her on 6 April 2014, at Chichester University in a crowded coffee bar, concerning new material for collaborative work with Three Score Dance Company, was punctuated with demonstrations of what she wanted to attempt conducted in the narrow spaces between tables in an almost parodic image for her use of the in-between. Flexer constantly shifts position on her chair, full of energy and physical charge. Her use of language and exchange of ideas is similarly restless, moving off centre, challenging, fleeting at times. These markers are ever present in her choreography where moods will change quickly from humorous use of spoken text and gesture to a restless and volatile dissection of the performance area. At times, her dancers seem to jostle for notice, to compete for the opportunity to occupy ground and remain. They are figures at the point of establishing themselves, finding self and a place for that self to remain, to establish presence in and amongst fleeting, transitional and processual narratives.

The emphasis of this chapter is on the third part of the Flexer’s triptych, *The Living Room*, but attention is first given to *Doing, Done and Undone*, which was premiered at Chichester University Showroom on 23 April 2007, and included an interactive video installation. The use of video projection, webcam and a Photo Shoot projection screen gave spectators the appearance of involvement in the performance. At least, the installation was responsive to a spectator entering its sensitive field. The spectator appeared to travel through and with the choreography, influencing its pace and direction, but it was entirely in keeping with Flexer’s questioning of performance that the actual projection started at the end of the dance and worked its way back to the green room. Unlike Rosemary Lee, who in *Melt Down* wished the dance itself to emerge seamlessly within the environment, Flexer wanted the spectators to become aware of that other location.

## Physical States of Affairs.

*Doing, Done and Undone* is itself a triptych within a triptych. In the first part six dancers engage, disengage, form and reform in an increasingly complex social game. At one point a single dancer plays an actual game that is akin to grandmother’s footsteps, though it never reaches completion. Changes of focus build out of interactions that follow. A pair of dancers engage in a sequence in which they seem to mimic each other, or take each other’s movement and subtly alter it. There are echoes of this appropriation of an other’s movement, a borrowing of identities, throughout Flexer’s work. Using their own individual gestural movements, the six dancers quarter a decreasing area, forced towards each other and the spectators, in front of whom the sequence pauses as the dancers seemingly ask for recognition. This dissolves very quickly into two dancers manipulating or interacting with a third, though it is never clear where the balance of power is situated. Bodies lie on the floor in line and then re-animate and Flexer returns to variations of this image of conflict and mortality throughout the main triptych. Any individual physical presence is subverted by others copying, interrupting almost forcing the individual to break off, walk away, and stand watchfully apart.

In the second part, in a complex exchange of manipulation and support between two dancers, attempts are made by each to establish an identity. Any consistency is again subverted by deliberate changes of emphasis, little confrontations and competitiveness over who will manipulate whom. A very early example of this motif that recurs in Flexer’s work can be seen in *In The Third Person*, a double bill performed as part of The Place’s *Spring Loaded* programme in 1998. After an amusing opening setting the scene, Flexer and another dancer go through an exchange of small movements of the hands, feet, shifts of body position and gaze communicating a growing awkwardness. This is broken by a decisive move into the centre by one of them. From this point, a complex interaction develops in which the two partly copy, partly mimic each other and sometimes establish briefly intimate physical contact. They play games in which one repeatedly falls onto the other or is manipulated by them. It is a questioning dialogue conducted through movement, building in tempo until each breaks away in seemingly mutual misunderstanding. In *Doing, Done and Undone* small sections of apparent harmony also break down into repeated moments of restless physical dialogue. Solo movement is observed by the others. While this establishes an individual’s movement identity, it inevitably ends with a questioning stance or an exchange of interrogative looks.

Flexer’s dancers rarely remove themselves physically from the spectators’ view.

Instead of making conventional exits to either side of a designated area familiar to much dance performance, they occupy the margins or go into an alert suspension of movement. Everything is observed, either by the spectator, or one or more of the dancers. Observation is not neutral, but engaged. In this way Flexer heightens both the physical presence of the dancers, and draws attention to questions concerning what is performed, and the parameters of performance, linking the watching dancers to the watching spectators.

The same movement themes and motifs run throughout the three sections and when the six dancers return in the third and final section of the triptych a seemingly firm social group identity is shot through with suspensions, solo statements, pairs almost together, a restless interchange between states. In this section, variety of sounds that had maintained an underlying pulse contains spoken words that give the impression of providing instructions, which are barely responded to. The group faces the audience on several occasions and though this gives an illusion of unity on behalf of the dancers, the overwhelming feeling is that although there is impetus towards recognition, nothing is resolved, nothing is at ease. Restlessness pervades the whole dance. In comparison, the movement of the dancers in *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie* appears full of harmony and joint purpose, even at the moments when their exploration encounters difficulties to negotiate. Lee spoke of the intelligent bodies of the dancers jointly exploring possibilities of unlayering towards a “rawer sense of self”, while Flexer’s dancers are often in a state of competitive exchange, the emergence of a sense of self wrested from conditions that are never wholly supportive. Flexer’s dancers are consciously performing their shifting states of self to meet immediate requirements of social exchange, and their underlying restlessness reflects this. Within the processual and transitional currency of Flexer’s choreography, the dancers move rapidly between packed social tactics and individual vulnerability. Alterity and agency are hard won, often inconclusive. Ownership of narrative is contested. The movement is at its most affecting when it gives a suggestion of reaching out, of revealing something that allows brief moments of physical intimacy.

Flexer says of her work that it is all about the body, and experiencing *Doing, Done and Undone* this becomes clearer. Flexer talks of the body as functional, and of “bones, joints, folding and unfolding: body centred, heavy qualities” (14 May 2009). She says that the body waits for an impulse to move through observation of another, and this comment mirrors the analysis in Chapter 2 of some processes of action observation and understanding at a neuronal level. Flexer describes patterns in *Doing, Done and Undone* as “start-stop, start- stop, move and stop” and a feeling of suspended motion and incompletion in the triptych comes from this. Flexer says that she hates to “do relationships” but clearly she is concerned with social tactics, power struggles and how identities emerge. She describes the working relationship of the dancers themselves as dialogic and this can be seen in the way they exchange physical commentary and response. What consistently gives the work extra dynamic and shape is the constant attempt to establish presence, to avoid exclusion and gain entry, to be seen as a solid self, placed and in control of their own narrative. Flexer is cautious about this, however, wanting to avoid any possibility of causality in a narrative structure that encourages fixing on relationships between supposed characters. Flexer maintains that she seeks only to see “performativity as an act that brings about a physical state of affairs”.

The constant shift of perspectives through which the dance progresses suggests a more complex reading of what Flexer intends when she speaks of “a physical state of affairs”. It is through the exploration of these states that the fluctuating role of a self as protagonist is seen. This is supportive of the emphasis being placed on the idea of a self not being presented as a singular reading, or a series of movements towards a static, final, realised position. What analysis of Flexer’s work reveals is a process through which her dancers continue as protagonists in their own performed presence, through exploration of a series of physical states that are themselves fluctuating within the circumstances that arise. Flexer’s dancers provide questions about whose narrative a self is engaged in and on what ground engagement is played out. This is at the centre of the tactics and brief power struggles that they are involved in and of the frequent direct physical address to the spectator. Environments that emerge particularly in Flexer’s most recent work do so through struggles for self- presence, struggles that contribute to constantly shifting, sometimes unexpected ground: environments that are physically cut from and against isolation.

## On The Borders.

In the Introduction to *Unstable Ground: Performance and the Politics of Space*, Gay McAuley writes that:

Space can no longer be taken for granted as simply the background to, or neutral container for, actions, events and experiences but has to be seen as a dynamic player, requiring detailed analysis of its role in the complex weave linking society, culture and history. (16)

This is a huge canvas, but the point at the heart of it, that space is a dynamic participant, has specific relevance. McAuley goes on to point out that performance has “a necessary spatial dimension” (16) that for the performer and the spectator results in “embodied co-presence” (16). McAuley also points to an increased concern with place, which she suggests is “sometimes conceptualised in opposition to space, sometimes coupled with it in a dialectical relationship” (17). Flexer leans more towards a dialectical relationship and the process of coupling results in the in-between shifts of unexpected, or unresolved ground where hybridity in the subject becomes more apparent. Occupation of this ground has a liminal quality, where a sense of becoming is continually absorbed by an inevitability of absence. Occupation continually returns to borders that are not lines of demarcation but shifting states of transience and exchange. Flexer associates this with Cooper Albright’s idea of a figure of eight loop, in which the dancer is moving between somatic experience and representation and demonstrates how it is possible to answer Cooper Albright’s call to be open to more complex understanding of how dance operates as representation. Cooper Albright writes that:

I believe it is important not only to look at the narrative, iconographic gestures, symbolic images and social relationships within the choreography,

but also to recognize how meaning is literally embodied in the dancer’s physicality. … I believe a performer’s theatrical persona is grounded in the phenomenological realities of weight space and movement intentionality – her literal being-in-the-world. (50)

This quotation from Cooper Albright is specifically linked to discussion of *Infant C’est Destroy*, by Louise Lecavalier, but it also contains a wider relevance to dance.

Flexer challenges assumptions behind conventional scopic regimes in her dialogic engagement of the spectator. Because her work is most often performed in smaller venues spectators, since they are in closer proximity to the work, are more able to feel the physical exertion of the dancers, their visceral involvement. It is an addition to the techniques Flexer uses to combat possible spectator anonymity, passivity and reflectiveness, examples of which have already been referred to in her use of prologue forms and direct address from dancers. In *Shrink’d*, the first piece in the triptych, spectators are positioned around a tight square as a form of performance in the round. Flexer wrote of this:

The intimacy highlighted through the proximal relation between audience and performers is accentuated throughout the dance with performers making direct eye contact with audience members, sitting among the audience and discussing the work, giving audiences torches to light the dance and finally inviting the audience onto the performance area. The work also highlighted the notion of *in-between*, physically, and through gesture referencing and crossing over the fourth wall. (25)

The spectators, in some venues seated on wooden chairs, were also themselves lit both before and during the performance, which is itself a further disruption of conventional expectations. Sections of spoken text make direct references to the style of performance, with the communicative conventions of text itself destabilised by use of Hebrew in the Prologue and, at a later stage, Japanese. This use of a dancer’s language of birth is a technique Flexer repeats in other pieces and is also another example of awareness of hybridity. Flexer writes that: “movement is performed with a quotidian stance and involves dancers’ improvised gestural commentary on the movement as they perform it. This serves to reinforce the concrete frame of performance as well as highlight the *in-between* of performance and *the everyday*” (26). In this way the whole piece moves rapidly in between formal choreographic construction and what Flexer sees as the everyday.

Fluctuations between abstract and concrete registers are often broadly defined by the various structures of performance venues. For Flexer, the abstract register is often, although not exclusively linked to a raised stage, to symbol and illusion metaphorically separating the drama from the world of the spectator and their daily concerns; a framing device that encourages passive reflection. In *Shrink’d* Flexer uses the configuration of the performance space as a deliberate form of investigation into spatial meaning within her dance. She makes the following observation about the triptych as a whole:

*Shrink’d* focused on dismantling the fourth wall and the pictorial framing of performance through the reconfiguration of space*. Doing, Done & Undone* continued the exploration of spatial signification through its drawing and erasing of performance using the downstage and upstage areas (advance and retreat) as well as the right and left sides of the stage. *The Living Room* continued both these explorations primarily through the temporal frame of performance. (149)

It is true that Flexer is intent on providing the spectator with the opportunity to question their relationship to the performance, but not through the manipulation of seating/spectator to performance alone. She writes: “abolishing the traditional spatial division of audience members and performers does not necessarily change the process of reading or reflecting on the performance in terms of association and disassociation” (137). The in-between in Flexer’s work requires a much wider examination of the strategies she uses in relation to the layers of framing that performance reveals. Juxtapositions that emerge reveal other possibilities for the dancer, as well as how the spectator interprets what they experience. In Flexer’s work the roles of spectator and performer, or the “theatrical body” produce frictions as their received borders overlap are challenged or reconstructed. For Flexer, the spectator is not only an element in framing performance, but part of a dynamic exchange about the fictional nature of performance. Flexer’s overall position on framing is that:

Although I continually point to the theatrical frame within my choreographic works through the play between the Concrete and Abstract registers, my intention is to draw viewers to consider the connection and implications between dance and *the everyday*, the framing of our actions in the everyday as well as within the theatre. (115)

Flexer consciously employs what she sees as Brechtian techniques in the structure of her work. In discussion, Flexer maintained that these techniques share some things in common with Brecht’s *verfremsdungeffekt*, in particular, to confront spectator passivity. She described these techniques as operating through “juxtaposition of registers aimed at new recognitions” (Personal interview. 21 August 2013). She suggests that by making the framing devices visible, referring to them, manipulating them, she is providing the spectator with shocks of recognition, seeing the new in the familiar that Brecht was concerned to produce. It is important here to remember that the V-effekt is meant to enable familiar things to be seen in a new light, to make the familiar and accepted unfamiliar, requiring renewed attention while also making the unfamiliar approachable.[[9]](#endnote-10) This fits with Flexer’s employment of what she hopes are dialogic exchanges with the spectator, during which accepted boundaries between the everyday and performance are questioned. It is possible to see how Flexer employs a range of challenges to the familiar framing of performance, the “play between the concrete and abstract registers”. Through these challenges she interrogates the framing role of venue, site, configuration, choreographic use of space, temporal frame of performance, beginnings and endings, use of gaze, sound and light.

Flexer’s manipulation of the orientation of spectator to live performance is to be found in site-specific work that had as part of its intention the idea that spectators could access the performance in a more dynamic and self-determined way, opening up the possibility for different forms of performance emerging. Relocating performance to buildings popularly associated with other art forms, or other uses, also sought to ask questions of the relationship of spectator to performance, offering the spectator the opportunity to move around, through or across work in progress. Often the experimentation concerned is thought to be granting the spectator agency, although what the exact form of that agency might be is not often made clear. Currently, these questions continue to be asked through experiment with immersive form and with performance in cyber-space, through remote dancing and use of interactive installations like the one Flexer used in *Doing, Done and Undone*, or the inclusion of proto-immersive elements in *Shrink’d*.

There are questions to ask of the idea that performance is done to the spectator: that judicious manipulation of the form of doing will allow, or grant agency, improving the share of ownership. I challenge this notion of an agency that can be granted or denied by specific groups or that the environment we experience is something we may be allowed to look into, observe, or participate in, in limited, controlled ways. At its worst, this notion becomes a mirror of the current economics of capital, an argument for the privatisation of affect. Agency is not granted, but an integral part of a sense of self. Jacques Rancière points out in *The Emancipated Spectator* that within a crowd we are still individuals and that theatre is not necessarily communitarian, or at least not in the accepted sense. He writes that: “it is the power each of them [*the spectator*] has to translate what she perceives in her own way, to link it to the unique individual that makes her similar to the rest in as much as this adventure is not like any other” (17). Rancière presents this power as the capacity of an individual rather than the result of a communal experience, through “an unpredictable interplay of associations and dissociations” (17). He continues:

Being a spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into activity. It is our normal situation. We also learn and teach, act and know, as spectators who all the time link what we see to what we have seen and said, done and dreamed. (17)

Tim Ingold, in *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, cuts to the heart of this matter when he writes:

Rather than thinking of ourselves only as observers, picking our way around the objects … of a ready-formed world, we must imagine ourselves in the first place as participants, each immersed with the whole of our being in the currents of a world-in-formation: in the sunlight we see in, the rain we hear in, the wind we feel in. Participation is not opposed to observation but is a condition for it, just as light is a condition for seeing things, sound for hearing them, and feeling for touching them. (129)

Flexer wants spectators to be aware participants. The form of that participation is important and her manipulation of proximal relations of performer to spectator aim for exchange in a non-representational space, a form of direct address without the sustained role or character she considers more consistent with the concrete register. Her spectators both look and are *looked at*. Flexer sees spectators as intelligent, aware, and able to engage dialogically with the performance; and to facilitate this Flexer’s dancers are expected to a degree to be open to spectator reaction and to use adaptive movement phrasing to allow for variations in response.

The way we process recognition of movement is relevant to how this works as an exchange or dialogue between a seated spectator and a mobile performer. Our ability to mirror movement, make image patterns of it and enter into its intransitive possibilities, takes us into the unexpected, shifting borderlands of performance, where Flexer’s view of the in-between of performance and the everyday is perhaps to be found and which Flexer describes as a membraneous interface between spectator and performance.

In seeking to promote forms of exchange between spectator and performance, Flexer plays with ideas of subjectivity and acknowledges influences from Valerie Briginshaw’s work. Briginshaw writes, in *Dance, Space and Subjectivity*: “when examining dance focusing on body/space relations, attention is drawn to the boundaries of bodies and spaces, where the limits of representation, of embodied subjectivity are forged” (19). Flexer blurs distinctions between the performed and the everyday and the embodied subjectivities they suggest.

A number of questions surround distinctions between types of movement in performance, particularly those movements described as the everyday, pedestrian or quotidian, terms that can at times appear to be instantly interchangeable. It is not necessarily clear what delineates actions in the everyday to distinguish them from other actions, or indeed why all actions are not also events in the everyday. Susan Leigh Foster, in *Choreographing Empathy: Kinaesthesia in Performance*, reminds us that: “both choreography and performance change over time; both select from and move into action certain semantic systems, and as such they derive their meaning from a specific historical and cultural moment” (5). One semantic system, resulting from work associated with the loose collective of the Judson Church, was that by showing the moving body in motion rather than the moving body supposedly expressing something other than itself, a possibility arose for the spectator to recognise the intelligent body, to reflect on movement within themselves, to see correspondences of the everyday.

Seeing the supposedly ordinary alongside physical virtuosity, spectators were also able to appreciate performative potential in both. The inclusion of a vocabulary of movement drawn from the everyday, walking, running, grasping, task repetition, using objects, brought into play new areas of consideration for dance. Ramsay Burt in *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* writes: “rather than trying to find profound metaphors for supposedly universal truths, many of the Judson generation invented allegories of the ordinary and particular. It is the metonymic and allegorical structures of meaning which underlay the new dance of the 1960’s” (92). Burt suggests that metonymic codes are disruptive to accepted norms and ideas of unity. From this destabilisation of universal truths, the ordinary person, the pedestrian, re-emerges not as bit part in an heroic myth but

a distinct element in the complexities of performance, for which physicality has a duration of process, rather than a constant progression towards dénouement. Pedestrian movement becomes revelatory rather than reductive; the virtuosic is not eliminated, it is walking, running, standing still that is seen afresh and in its turn re-defines virtuosity. In this context nothing is ordinary at all.

If, as is being proposed in this thesis, space is a performative potential, never empty or in neutral suspension, and place a site of an emergent self, distinctions between types of movement in the everyday become problematic. One state overlaps and co-exists within the other, continually in a process of mutual exchange. In *The Perception of the Environment* Tim Ingold writes: “a place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there”. He continues: “it is from the relational context of people’s engagement with the world, in the business of dwelling, that each place draws its unique significance” (192). Mike Pearson, in *Site-Specific Performance*, also references Ingold and his view of the performative potential of environment-as-taskscape, which, by definition, is always in dynamic movement. Pearson expresses relationships of performance to the everyday as follows:

Through our passage, movements, actions, encounters, we constantly mark our material surroundings. These are the authentic traces of the performance of everyday life: the result of routine, tradition, habit, accident, event, social ritual, of long-term evolution and unconnected short-term ruptures and singularities, of nearness, of dwelling. (43)

However, Flexer acts on the idea that the in-between is transitional. It is not a separate site, but moments in processes of exchange. It is in entering these processes that she hopes the spectator will begin to consider the connections between dance and the everyday, and grasp resulting implications for their own movement.

Such perceptions are co-dependant on the contribution which movement makes to the formation of self and how it patterns and reflects us. As a result of the dynamic processes involved, there is a correspondence binding the interiority of the apparently absent body, its interoceptive state where the action of neurons helps effect the plasticity of self, to the proprioceptive and exteroceptive states which enable the sensory systems to exchange experience. As active participants rather than passive recipients, we make, condition and adapt our being-in-the-world and shape our perception of the world in which we participate. We are always immersed through participation. We move within the conditions of an environment of light, texture, weight, air, earth. Our ability to use recognition of movement between ourselves and others extends to understanding our own movement in relation to the environment we in-habit and pass through. Part of that understanding is the way in which we can make symbolic representation of our progress through sensation; a way of placing our affordance of the objects we encounter and observe in a wider context of understanding movement as image. We project beyond the images we see; the image is not limit, but a way beyond, a potential for extension. It is affect as process. And if we speak of borders, as Flexer does, between the everyday and the performance, it is valid only if we see those borders as permeable membranes, not as a kind of flat cartographic description – here me, there you – here this state, there that. Dance can cross the permeable border between our selfhood in the world of our everyday, aiding our potential understanding of it. We take the movement of self and its performance and make of it a conscious examination of possibility, of new ways of orienting things, of exchanging action between the everyday and the not-everyday. As Grosz suggests, it is here, where the in-between is a breakdown of cohesion and unity, that identities are subject to states of multiple becoming.

Becoming is often a fragile concept to apply to the solidity and presence of a dancer’s physical alterity particularly when associated with Flexer’s work. What is also evident in Flexer’s work is the way she constantly tests the ground of our understanding of identity. If in *The Living Room*, for example, we encounter one of her dancers, or herself, announcing that they are an armchair, a television, a wardrobe and then following it with a repeated movement motif, we might immediately suppose it to be a representation of the object, some distillation of its use, its properties, its possible associations with everyday life. It is not long before that ground is completely undermined, showing “cohesion and unity” are at best transient. Identities are swapped, exchanged, negotiated, and challenged. We/they are not what they/we thought. Through this uncertainty, we are encouraged to reflect on our own patterns of habitation, where our own shifting borderlands are. Flexer offers a distillation of dynamic processes of becoming whilst the hybrid form of things that runs through Flexer’s work inevitably mean there are uncertainties concerning identity. Such uncertainties are clearly apparent in *The Living Room,* which the next section of this chapter looks at in more detail.

## Dance As A Space For Living.

*The Living Room’s* preview performance was at the Place on the 8 March 2010. Since that date, it has been performed widely in the UK and abroad. Flexer describes *The Living Room* as “the most inviting (and perhaps most hopeful or celebratory) work of the three, [which] proclaims theatre as a space for living” (106). When explaining the structure of *The Living Room*, Flexer says that it has complex choreographic constructions, requiring specific bodily effort but also points out that this is not to do with the interpretation of set patterns of movement, but a complex of interactions and investigations, negotiations and subversions by the performers. During an interview she gave a description of techniques used in the rehearsal studio as follows:

We did a lot of exercises about breaking or folding, the idea of collapsing through the joints. We did a lot of sending your extremities, so your extremities are directing and then finding an internal movement so maybe your rib cage, or your liver, or your heart – a play between your external and internal body; and we did a lot of collapsing and contact where people manipulate you, and finding movement coming to you rather than directing it (Personal interview. 30 September 2013).

She went on to describe manipulation further, describing how different qualities of movement emerge from it. She also described the dancers moving while being observed, an important element of her work in performance – her dancers never make formal exits and this is seen in *The Living Room* in the way things are observed by the dancers from within and from the margins. Everything is looked at and this can produce a quite menacing atmosphere at times, although Flexer describes it as “the most inviting” piece in the triptych. The witty exchanges and humorous play evident in *The Living Room* make it seem inviting, but the dancers’ use of tactics for social acceptance remain destabilising, part of a conscious spectacle. As Guy Debord observes in *Society of the Spectacle*: “all individual reality has become social, in the sense that it is shaped by social forces and directly dependent on them. Individual reality is allowed to appear only if it is *not actually real*” (11). The effect is to pose questions about identity, about selfhood, about how we establish a sense of presence and how this self-presence is physically constituted.

Flexer’s work can be seen as oriented within becoming-nomadic, and she writes that: “*The Living Room,* as the title of the work suggests, interrogates the notion of home and the traversing between the domestic/private and the public and hence the informal and formal, *the everyday* and performance” (191). The dancers, like Flexer herself, are un-homed, unplaced, constantly establishing and then dissolving ideas of fixed presence and role. They are often restless and fragmented. There is an edge in the movement, running just below the establishment of tactics and strategies of possession and dwelling. This edge is felt in the dialogues they establish with each other and with the spectator. It is not always comfortable.

Flexer, drawing on her own direct experience, has a very specific position on ‘un- home’. She writes:

The *unhomed* refers to the displaced experience of the migrant, immigrant or a hybrid subject, who through the transition across borders occupies the *in- between* spaces of outside and inside, the straddling of two cultures, at once familiar and strange, creating dissonance and displacement within the subject. (192)

Flexer links ‘un-home’ directly with Homi Bhabha’s concept of the generation of new cultures from cross fertilisation in mobile multi-cultural and multi-lingual societies.[[10]](#endnote-11) She said that: “I feel an affinity with people that are kind of mixed or migrant or in that situation of being a minority – and how do you negotiate your culture in a more dominant or majority culture?” One result of such negotiations is Rosi Braidotti’s proposition of multi-layered, nomadic subjectivity. Un-home does not refer to homelessness, but to the possibility of transitions, of being able to establish a place for habitation rather than a search for permanent presence.

In this context, *The Living Room* helps examine how the moving self establishes a sense of place and is in turn established by it, becoming both the potential for and site of performance. Typically, Flexer’s restless dancers are engaged in short bursts of contact, sometimes suggesting conflict. They employ tactics of subversion and claim/counter claim. Though these often end in moments of stillness and almost-intimacy against another body or in facing the spectator, such expressions are as quickly and decisively dissolved as they appear in the first place. Where the self of Lee’s dancers, for example, is often present in an empathetic exchange with a particular environment, Flexer’s dancers are vividly present as individuals for short bursts, animated presences that are rarely still, claiming and occupying the environment as transients, wresting habitation from what they seem to indicate is occupied space, demanding a place for self.

Flexer declares herself ambivalent about ideas of space. Her response when asked about her use of space was to say: “I don’t really use space or think about it too much as an idea. I think as it coming more from the performers who will then define the space. I might think that, say, we might have some chairs and then I think about the chairs a lot and what that means” (Personal interview. 30 September 2013). This is characteristic because Flexer exhibits the same restlessness towards intellectualising her practice as she does in her practice itself. Space, for her, is something where dance happens and which in some senses is constructed, or given concrete if temporary form by the dance that takes place. She explains that: “The space comes later. Those questions that I have from my performers will then define the space”. Perhaps Flexer’s ambivalence is also because ideas of space have no particular meaning for her in her constant traversing of ground. Here it is important to repeat again that I do not understand space to be empty, a thing to be filled by various forms of activity, a passive receptacle waiting for human arrival and inscription. One of the effects of establishing and performing place is the generation of a momentary pulse of clear definition within an already suffused space. In *Architecture From The Outside*, Elizabeth Grosz advises that we: “refuse to conceptualise space as a medium, as a container, as a passive receptacle whose form is given by its content, and instead to see it as a moment of becoming, of opening up, of proliferation, a passage from one space to another space, a space of changes, which changes with time” (118).

Where Flexer’s dancers operate is inevitably linked with their own fragmented associations and moments of clarity, their uncertainties and their moments of watchful stillness. If Flexer is ambivalent about how she conceptualises the idea of space, it is partly also because her work is indeed, as Grosz suggests: “a passage from one space to another space, a space of change” (118). In making this passage, a sense of self is continually presented, modified, adapted and quite often solitary.

Like Flexer herself, the dancers are frequently in preparation to leave. Furniture, objects, utensils, are obstacles, things to move, displace, re-arrange, and discard. Nothing seems permanent and, in direct contrast to Lee there is no feeling of revelation or of the grounded, textured duration from extended elemental horizontals and verticals of Lee’s grounded childhood. Flexer’s references have more absurdist existentiality. The dancers are always on the border, gaining entry, expecting an exit, almost confronting exit as inevitable. As an indication of the way Flexer perceives her work in the in-between, her dancers do not occupy static ground; everything is malleable, changing. Flexer’s trademark use of gaze between performers themselves, and performers and the audience is frequently employed to establish fleeting moments of occupation, but also to signal another passage towards fragmentation. “I am here, but not for long!” might be an apt vocalisation for these moments. Fleeting occupation is not between one state and another but a processual enduring of transitions. Transition itself seems to become one of the most familiar and solid of things. When looking at how agency operates in Flexer’s work, the uncertainties, departures and arrivals of her dancers can be seen as expressions of a search for their own narratives, attempts to allow themselves to be protagonists, to realise parts of their multi- layered subjectivities.

The title of the piece itself contains layers of meaning, suggestion and reference so that *The Living Room* is indeed a ‘living room’, part of a potentially larger structure, a place where people are, a place where relationships build and dissolve - and more darkly, as Flexer suggested, a reference to the difficulties associated with ideas of homeland and possession. Referring to *Shrink’d*, Flexer said:

we were looking at boundaries as a recurring question, because we were looking at sort of identity, and who gets to speak and who doesn’t get to speak…It had a lot of dead bodies and things so we were looking at, or we were making reference to world events without being specific. It could be people taken away out of the Gaza Strip. (Personal interview. 2 February 2014)

She went on to say: “we had a little manifesto in the piece … I come from a place, that’s what I said, I come from a place where there is a fence or there is a wall and we call it a fence, we don’t actually accept that it is a wall”. Flexer’s own background is clearly cut into the texture of her dances.

*The Living Room* is in many ways exactly what its title states, a defined space into which Flexer situates her dancers and herself in what appears to set be the setting up of a series of domestic views. Flexer writes of this that:

The title *The Living Room* is suggestive of a domestic space yet on entering the theatre the audience finds a wholly undomesticated ‘rehearsal’ or performance space. At once expectations and notions of home are de- familiarised. Nevertheless, the audience throughout the work is made to feel ‘at home’, through the informal welcome of Alonna’s dance, the prologue and the informality with which the performers interact with each other and the audience. (193)

The dancers take on roles as bookcase, armchair, television and then proceed to place themselves in positions partly negotiated or approved by the others. In the final epilogue section of *The Living Room*, instructions are given to the lighting technician to reduce the lit area by percentages. The visible area shrinks until, finally, a small patch of light is left into which small toy-sized models of each piece of furniture that the dancers had earlier incarnated are carefully placed. It is a clever and unsettling sequence. As spectators, we are peering into a playroom, an unoccupied doll’s house where implications ripple on, asking questions of what we have seen and where we have seen it and what our own roles have been.

At its preview on 9 March 2010, *The Living Room* was preceded by a long warm-up conducted on the formal performance area. The Place main studio was set up with the usual banked seating facing an empty rectangle, with lighting and sound equipment visible.

Movement in the form of an extended warm-up/game was underway as spectators took their seats. Flexer says that this is an informal welcome signalled by the element of play involved, indicated at the start of this chapter. However, with Flexer’s work it is always best to suspend ideas of conventionality when thinking of a performance area. What appears to be familiar ground soon dissolves and re-shapes itself through the impact of the dancers’ movement, which Flexer sees as decisive in shaping space.

Flexer maintains that she blurred the idea of a starting point for *The Living Room* by having several possible starts, one of which was Flexer’s daughter, Alonna, who was three years old at the time, leading a game of follow-my-leader. The effect is amusing and unsettling at the same time. Amusement comes in the form of immediate comparison between the child’s movement and that of the dancers, who are attempting to faithfully reproduce the movements they see from the child. It became apparent that the child’s play soon defeated the dancers’ attempts to copy. Changes of direction, rhythm, pace, are so instant and unexpected that the dancers individually and collectively are sometimes caught out. Physical training and virtuosity sometimes dissolve in front of a person who sits, scampers, gets up, jumps, and changes direction in a gleeful instant. Roles are reversed, the seemingly expert, at least in expectation, almost appear clumsy. It is the child’s movement that captures attention. Textures and distances are seemingly altered at will, so that the child’s comparatively small compass seems to contain within it all the dancers, cramped in close proximity. The dancers are also watching Alonna carefully. She is observed, though the observation is punctuated by expressions of amusement and surprise from the dancers at times. It is also the start of watching and being watched that runs through *The Living Room*, and sets conditions for shifting identities. Alonna, in her play movement, is also free of expectation whereas the dancers are sucked more and more into parodies of the child’s movement. Was there an aspect of idealisation of the child’s apparent freedom deliberately set against the trained bodies of the dancers in a game that is based on copying?

The juxtaposition of a child playing with movement and a dancer moving in imitation raised a number of questions. Why was this being done? How many times would it be done? Was the child already following a path laid down? Was she expressing herself through play or following a procedure? Discussing these questions in a short interview at The Wessex Dance Studios in Winchester on 6 April 2014, Flexer confirmed that initially the element of play was uppermost for Alonna. The passage of time from the first performances of *The Living Room* to that point had seen a marked change in which Alonna had “begun to layer structures of movement which were learnt, copied, expected, favoured as opposed to those which were apparently more immediate, more instinctual”. The now school-age child’s movement had become much more consciously layered with social expectations, conformities and preferences.

The playful opening section then gives way to something more formal and apparently familiar through the dimming of house lights, hushing of voices, change of pre- performance atmosphere, the shuffling and re-arranging of things, switching off phones and so on familiar to any performance-goer. Flexer immediately plays with this change, starting with a prologue and introduction spoken into a microphone. The performance and performers are in this way signalled, the future actions recognised as fictional, as play. Having already disrupted the expectations of the spectator entering the venue, Flexer provides an unfamiliar opening to a piece of dance performance and as mentioned above, nor is it absolutely clear whether this is now the actual opening of the piece. Even in the introduction of the performers Flexer blurs the boundaries of exactly who the dancers are, what their role will be. This is accomplished through use of direct address from all concerned in humorous exchanges about who takes what role and where on the supposed performance area they would be. Flexer destabilises the spectators’ expectations and in so doing opens up for the spectator a different form of relationship with her work. Initial expectations are replaced first by amused confusion, and then by a real questioning of what is actually being presented and what role the spectator plays in that.

## No Mute Bodies.

The close proximity of spectators to dancers in Flexer’s work offers the spectator a particularly visceral experience and Flexer’s work makes full use of that opportunity to examine proximal relations. The sheer effort involved is transmitted through the sound of bodies in movement and in contact, cadences of breathing made under exertion, shaping of musculature, the clarity of weight brought to bear on limbs placed in precarious relationship to balance, the sweat of extended physical engagement; all of these become clearly apparent. The term embodiment takes on a more present corporeal aspect, with Flexer’s stripping away of possible illusion. Flexer’s dancers are indeed physically highly articulate, and Flexer exploits this by linking the production of bursts of virtuosity to aspects of everyday physical exertion. Something immediately accessible is transmitted, a shared experience of the effects of physical commitment, a more earthy sense of the dancers’ self- presence.

Throughout *The Living Room* the dancers are involved in use of the spoken word, and this is part of their expressive physicality, not simply utterances or delivered lines. Cooper Albright asks of this combination of spoken word and movement:

What happens to the bodily identity of a dancer when it is accompanied by an autobiographical voice – a verbal “I” that claims a subjectivity of its own? How closely intertwined with its own physical reality is the “self” of that dancing body? (125)

Flexer does not allow this to be a straightforward proposition of exchange between the spoken voice and the dancing body. The voice itself is a physical expression and as Cooper Albright points out: “voice … immediately calls forth bodily presence, and recognises the performative nature of that presence. Starting with a breath deep in the diaphragm that rises up the throat” (124). Production of sound is also a complex of operations in the shaping and placing of the tongue, lips, mouth, with the sound itself emerging as a burst of displacements of air and moisture. The sound of the voice is conditioned by the physical properties of the body that produces it, as well as through those that receive it. In close proximity, the effort of production, and the minute animations of the speaker’s body add to the overall sense of an embodied, emergent presence.

Throughout its performance, *The Living Room* provides examples of a number of different modes of spoken word. There are revelations*,* invitations, challenges, interjections, questions, a manifesto, an epilogue, and exchanges between Flexer as author and other dancers. Characteristically each shift of emphasis, delivery and purpose is clearly structured, carefully weighted and interwoven with the movement; and this interweaving is clear even when the dancers are notionally still. They listen as attentively as they observe. Because Flexer sees the delivery of spoken word as part of an overall texture of movement and because it is also so involved in hybrid identity through use of different languages, the dancers project their text with clarity and sensitivity. Their movements speak with different voices. In response to being asked about the use of words in her work, Flexer immediately deflected the idea, saying: “I don’t consider myself at all a text person, but I do write quite a lot” (Personal interview 30 September 2013). She went on to explain:

I think text, the first thing is about the ability to directly affect and be in contact with the audience. And it [the text in *The Living Room*, my clarification] is often funny and it creates some kind of effect for performers so that they get some kind of feedback. And I think for me it is to give you something when you see it so that there is a kind of other layer in some ways, so that maybe movement would otherwise only be read in a certain way and it just gives it a little more depth.

Placing the spoken word as an active and dynamic part of exchanges between spectator and performance also suggests it occupies a role in pointing to Flexer’s overall understanding of the in-between. She writes that:

Playing between expectation (what the work is supposed to be) and realisation … points to the *in-betweens* of the choreographer and the performers, the performers and the audience and both performers and audience members and the work itself. How the meaning of the work emerges in the negotiation and exchange between all parties. (28)

Flexer sees the use of a spoken prologue form in particular as a “signature feature” of her work. Flexer describes it as multi-functional as well as a specific example of how the spoken word is part of her focus on the in-between. Flexer is not alone in using either the prologue, or the spoken word as a form of autobiography for the dancing figure. This technique, as Cooper Albright says: “change [s] the dynamic of the objectifying gaze” in “an art form that traditionally glorifies the mute body” (120). What is particular to Flexer is the combination of methods she uses to draw attention to the multi-layered textures and directions of sound in dance. She sees it as giving the spectator “clues to how to read or decode the work” (170).

Flexer spoke of the prologues being delivered “close to the frame, in-between the auditorium and the main central stage area”, and in the three pieces making up her triptych she varies the positioning of the prologue delivery along the margins: right front on *The Living Room*, front left in *Doing, Done and Undone*, and placed in one of the corners of the square version of in-the-round she uses for *Shrink’d*. Flexer also sees her employment of the prologue as a demystifying technique consistent with her claim that she uses elements of the V-effekt in her work. In live performance, each of these three pieces do in fact invite the spectator into a more informal relationship with the dancers, even introducing dancers by name or nickname - except of course that, again characteristically, this information may or may not be reliable. Flexer summarises the prologues as follows: “they spatially (and temporally) act as a bridge, fraying the fourth wall and intimating a shared or porous space between the stage and the auditorium, audience and performer, the performance spilling over its edges onto the audience’s designated space” (170).

Flexer avoids associating the spoken prologue with a form of hierarchical statement, in which she is seen as the omniscient choreographer. The dancers respond to what she says and are invited to do so. The mix of subversive humour and revelation also invites the spectator to enter into the prologues on an active basis. Flexer suggests this encourages “reflection in the spectator, emphasising the transitions between action, reflection, sound and silence” (30 September 2013). An example of this taken from *Doing, Done and Undone*, has Flexer addressing the spectators as follows:

This is *Undone*, where we occasionally copy Aya, some better than others [*gestures at herself*] - we have some love duets so you can try and spot those. We also have some love text in Arabic and Hebrew so you can try and figure out which one’s Arabic and which one’s Hebrew or if you understand those languages you could just … listen. (171)

Flexer hopes for a complex set of recognitions from spectators in response to the prologue form, but she does not leave this to chance and the example given here prompts the spectator to recognise and reflect on particular aspects of the dance. It also points to the individuals dancing, encouraging the spectator to see them as more than an expression of aesthetic movement. Discussing this in the context of the manifesto that is delivered in *The Living Room*, she said that: “it was all sort of relating to theory and looking at directing your body or being in charge of your body, being in charge and manipulating other people”. The full text of the prologue shows something a little different. It is tongue in cheek, and delivered from a disguised catalogue, into a microphone, with Flexer speaking at an angle to the spectators. The humour that twists in and out of the piece is apparent and everything is designed to subvert certainty, as these extracts show:

This is our manifesto:

There’s not going to be any deconstruction or reconstruction. Unless we reference some early modern dance pioneers, preferably dead. There will be construction followed by more construction: basically, we’re going to dance, and you’re going to watch …

There will be quoting of songs we like, even though it's been done before, and even though some of them are fairly obscure Israeli pop songs. There will be some knowing winks at the audience and stealing of the show and cheesy jokes, but no jazz hands, not even subliminal ones. There will be no handstands, no headstands, no bandstands, no standing ovations, not much standing of any kind …

There will be no dancing with chairs, under chairs, over chairs, no throwing of

chairs no musical chairs, no mistreating of chairs, no chair misconduct …

But there will be time to reflect on how this work sits within the wider

context of world events and interdisciplinary practice as well as time to

consider its discursive elements in terms of notions of identity,

performativity, witnessing and living ...

There will be some text There will be live music. There will be silence …

The will be no audience participation

Just a simple adult acknowledgement that we’re in this together …

There will be questions

There will be some eyebrows raised

There will be overlong speeches and manifestos There will be an end. (248)

There is a long solo in *The Living Room* in which one of the dancers, Lyndsey McConville, performs what at the start appears to be an autobiographical text. This is accompanied by movements that follow the pattern of the earlier furniture motifs, accompanying each statement with a movement signature. Flexer describes this technique as punctuating the text and suggests that it offers contrasting and complimentary readings. Flexer writes of this section in general that:

McConville’s solo involves her speaking the text in the future, present and past tenses in conjunction with moving. The text could be construed as [auto] biographical yet the play with tenses suggests it is hypothetical or fictional. It contains the elements of a potential life story: “I’m going to go home, I am home, I’m unhomed, I am going to get married, I am married, I was married, I will have three children, I have three children, I’ve had three children, I’m going to have a hit record, I have a hit record, I’ve had a hit record … I’m going to change the world, I’m changing the world, I’ve changed the world. (179)

As Flexer points out, the mixture of tenses questions the authenticity of the content, an effect that is emphasised when the claims become more and more part of fantasy, or fantasy mixed with more mundane, recognisable, everyday concerns and movements, for example: “I’m going to touch the floor, I’m touching the floor, I’ve touched the floor … I’m going to do a move, I’m moving, I’ve moved” (179). Flexer describes this as text that “refers back to the concreteness of the dancing body. The portraiture therefore interweaves and inscribes the dancer as both embodied, physical body and reflexive subject” (180).

Flexer ensures that spoken text is carefully interwoven into an overall movement structure, where the physicality and texture of the spoken word adds to the richness of the movement*.* This provides a juxtaposition of textures and rhythms. She uses the first language of her performers and herself at times to add further layers to the textures, as well as indicating the hybrid multiple subjectivity of the speaker. Flexer understands and makes use of the physicality needed to produce speech, as well as recognising the overall density and movement of sound both adding to the sense of embodiment in the dancers. The dancers are flesh and blood that communicate and act as themselves directly as well as the fictional images of themselves that exist side by side.

In this area, as in others, the dancers’ own interpretations and interventions impact on the material and include exchanges with Flexer herself over her role as notional author. Flexer’s deliberate blurring of supposed boundaries between perceived roles enables the spectator to enter into and share the dialogues taking place. The spectator is challenged to locate the identity of the dancer, the ground for the dance and their own relationship to what takes place. The dance potentially becomes a mirror for the spectator’s awareness of their own processes of performance of self. I suggest that what happens is that the spoken word locates itself within a conflict of expectations, a conflict the spectator is invited to resolve individually. Flexer explains that:

The predominantly movement driven sections in *The Living Room* … emphasise functionality alongside the incorporation of everyday behaviour and gesture and much visible dialogue and exchange between the dancers (while they are dancing). These sections make the core of the work and exist *in-between* representation and embodiment. (18)

Flexer intends movement overall, including the movement of spoken text, to present each dancer in the state of becoming suggested by Valerie Briginshaw, when she writes:

It [bodies seen as becoming] … recognises the non- fixity and instability of subjectivity, such that the subject never reaches a stable state of being which can be fixed in binary opposition, it rather has the possibility of fluctuating in the spaces in between. (18)

## Agency in the Fabric of Presence.

The dancers’ claims and counter-claims, their assertions and exchanges are often fragments of longer dialogues, interweaving with unresolved sections of movement, the one interrupting or commenting on the other. Flexer’s dancers operate in a continuous destabilisation of their own solidity, a form of deterritorialization. Both embodiment and representation of that embodiment emerge out of or refer to those everyday behaviours and gestures that Flexer favours. It is a process through which use of the spoken word accompanies a search for elusive alterity and agency. It is a process to which impermanency and plasticity are integral. The use of spoken word provides a quality of experience which reveals another thread in a fabric of presence within which agency establishes itself through conscious engagement in process itself. It is through this understanding of agency that alterity can be seen to emerge. The one is the consequence of the other.

In *The Living Room*, the spoken word and the entwined movement phrasing also retain an aspect of theatricality, of conscious performance. Spoken passages and interventions are carefully structured and delivered whilst maintaining the overall pattern of sound as a movement texture. Delivery of the spoken word is done with attention to weight and expression. At one and the same time the combination seems to confer solidity while almost at once taking that away. Flexer considers that:

Using different modes of signification in my works, in particular the interfacing of text with movement, makes use of the constitutive as much as the antagonistic relationship of text and image. While both text and movement offer clues about the performer/s these converge and collide, problematising a single understanding of subject. (179)

After the child’s play that opened the performance the dancers’ own games over position, movement phrasing, and exchange of roles come from a more exposed, vulnerable position. Once the question has been posed about whose self the movement expresses, its implications permeate the social games that follow. Flexer does not usually present answers. She reveals processes, prompts realisations and uncovers similarities. Writing of the process she uses in rehearsal and development, for example, Flexer suggests that: “as a methodology it [improvisation] was used as a way of honing dancers’ kinaesthetic empathy and extending and challenging their habitual movement patterns” (226). This challenge lies in finding where the dancers’ own alterity lies amongst the habitual patterns that both training and the everyday behaviours produce. Alterity is not some removed state, or a sublimation or revelation; still less is it contained in an idealisation of an originating form to which we seek to return, the discovery of some pure essential core that had been overwritten. It is something closer to a more alert and aware consciousness of one’s processes of embodiment. Flexer reveals that:

Significantly, although dancers commented on how their movement vocabulary was enriched by the process, they also pointed out that they found it impossible to fully emulate the Other. They felt their impressions of one another could never truthfully represent the Other. Therefore as dancers in trying to emulate the Other, we realised inherent differences, but at the same time discovered something of the Other and something new of ourselves. (226)

In the idea that there is something new to discover, some fresh aspect of alterity, Flexer points to a process that allows moments of agency to emerge from physical exploration. The

dancers are given the opportunity to become protagonists in the ongoing processes of their physical narratives.

Following the extended warm up to *The Living Room*, the dancers re-enter and stand facing each other across the width of the formal performance space. The dancers then part turn and face the spectators, each looking quizzically, as if to ask what is expected. Flexer begins to invite each to take on a role – invitations met with both acceptance and refusal, to the spectators’ amusement. The roles are as pieces of furniture, after all. Each dancer, after announcing their role as a particular piece, proceeds to make a short movement statement setting up an expectation that this will become a signature throughout the piece – a sort of ‘telephone-ness’ for the telephone, ‘sofa-ness’ for the sofa. Naming a day and occupying a particular position accompanies the role adoption so that each supposedly has a time, a place and an identity, personally established and confirmed vocally with others. Characteristically this apparent order and polite exchange is quickly subverted. Positions, signature movements, days are contested, changed, exchanged. A pattern is established of expectations not met, normalities undermined, habitation contested, and time made fluid. The dancers enter and are moved, establish places and movements which are verbally approved of by the others and then immediately changed. A verbal formality accompanies every move with thanks from those moved from their chosen positions, acknowledgement from those who have moved them, all the paraphernalia of social accommodation. Yet this is itself quickly subverted by those leaving the space being recalled and assigned a new role – the sofa is told that it is now the armchair, the telephone the bookcase, and so on. The signature movements are exchanged, the former sofa, now an armchair, completes the armchair’s coda. It is a fast moving sequence concerned with the establishment of boundaries within a social space during which claims to alterity or to agency, and so control of personal narrative, dissolve. Using familiar, everyday objects associated with day-to-day living, Flexer is making provocations about the way we ourselves establish a sense of permanence and habitation, not only in the furniture but also in the form of verbal exchange.

These opening exchanges, with the dancers addressing each other by their ‘real’ names, increase in pace until what appeared strangely ordered, obeying the rules of a complex social game, disintegrates. Paradoxically, the dancers themselves individually emerge out of a growing anarchy as distinct physical presences. Valerie Bringinshaw argues that: “In a very fundamental and immediate way dance presents representations of bodies in space, their relations to space and the other bodies” (5-6), and this is demonstrated here. Another perspective that fits with Flexer’s view of dancers making a space for dance is provided by Sarah Rubidge, in *Dance Spaces*: *Practices of Movement* when she writes that: “action within a space can render it ‘choreographic’; that is, shift attention away from any overriding functional purposes of the space to the movement taking place in the space”, she considers that this is “movement that transforms the material space into an active, dynamic flow of relational forces, vectors and tensions”(21). While I agree that “movement transforms the material space”, I maintain that this transformation is from the performative potential of space in which there is always already a “dynamic flow of relational forces” to coalesce into a specific, performed place, in which the equally performative potential of the dancers’ bodies has become performed self- presence. The dancers may be playing with ideas of social space, furniture and social tactics, but the overall effect of this humorous descent into confusion serves to displace (‘un-home’) them from their expected roles within the performance. They are effectively deterritorialized.

It is after this increasingly absurdist parody of social tactics surrounding the furnishing of a room, that Flexer presents her manifesto to the spectators. The Flexer manifesto (see pages 189-90 above) places everything (except the promise that there will be an end to *The Living Room*) on an insubstantial, shifting base. The Manifesto section is immediately followed by Flexer calling out one dancer’s name and receiving a reply from two others, who are then both asked if they are that person, if they can speak, if they are there. The spectator is never sure which of the answers given are accurate, if any. At a later stage the dancers are asked to give personal information about their identities as individuals, by indicating if a description about sexual orientation, family life, living arrangements and other similar pieces of information fits them, and the results are similarly open to question.

In this opening section, as throughout *The Living Room*, the use of spoken word that is integral to the phrasing and realisation of movement, is also part of the dancers’ attempts to establish some brief moments of agency and alterity within accepted social codes: to perform their identity. This shifting ground of identity and habitation is not separate from, but part of the utterance of information, the texture within the sound of words that become as insubstantial as the movement accompanying each supposed adopted role, whether of name, inclination or purpose. These elements dissolve into one another, intentionally interdependent and intentionally unreliable. If the dancers will not own a name, actually or metaphorically, what establishes them must be found elsewhere, with, as Flexer explains: “the body both revealing and disclosing through the visible as much as hinting at dancers’ somatic experience which is invisible” (29). Is this experience ever made visible? In the establishment of alterity and of agency as interdependent, a resolution of the visible/invisible dichotomy in the moving body occurs. Cut free from assigned, assumed, conventional acceptances about place, duration and utterance, the body emerges as a potent presence, in its place, asserting its identity.

Despite the fact that Flexer considers *The Living Room* the most playful of the three elements of the triptych, it still contains unsettling sections. An example of this is when Karni Postel’s live cello work, accentuated and textured with electronic distortions and feedback, accompanies and signals a new social tension. This is emphasised by measured, plucked single notes. Postel’s playing, itself physically active, establishes a dialogue between movement and sound, often through counterpoint, that is consistent with Flexer’s use of movement and the spoken word. In neither case is one an interpretation of the other, but the recognition of flow, density and movement in the sound itself. This section of *The Living Room* is startling in its sudden change of tone and texture. A combination of fluctuating, strobe-like light and bursts of staccato sound from the amplified and distorted cello adds a level of anxiety to the proceedings. Solos, duets, group movement follow in quick succession, all overseen by those dancers who are not directly involved, momentarily revealed in the shifting light, staring intently at those in movement. It is a section in which humorous subversion has given way to a more naked and vulnerable presence. Alterity and agency are things to be snatched from moments of physical intimacy or asserted in brief occupations in which the dancers’ movement seeks to stabilise the flickering textures of the environment. Here Flexer’s comments about fragility are most clearly evident, and a sense of self as fleeting and impermanent comes to the fore.

The vestiges of game and play can still be detected, but have been changed into something altogether more affecting. As often in Flexer’s work, actual physical contact with another offers brief moments of closeness always pushed away - not rejected, but postponed, or interrupted. Stripped of the social performance of their notional roles, times and places, the dancers become isolated physical individuals. The site of their interaction shifts, focus tightens and the living room space closes in, magnifying the attempts at physical interaction. What the spectator sees is a process of space and dancer mutually constructing identity from potential, self through movement, movement which contributes to the dynamic interchanges between what and where we are.

The closing of this first movement is signalled with Flexer offering to be a reading light: “I’m the reading light – here. Is that OK ?” Immediately, each of the dancers repeats the same words and signatures, all reading lights, then all sofas, bookcases – all the objects in the room. There follows a command “Lights off!” and each dancer is suspended in a repeated bouncing motion, a suspended animation. Flexer offers to leave, followed by the establishment of a new day and the command to switch lights on. This process continues, gradually resulting in each dancer offering to leave the space freely but in fact manoeuvred or manipulated to that position. As this develops there are moments of humour and brief exchanges usually through single words and looks, and the spectator is invited to see this as benign. However there is an element of competition, each spoken repetition of a piece of furniture contested verbally – “I’m the sofa! No. *I’m* the sofa”. Finally the remaining dancer goes through each of the pieces of furniture, movement signatures and declarations, until she is engaged in sequences already blurred by repetition and exchange, combined into one continual expression. Against expectation, it becomes a skilful fusion of what has gone before into a single, dynamic physical presence. The dancer endures, adapts, dissolves and endures again.

## A View From Inside.

Yael Flexer remains insistent that her work is not about taking on roles, or making dance that sets out to use specifically theatrical or virtuosic material, although her work is, at times, both dramatic and demands high levels of training from the dancers with whom she works. Her explorations of the in-between, of hybridity and the ‘un-home’ discussed in this chapter require from her dancers an ability to work under the surface, to allow identity through movement to emerge. This final section of the chapter looks at the responses of Luke Birch and Aya Kobayashi, two dancers who have often worked with Flexer and who both performed in *The Living Room*. The material quoted here is taken from emails to the author from Birch on 15 August 2014 and Kobayashi 22 August 2014 and an interview at The Place with Kobayashi in 22 September 2014.

Birch was expansive about the atmosphere in the studio both on tour and in making the actual material. He referred to the shared sense of ownership and to the sense of fun that permeated the hardest work and it has been commented on in this chapter that a sense of mischief and humour is present throughout the whole triptych. Birch suggests that the working method is in part responsible for this. This atmosphere gave the dancers a freedom to reveal more of themselves while exploring the material. Birch explained that:

a friend did say to me after a show that we looked like a bunch of misfits until we started dancing together. I liked that! Physically we are all quite different and probably not like dancer stereotypes (ballerinas) but there is something about our approach or delivery or aesthetic tendencies that draws us together.

This comment describes quite well the meta-movement of *The Living Room*, in which the dancers fluctuate between individual struggle and bursts of group connection. Kobayashi gave another slant on this in her email when she wrote of a conversation with Flexer:

I think we were talking about female dancers in general and Yael said “I don’t like beautiful dancers, my dancers are not beautiful” and she meant it in a positive way, maybe we were interesting more than beautiful … I am aware that she really isn’t interested in presenting the gender stereotype. She is interested in odd (we say odd because of stereotype of dancer’s figure) body shapes and different races in her casts.

Both Birch and Kobayashi drew attention to the avoidance of stereotyping, to a desire to strip away artifice, and this fits also with Flexer’s desire to involve the spectator in forms of recognition and new bodily awareness. Kobayashi wrote: “I feel we create our own narrative as we perform so that each performance becomes real and finds intimacy and inclusivity with the audience”. The narrative that Kobayashi refers to is of being subject, or protagonist, in those emerging pulses of self-presence suggested throughout this thesis.

Birch and Kobayashi both made reference to the permissions they found to release or explore senses of a self. Birch wrote of Flexer’s choice of dancers who “bring a sense of their own character or personality to the forefront when they are moving”. Importantly he qualified this by writing “I’m not necessarily talking about people that are loud or extroverted [another avoidance of performance stereotyping] … but I think there is a subtleness of presence of self about … the dancers”. Kobayashi wrote in agreement: “Her [Flexer’s] movements/choreographies seem to give dancers room to be comfortable ‘self’. So I feel the permission to be myself … when I am moving. So I am pretty much following my ‘am-ness’ at-the-presence”. The permissions and explorations translate to the performances, where the meta-movement referred to above gives the dancers opportunity to explore, reveal, and of course defend and disguise their self-presence.

Both dancers spoke of the complexity of movement required in Flexer’s work, while also distancing such complexity from a lexicon of taking on roles. Ann Cooper Albright sums up the possible dilemma when she writes that: “verbal and physical discourses concerning form, style beauty, movement phrasing … combine to create a powerful ideology that can dramatically affect a dancer’s own subjectivity” (32). Kobayashi and Birch each indicated a sense of release in Flexer’s work. Kobayashi said that she came from a ballet background

that she struggled with, a background where she was expected to be “a different person, a different figure, often a ‘better’ figure acting as a prince/princess”; and she appreciated that “Yael doesn’t do ‘acting’ and neither do I, but I try to find ways for my expression to be honest to what I am about” (Personal interview 22 September 2014). Birch experienced a sense of discovery through the release that he found working with Flexer. He wrote: “I have a strong sense of individuality and a permission to be myself on stage. I never feel like I am

putting on a mask or pretending to be somebody else”; and he gave a clear description of how this release was maintained in the complexity of the movement:

The dance vocabulary is really fast, technical and complex … the way in which we aim to perform it is with a casual almost pedestrian approach. I think it is in this functionality and simple delivery and execution of the material that … we find a subtle but quite specific rhythm and accent of dynamic and phrasing.

Birch gave a pragmatic assessment of the glances and looks that have been analysed in this chapter when describing how he approached the complexity of movement. While using the word “conversational” to describe the interplay of movement between the dancers and emphasising the need they felt to work together and “check in with each other whilst performing” , Birch also felt he had to “rely on the other dancers to help me through the piece and carry me through”. He did not suggest that this was either the main, or structural reason for the constant exchanges of looks and observations, explaining “this is not to say all the meaningful glances or moments of eye contact are just about me checking I am in the right place”; they emphasise rather that “there is something very grounding in the shared experience”.

The view from inside that Kobayashi and Birch offer describes an ensemble process that provides the opportunity for the dancers to explore acutely what they feel, both individually and collectively. It is movement more authentically linked to their own individual senses of self. Exploration and process dominate. Discoveries of aspects of a self are not presented as end points, but as an examination of possibilities. It is a rich mix of trajectories and potentials, textures and dynamics from dancers that Kobayashi points out are from different races, with body shapes and gender orientation that she felt did not follow what is sometimes thought to be a typical dancer stereotype. Of themselves these qualities are not necessarily precursors of or determinate conditions for explorations of identity, or self, or grounds for revealing multiple subjectivities; but Kobayashi was certain that this was part of Flexer’s artistic vision. Her view is consistent with Flexer’s work overall, concerned with hybridity, un-home, her ideas on performativity and the in-between.

When asked about her experience of hybridity and un-home in her dancing and how this became evident in her exploration of self in movement, Kobayashi began by emphasising that it was her choice to be in a place where she wasn’t brought up. She had placed herself in-between identities and this had led to her feeling a “foreigner when I’m in Japan, but obviously I’m foreigner here too”. She said: “I do feel two parallel identities live in me. There was a question in the voting section in *The Living Room*, ‘Some of us are un- homed’, I raised my hand, Yes I do”. Flexer regards un-home and a sense of hybridity as a continuum of movement between cultures, finding ground rather than being removed from it. Kobayashi and the other dancers are involved in this expression of the in-between both in their performance and their everyday lives. It is an expression of the processual, shifting emergence of pulses of self-presence.

Kobayashi gave a clear indication of her experience of tension between and across the everyday and performance, how this gave rise to a feeling of hybridity, when describing the effect of her speaking Japanese in *The Living Room.* She acknowledged that she found it hard and that she could feel self-conscious, even fake. She wrote: “It might be something to do with the nature of Japanese language. The tone of my voice gets higher when I speak Japanese and the intonation is quite flat compare (sic) to English, so I feel I am exaggerating my expression too much when I project my voice in Japanese”. Kobayashi provided another perspective on how the physicality of the spoken word operates in Flexer’s work when she explained that:

I’m so aware that when language changes, my attitude and mannerism slightly changes from daily life. And I’m speaking from experience in some shift within myself through the last eleven years. I feel I have created my Englishness that doesn’t fit in my traditional, archetypal Aya who speaks Japanese. Speaking Japanese in English context never feels right as I wish. So when I danced the choreographic material in *The Living Room* as I speak Japanese, movement and text didn’t feel integrated.

Kobayashi here reveals from her direct experience the areas that Flexer wishes to explore. She (Kobayashi) struggles with the fluctuations between the performance and the everyday, not as an expression of a fictional role, but as a direct experience of her own hybridity, her own attempt to find a point of equilibrium, and what she described earlier as a possibility to immerse herself in “the permission to be myself … when I am moving. So I am pretty much following my ‘am-ness’ at-the-presence.”

I commented to Kobayashi in the interview at The Place on 22 September 2014, that I found her movement in *The Living Room*, even in the sections where she spoke Japanese, to be grounded, physically solid. She expressed surprise at this and repeated the uncertainties she felt and had expressed earlier in her email. When asked whether, as has been discussed in this chapter, she felt Flexer’s work to be concerned with trajectories of exclusion and entry both within the business of everyday life and in its expression through movement, she broadly agreed. However her sense of an identity remained partially conflicted rather than becoming expressed as a fusion of cultural experiences. She referred to the habitual everyday movements of cultural difference, rather like the way Lee described the puncturing of assumptions about the understanding of *Melt Down* in its performance in Brazil. Nomadic trajectories are not brought to some resolution or stasis, but spiral out from the consequences of hybridity, as with the central whirlpool motif in *The Living Room* where the dancers’ circular running suggests both the centrifugal and the centripetal. Kobayashi was describing her trajectories not as a point of arrival in her own skin, the balance and transformation Lee explores, but as a co-extensive series of presences emerging though never arriving.

Chapters 3 and 4 explore different and at times contrasting aspects of the body’s discourse, presenting distinct routes towards a developing awareness of a sense of self emerging through somatically based dance. Proposals on interaction with the environment also have linked, but varying application, from the rooted, nurturing approach Lee adopts, to the fractured, shifting and unstable ground of Flexer’s in-between, unhomed and nomadic habitations. Both Lee and Flexer are in these chapters to have connections to a vital, material and processual approach, consistent with the posthuman view adopted in the thesis overall. Lee and Flexer also show differing perspectives on what can be understood as alterity and agency. Both provide evidence for a reading of affect contextualised by their practice. These are trajectories that interweave throughout the thesis as part of a developing sense of self. Presence and place continue to be discussed as part of an overall notion of becoming, where processual emergence and plasticity are vital concepts. Both Lee and Flexer’s practice is shown to be firmly supportive of mind/body interdependence. The following chapter is centred around practice undertaken by the author to further investigate self-place-presence and the linked ideas of alterity agency and affect.

# CHAPTER 5: EMERGING NEVER ARRIVING

## Introduction.

This chapter looks in detail at work undertaken by the author in order to specifically explore interactions of self-place-presence. During the course of two projects in 2013 and 2014, and drawing on the work of both Rosemary Lee and Yael Flexer discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, dancers were involved in investigating, interrogating and exploring their own movement practices and training. This was carried out with a growing awareness and appreciation of an interactive environment, rather than as progress solely towards studio or venue performances. The work follows the same somatic principles of alert, aware, intelligent bodies that are consistent threads through the thesis. The dancers’ progress through this investigation and how they access their growing awareness of self through movement, is explained and analysed from their own experiences, points of view and testimony. Each of the dancers explores how their own bodies are sites of unique discourse, processually revealing narratives of singularity in their own sense of self. The process they are involved with offers more evidence of an interdependent relationship between alterity and agency and the way in which affect is linked to this relationship through pulses of self-presence. In keeping with the overall approach of this thesis, it is the process that binds together the various trajectories of the dancers rather than the ‘right’ move or conclusion. The vital and affirming materiality of the body, interacting and co-extensive with the materiality of a developing environment, continues the overall posthuman approach.

*Emerging Never Arriving*, devised and performed in June-July 2014, is the second practical investigation undertaken of self-presence-place following on from *Motion Traces ii* devised and performed in July 2013. Although no claims are made that these projects are necessarily the first of their kind or perhaps that they break new ground, in the context of this thesis they offered the opportunity to carry out practical investigations driven by the overall research. These investigations were positively influenced by some aspects of the work analysed in the case studies of Lee and Flexer. What is particular about the work dealt with in this chapter, is the combination of objectives brought together within a posthuman view of dance. This opened up possibilities for the dancers to experiment with the idea of what Braidotti, in *The Posthuman*, terms: “multiple ecologies of belonging”, enabling them to “acknowledge the collective nature and outward-bound direction of what we still call the self” (193). Both projects provided permissions for the dancers to explore multiple trajectories that were processes of “redefining one’s attachment and connection to a shared world” (193). The dancers’ voices in this chapter are, consequently, central throughout. There was no sense of detachment or supposed neutrality of the body, but instead a search for a direct, and vital material presence stemming from the dancers’ own explorations, discoveries and admissions. The two projects also grew out of each other, not as a linear narrative thread, but as a series of recognitions from the processes involved.

Both dance pieces were collaborative ventures located at the University of Chichester dance department that took similar time periods to research and develop. Initially, three hour sessions were used once a week. These increased in number and duration over the seven week period involved. The dancers themselves, who were at various stages of their dance education, from undergraduate to postgraduate level, were selected after workshop sessions, and discussions with them and with others contributing to the projects. Involvement was a matter of mutual choice rather than selection. My main consideration was to work with people who could enter into a dialogue both with the material and with the research aims. Of equal importance was that the dancers were willing to engage in wider concerns than the accurate completion of choreographies. Seven dancers were involved in the two projects, three of them taking part in both.

It was a feature of the work that the dancers were involved throughout in discussion, exchange of ideas and critiques on the making of the two dances. Working for the second time with some dancers in *Emerging Never Arriving*, enabled a more fluent and economic process to take place. New dancers were able to profit from the experiences and understanding of those returning. All the dancers continued to develop their investigations and increase their familiarity with material between set sessions. Some of this took place using various forms of media contact, particularly posting rehearsal photographs, video clips and discursive commentary on a private Facebook site. The dancers did not want this particular site to be made available beyond its immediate members. The earlier discussion on pages 17-19 concerning the validity and dynamic contribution of recorded material, gains extra purchase here through the continual interaction of the process of the work with its various forms of cyber presence. Five of the dancers contributed written material during both these projects. Links to specially filmed, full versions of *Emerging Never Arriving* and to an archive of rehearsal and development photographs can be found at: [www.emergingneverarriving.wordpress.com](http://www.emergingneverarriving.wordpress.com/).

Both dance pieces had elements of site-specific performance with *Motion Traces ii* developed entirely for performance in Chichester cathedral and *Emerging Never Arriving* moving between an outside courtyard, rooms and corridors surrounding the courtyard and inside the studio. Site-specificity in relation to the two pieces discussed in this chapter is not concerned with a simple removal of performance from one designated auditorium to another, nor solely concerned with performance taking place in spaces not usually associated with performance. Writing in *Site-Specific Performance*, Mike Pearson suggests of site specific performances that: “Places are about relationships, about the placing of peoples, materials, images and the systems of difference that they perform” (13). The two pieces also meet some of the possible fingerprints of site specific performance as set out in Pearson’s table of “Provisional Distinctions” (16-7). In *Motion Traces ii*, in particular, many other things were happening in the cathedral – for example a choir practicing, cathedral employees crossing the adopted performance area to gain access to other areas, a whole array of competing noises from guided tour groups – which meant that: “performance [needed] to establish and proclaim its own presence” (17), and that “effects … intrude[d] and compete[d] for attention” (17). In the cathedral, spectators were incidental in that there were no people accessing the site in the role of regular theatregoers.

The environmental conditions were of immediate concern in both *Motion Traces ii* and *Emerging Never Arriving*. In *Emerging Never Arriving*, both the possibility and the actuality of changes in weather conditions meant that the dancers needed to be able to adapt, respond, and if necessary improvise sections of the eventual performances so that techniques were “invented or appropriated” (17). In *Motion Traces ii* there was the unexpected effect of cracked, chipped and uneven medieval flagstones and other aspects of the cathedrals materiality - the differences in temperature in the huge spaces of the building and the unexpected but elevating sun light that flooded through the stained glass windows during one of the performances. This was unexpected since it occurred at only one period of time and so for the first time for the dancers actually during performance. In both pieces the condition was met that: “At site, it is always as if for the first time” (17).

*Emerging Never Arriving* and *Motion Traces ii* relate to site-specific performance in the context of multiple processes of emergence. Pearson’s check list of provisional distinctions for site-specific performance has a consistent motif of flexibility, movement and fluidity running through it. Overall he describes performance as an “interpretive and representational practice, a medium that can juxtapose, superimpose and elide different orders of material” (44). There is always an implicit question being asked about what site and what kind of specificity, for all sites are specific and it is in the exploration of flows of qualities and textures particular to those sites that new contexts emerge and through which, as Pearson writes: “we might demonstrate for the popular imagination how we ourselves and our immediate environment are part of the historical process, how constituents of material culture exist within overlapping frames and trajectories” (45).

## Searching for a Method.

My approach is influenced by and shares some techniques in common with Flexer, although Flexer’s work demands far more exacting physical technique, which Luke Birch, quoted in the previous chapter, described as a “dance vocabulary that is really fast technical and complex” (email. 15 August 2014). I share with Flexer the belief that the dancers themselves should have a voice and that they are able to feel a strong sense of ownership in the creative process and the dancers were dynamically involved in the whole process of both dance pieces. It is here that I suggest agency in dance movement has a core place. Dancers can be perceived as occupying only a reactive function. I was concerned that the dynamics of the work were based on the active and continual exchange of ideas generated through a variety of methods. Although actual discussion, sharing of ideas on the private Facebook site, and through texting made a considerable contribution, most often exchanges were made through physical dialogues taking place in the studio and other locations. The physicality of these dialogues was a constant reinforcement of our embodied and situated identities.

The interactive process, based as it was on exploration through movement, established a developing awareness of possible multiple subjectivities. Difficulties and confusions that arose, and were expressed through the explorations, were often further considered during individual conversations between the dancers and myself. These conversations led to some realisations by the dancers about the way they used certain techniques and how these realisations could develop a more acute awareness of a sense of self through movement, rather than being responses drawn from repertoire. Particular cases and the effect they had individually and collectively are discussed during the chapter.

All of those involved understood from the outset that the excitement and at times release that individual discoveries provided should not be mistaken for new ground in dance practice being broken. This was not an aim of the work. The dancers were well able to contextualise our approaches and the results that followed within a wider pattern, and the dancers in both projects were aware of and interrogated the received ideas of the obedient dancing body. This awareness provided one base from which they could examine their own practice and find ways of progressing beyond any possible limitations imposed by such perceived obedience.

There was considerable discussion of the sometimes intensely gendered roles assigned to and visible through male/female movement tropes. It became, for example, an integral part of *Emerging Never Arriving* that women lift men rather than men lift women. Women lifting men was not limited to the idea of an actual lift, but to a growing consciousness of ways in which gendered training had had an effect on what each of the dancers considered legitimate repertoire. However, in the event, the dancers did include men actually lifting women in the first, playful section of *Emerging Never Arriving*, where a series of lifts were deliberately destabilised or made precarious. In discussions about body types and expectations some of the dancers expressed their own concerns about their own bodies, and measures they felt obliged to consider in order for them to fit a typical perceived body type for a dancer. Discussions took place about “production, regulation and management of bodies” that operates “through the production of practices, habits, rituals, and institutions” (144) that Grosz refers to in *Architecture From the Outside.*

The power relations of the gendered body are most often seen as a phallocentric expression through which male gendered action is dominant. Grosz writes that: “All cultural production is phallocentric in that it covers over women’s specificity” (40), and this perspective received considerable support from some dancers. Examination of received gender roles was not conducted without aspects of resistance. A key part of the method adopted in various improvisations was to give space and legitimacy to expressions of such resistance, so that wherever possible dancers could feel that they had reached their own resolution of doubts through a dynamic process invested with their ownership. The discussions that took place were never divorced from, or arose in isolation from an embodied exploration of concepts involved.

The question of whether to mount a formal performance rather than stay within the compass of a series of exploratory workshops was discussed against the wider background of investigating accepted practices. The eventual decision to give performances owed much more to a simple collective wish to present to spectators rather than, for example, simply have open unstructured access to workshops. However, the dancers strongly felt that the performance should be carried out in auditoria that, using Pearson’s description, were “porous, with information flowing in and out and through [them]”, and not the usual “singularity of looking and listening” (42). A decision had already been made to film the work as near to the chosen performance date as possible and that the filming should not be done within a convention of simply recording a live performance. Above all, the prospect of a tightly fixed choreography was rejected in favour of an overall structure through which the potential could remain for different trajectories to emerge – for example in the case of changes in weather, or unexpected interventions from campus activities.

The choice of *Emerging Never Arriving* as a title indicated a continuing process taking place, through which ideas of emerging and arriving became blurred and interchangeable. The dancers wanted to suggest that the piece was never finished in a conventional sense, but that the whole process of *Emerging Never Arriving* was an experimental site, with the actual performance to spectators a moment within a continuum. In the actual performance, this was suggested practically in the way spectators were taken through various sites and finally into an auditorium usually associated with performance where the conventional expectations were also subverted. The performance had no formal ending.

The dancers sought and found ways to use what they felt was a shared ‘experimental’ site to investigate ideas of their becoming and their self-presence. In doing this, they were involved in an affirmative and fluid process during which, as Braidotti writes in *Nomadic Theory*, “processes of becoming are collective, intersubjective” (153). While each dancer was concerned with examining their own becoming-self-subject, what emerged was not a unitary examination of individuality, but a collective realisation of inter- subjectivity and the possibility of multiple subjectivities. Within this intense investigation, affinity and empathy became shared properties.

Much of what took place during early studio sessions had a familiar shape. In these early stages warm-up routines, stretching, establishing rhythms and patterns of engagement were imported by each dancer from their years of training and dance experience. Since they were all associated with the same educational establishment, this produced an easy uniformity, a place of safety perhaps. It was here that experimentation began and the notion of questioning becoming self through dance movement was introduced. Although the initial stages saw the dancers responding to requests or instructions given, at the same time each was encouraged to find their own way of responding. It was not an easy or immediate process, since it required a deterritorialization of response on behalf of each of the dancers.

A process was being aimed for that could be situated within what Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* call “expressive qualities [that] entertain variable or constant relations with one another … they no longer constitute placards that mark a territory, but motifs and counterpoints that express the relation of the territory to interior impulses or exterior circumstances” (351). The dancers came to appreciate that we were involved in qualitative and durational exploration rather than the business of functionally completing tasks and learning material. The dancers were encouraged to see how these were evident in the sweaty, stretched, physically demanding business of three-hour sessions. These were the immediate “exterior circumstances” that the dancers experienced, part of the materiality of their movement so that, in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms: “expressive qualities or matters of expression enter shifting relationships with one another that express the relation of the territory they draw to the interior milieu of impulses and exterior milieu of circumstances” (350). The process of deterritorialization lies within the dynamism of such a process, the continual negotiation that takes place between the moment of deterritorialization and the establishment of new territory – which itself is always already unstable ground.

It was understood from the outset that *Emerging Never Arriving* would not involve characterisation, role playing, linear narrative structures or direct interpretation of music or sound. Nothing remained within fixed or familiar territory, with the accompanying expectations of specific kinds of organisation and definitions. The narrative of becoming- self-subject and what might emerge from this with respect to each dancer, individually and collectively, required a development of awareness that departed from some of the expectations with which the dancers arrived. A more holistic approach was developed in each session which came to be regarded as processually related to performance occupying the same quality of aware, intelligent body exploration. Initially, the dancers still found working with music or sound of some sort helpful at the start of each session.[[11]](#endnote-12) This was made into a game with quite unexpected and at times deliberately challenging material being used. The idea of what was ‘helpful’ was itself challenged. The dancers became less dependent on sound as a simple trigger mechanism for rhythms, atmospheres and emotional direction.

The dancers were asked to begin to develop a very specific consciousness of their own bodies so that no routine, imported or developed, remained familiar for long. They

often adapted an aspect of a routine so that it lost its restrictive framing and became a form of fluent investigation. For example, a change of pace, from walking to running, was transposed into a keener awareness of accompanying changes of airflow over the body, textures of surfaces under different impacts, as well as the changes in movement relating to their own bodies. The concept of ‘warm-ups’ as a separate framing was eventually abandoned.

Any instructions given and suggestions made during the first two or three workshops still elicited responses from the obedient body produced through training, but the dancers quite soon moved away from instruction dependency into self-designed movement, stemming from the particular needs of any given session. Instructions gave way to discussions and from these, the dancers’ own interpretations and approaches mixed with the overall process. One outcome of this was that the dancers were often questioning what ground they were on. As a result differentiation between the supposed function of one location and another, what was a place for dance and what was not, became blurred examples of which can be seen in figure 5, on page 213. The seating, exterior corridors, doorways, areas where dancers were used to waiting for timed entrances or exits, the technical gallery, behind the cyclorama curtain, these kinds of divisions were discarded, not without a fair degree of outright play involved; the element of play remained throughout, incorporated into the structure of *Emerging Never Arriving.*

As a result of the dancers’ interrogation of what was a place for dance, the studio was stripped of curtains, flats, and similar materials, leaving only raked seating that was permanently fixed and the lighting bars, fixtures, supports and lamps. Consequently, the cyclorama wall was fully uncovered as a large expanse of white brickwork, and double doors were revealed on one wall and exits into access corridors on another. None of this was thought to be novel in a wider context but the dancers were aware that, as Sarah Rubidge writes in *Dance Spaces: Practices of Movement*: “the design of the material spaces with which we engage can affect both our behaviour within the space and the detail of how we see (and feel)” (29). Changes came as a direct result of the way in which the dancers approached their own routines and how they began to link becoming-self-subject to what a place of dance might be. Rubidge writes that: “the movement of individuals and entities (either alone or as part of an ensemble), and the space they move within are … central to the generation of choreographic space. It is this that generates what we might call a ‘felt’ space, the space of being and of feeling and of becoming” (32).

The idea of the everyday or pedestrian movement came under a series of challenges during which the dancers, at various stages and to various degrees, saw all movements as potentially performed. The challenges were a direct result of the dancers own deconstruction of permitted dance spaces and the consequent inclusion of the movement vocabulary of the everyday. Moving from the studio to the corridors and elsewhere meant opening and closing doors, using pressure pads and keying in entry codes. It also entailed dealing with changes in floor surface, encountering lower ceiling spaces, and adjusting to sudden changes in light. In contrast to this, the dancers were able to play with less familiar, or previously forbidden possibilities - for example, moving over the permanent seating, climbing to the technical area, negotiating the spaces between studio lighting supports, encountering the cyclorama wall - and each of these posed different relational problems about shaping of the body. Rubidge writes of the “qualitative dimension of trajectories of motion, whether or not created by dancing bodies” (28), as being central to what she sees as choreographic space. New possibilities for qualitative dimensions and trajectories of movement had emerged from having to deal with these acts of opening, the implications of bare feet on a different surface, the effect of climbing over and round objects, and the unfamiliarity of a large expanse of brickwork.

In the apparently straightforward business of well-learnt routines in a familiar dance studio the dancers had encountered a discontinuity of self-presence that had prompted them to become more expansive and investigative. Paula Kramer, in *Dance Spaces: Practices of Movement,* proposes “decentralisation, coupled with a clear sense of the human body and its materiality amongst other materials, that supports creative movement practice and renders moments of finding and sensing one’s place in the world possible” (167). Grace Campbell, a dancer in *Emerging Never Arriving*, described the effect of this decentralisation and heightened body awareness in the following way: “I found myself re-evaluating myself as a dancer, how do I dance? Why do I dance this way? Where does the movement come from and what’s the point of it? Why do I play with my hair? Why do I fidget with my hands?” (email 17 September 2014). Campbell was, in straightforward, practical terms, expressing her response to the destabilisation of her dance expectations and certainties. What it implied for her was the necessity for a different consciousness about her movement. She could not then avoid those questions and, in her solo, she explored the implications of this different body consciousness. Campbell’s response above suggests its connection with a process of destabilisation within a vital continuum. Kramer describes this exchange as: “simultaneously finding one’s place and becoming part of a larger whole” (165). A sense of self-presence-place may have as its point of origin an individual body, but it extends outwards, rather than being confined to an individual experience.

Braidotti’s analysis of Deleuze’s propositions concerning the plane of immanence in *Nomadic Theory* , suggests that it “composes and sustains the actualization of processes of becoming as relational, external, and collective”(154). She goes on to assert that: “Becoming is molecular, in that it requires singular overthrowing of the internalized simulacra of self, consolidated by habits and flat repetitions” (154). Campbell was bringing into experiential, embodied focus the possibilities of sustained effort as a qualitative state rather than a goal-oriented, contained activity. She was questioning the qualitative dimensions of her movement. Material emerged out of this that was taken forward from a performative potential into realisations of performed place.



Figure 5: Extending the dance space in *Emerging Never Arriving*

An element of randomness might seem to be implicit in what has been described so far, and this would be misleading. The work stemmed from analysis of aims and a very specific direction resulting from that analysis. On many occasions, one or other of the dancers would remind us all that the ability to explore in the way we were, at the level we were, was to a great extent dependent on the very training that we sought to interrogate. This was a paradox that was a necessary and vital part of *Emerging Never Arriving* as a site of experiment. Raising awareness of what could result from exploration was not being proposed as a replacement for hard earned and continuing training, but as a continually shifting realignment of its potentials. Consequently, although early sessions could and did at times disintegrate and need to re-assess focus, there was a constant affirmation of the dancers’ agency and a way of viewing their subject self as multiple. Dancer Sarah Richter- Rose expressed this process as follows:

We were constantly arranging new patterns as we played with the idea of possibilities, as groupings and movement shapes emerged and departed sometimes only as a brief suggestion. We were tracing our pathways in the space as though hoping to find meaning in them – through the air and across the floor and past each other’s bodies – reading the map of where we’d been in order to find directions for where we were going. There was this proximity in our group awareness which lived through our constant alertness and reactionary state, where small interchanges felt like day long conversations. (email. 8 August 2014)

Richter-Rose is expressing here the dynamic engagement that the dancers’ “constant alertness” produced and that the methods we adopted gave permission to. Each of the dancers experienced similar changes in their body awareness as the work progressed. Reflecting generally on the process, Richter-Rose goes on to reveal that:

I did not realise that the piece would be so intensely personal, based on the materiality of you, your body in this moment, in this context. Your performed self develops with the piece; you create the piece, you are the piece, you come from it. And so when I move, I find myself.

Richter-Rose’s comments here do not suggest that she has stripped away layers, or looked for supposed fundamentals or notionally ‘purer’ states of movement. She is describing the possibility of immanence, a state in which there is a fusing of the performative potential and the performed self. She writes of finding herself, but again this should not be understood as a mystification of the process, a ‘revelation’ of ‘essence’ but rather as a realisation of the continual and evolving affect of movement. The methodology that resulted in *Emerging Never Arriving* was itself emergent. While there were elements of a number of improvisational techniques used, from variations of contact improvisation to responses to images or directions that arose from discussion, the overall aim was to develop an holistic approach specific to the particular project. This allowed for the extension of what at first had been seen as introductory warm-up into *the thing itself*, through a fluid process of investigation centred on each dancer’s intelligent body. When Richter-Rose writes of the materiality of the body in the moment, she is describing the process aimed for.

## Textured Places.

It has already been indicated that both *Emerging Never Arriving* and *Motion Traces ii* contained elements of site-specific performance. Ingold gives an indication of the effect of this way of approaching different locations and their emerging environments in *Being Alive: Essays on Knowledge Movement and Description*, as “an isotropic surface upon which all things are wrapped up in themselves, fixed in their respective places, broken off from the movements that brought them there” (141-2). Environments, as Ingold explains, have the dynamic property of multiple processes of emergence through which, and entwined in which, we move. Ingold persistently questions our understanding of terms like space and place writing of: “a world of incessant movement and becoming, one that is never complete but continually under construction” (141).

Kramer, echoing Ingold’s position, signals the continuous changes, movement and flows of the environment when she points out that: “whilst it can be cold, wet and tiring as much as warm and comforting, exposing the body to the liveliness of *nature spaces* positions the dancer as one creator of movement amongst many” (164). Kramer is writing specifically of dance that takes place outdoors, but I do not see this view as only applicable to that setting, although Kramer is not directly suggesting such a limitation. The dancer is “one creator of movement amongst many” in all environments. Kramer writes of developing awareness “alongside a multitude of change and movement” (164), as exercising a major influence on her creative work. She makes a crucial political point when she declares that: “Experiencing the possibility of embodied co-habitation within *nature space*, rather than aiming to control it, offers a possible and necessary practice of repositioning human beings within the current ecological crisis” (167). In declaring solidarity with this important statement, and in tandem with the posthuman stance this thesis adopts, I consider that, in all situations, increasing awareness of the co-extensive properties of the embodied self through movement continues this repositioning. Both the dance projects under analysis in this chapter attempted in varying degrees to implement such awareness, as part of the discourses that bodies are the epi-centre of.

In interview, the dancer Aya Kobayashi described her personal experience of this type of awareness as being “part of the threads of a textile, into a fabric that are there themselves [referring to the threads] but mixed with each other and become for a time something perhaps different” (22 September 2014). Kobayashi was expressing the way in which she saw herself as present within and interacting with what Doreen Massey in *For Space* calls “one’s place within continuous and multiple processes of emergence” (54). Ingold writes of having “nothing against the idea of place” (146) so long as it is not seen as being sited within space, as if space existed as a container. He also suggests that it is mistaken to see place as a static thing, like sitting in a room, within which we live. The comparisons here with the underlying concerns of Flexer’s *The Living Room* are clear. Ingold considers “lives are not led inside places but through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere … human existence is not place-*bound* … but place-*binding.* It unfolds not in places but along paths” (148). He goes on to describe these paths as trails that cross, mix, and interweave “as the life of each becomes bound up with the other”(148). Places are the consequence of emergent qualities of movement, where awareness of the textures of being-in-the-world is at its most affective. Places are never successive points along a flat cartographic surface. The material bodies, whose traces interweave and cross within and through them, narrate themselves through their continual movement. The consequent dynamic qualities and textures are at the centre of an idea of textured places that the dancers came to associate with their investigation of self-presence.

In both *Emerging Never Arriving* and *Motion Traces ii*, there was awareness of shifting, changing textures, and the possibilities for a more widely textured experience. *Motion Traces ii* was almost entirely developed within a studio setting, after research visits to the cathedral, and it only took place in the cathedral at all for the morning before performances, giving rise to questions over which was the specific site. The dancers’ movement through and with these changes of site required an awareness and understanding of the nature of those changes. We were not aware enough of the way in which things overlap. We were in fact unwittingly approaching each environment as separate things, as containers. Although the dancers were aware of the other textures and spoke of them later, the sheer volume of the south transept, its cold, uneven stone floors and carved, decorated, icon hung walls appeared to shrink their own sensory exchange with it.

Paradoxically, the dancers’ initial aim had been to explore the spatial architecture and material textures of the cathedral, where light and space, vaulted roofs, finely carved images, decorated floors, arches and fluted columns disguise massive weight-bearing functions. The dancers attempted to find parallels relating to how the structure of the body used and countered gravity, how it was able to operate with such weight defying economy in the processes of movement. The bodily responses they explored had correspondences with the structure of the cathedral and the south transept chosen as the particular location within it. These correspondences were not approached as copies, or as ways of mirroring architectural features. The dancers wanted to integrate their own physical presence with the traces they were entering in a process consistent with Kramer’s sense of the body’s materiality mingling with other materials and being in a state of embodied co-habitation with them.

The whole piece was performed within the south transept of the cathedral (see figure 6, below).



Figure 6: Performing in the south transept in *Motion Traces ii*

The potential for affect generated in the cathedral needed sharper awareness as did its associations and resonances and how each of the dancers’ movements might respond to those resonances. Calling our piece *Motion Traces ii*, we had underestimated what the impact of the cathedral might be for spectators. In an entirely secular piece of dance, for example, it was commented upon by members of the education department of the cathedral that for them there was a spiritual dimension to the work. What pulses emerged here? We had not allowed for the intertwining of a variety of storied environments, or had concentrated too exclusively on what we were bringing to the experience. Although it is always to some extent true that the social act of performance interweaves with the individual narratives, perspectives and concerns of each spectator, there are varying degrees through which this process takes place as we have seen in Flexer’s work, where the dancers actively engage the spectators and present themselves as part of their everyday, as well as slipping through the permeable membrane of the in-between.

From the outset of *Emerging Never Arriving* the idea of texture - its materiality and its possible links to affect - was discussed in relationship to the wider associations of the environments we worked within and the dancers’ movement through them. All the movement associated with particular locations was developed within them and these were:

A courtyard enclosed on four sides, with a low wall surrounding an ornamental tree in its centre

A glass enclosed entrance space, sloping corridor and double doors Paved walkways with metal railings

Several entry points into the courtyard

A main wall adjacent to the walkway into the Dance Department and its double doors A small equipment cupboard next to Dance Studio 1

Stairs and stairwell

Double safety doors in Studio 1 Studio 1 itself

All of the movement outside Studio 1 took place within the natural variations and patterns of sound and light emerging in those areas. Movement inside Studio 1 was, for the most part, accompanied by recorded sound and for one section a projected animation was used as a backdrop. Stage lighting and portable lights held by the dancers were used and the dancers were filmed or filmed each other live with the images projected straight onto a bare cyclorama wall. The movement went from an outside setting, taking the spectator through to eventual entry into Studio 1, so that there was a progression into an ever more constructed experience.

Working in the locations themselves provided a constant reminder of the crucial part their varied environments played in understanding the processual, interactive and shifting nature of the experience, but also the solidity, the actual physicality of becoming. I have commented earlier that the idea of becoming can be a particularly diaphanous one, and whilst becoming is seen as processual this should not imply a lack of substance. Learning from the experience of the work in Chichester cathedral, the dancers moved through each environment sensitive to the variety of textural changes transmitted through the whole of their sensory potential. Eve Sedgwick, in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, explains that: “to perceive texture is always, immediately, and de facto to be immersed in a field of active narrative hypothesising, testing, and re-understanding of how physical properties act and are acted on over time” (13). She goes on to suggest: “To perceive texture is never only to ask or know what is it like? Nor even just How does it impinge on me? Textural perception always explored two other questions as well: How did it get that way? And what could I do with it?” (13)

We wanted to avoid the trap of limiting textural awareness only to responding to what is seen. Ingold, writing about sound, claims that: “Sound … is neither mental nor material, but a phenomenon of *experience* – that is, of our immersion in, and comingling with, the world in which we find ourselves” (137). Ingold brings the same approach to the full range of our “cominglings” with environments, so that we are not experiencing them as surfaces but are suffused within them. “Sound”, he writes “is not the object, but the medium of our perception. It is what we hear *in.* Similarly, we do not see light, but see *in* it”(139). The dancers became more aware of the accidental but continual sharing of their textured explorations with other sounds that were not predictable. Touch became not what was felt with, but what was felt through. In figure 7 below, the dancers are exploring possibilities that a wall sequence provided. The dancers moved beyond the idea that the wall itself was a separate experience from the courtyard of which it was a part. The dancers worked on a sense of flow during which their own individual and collective presences fused with the textures they encountered. They commented that they became aware, when close to the wall, of the smell of the bricks as well as their roughness. They also became more acutely conscious of the sound their own movements made.



Figure 7: Working with texture on the courtyard wall

The courtyard, tree, railings, corridors, rooms, stairs that formed the environments of the first part of *Emerging Never Arriving* were each already intimate parts of the daily experience of the dancers. These were after all the locations they had used during the years of their training where they had walked, met friends, planned, studied, relaxed. In Ingold’s terms these were where “inhabitants meet; trails are entwined, as the life of each became bound up with the other” (148). It was important that these multiple traces were seen as part of the textural richness of environment and that the pulses of self-presence-place that emerged were not simply imposed, inscribed on an otherwise neutral or empty space/surface. Elements of play, experiment, social interaction, reflection and sheer exuberance emerged alongside awareness of texture, the improvisations that examined it and the dancers’ previous associations (see figure 8, below). The dancers allowed themselves to enter into movements, runs, lifts, free of the necessity for absolutely accurate dance figures.

Figure 8: Playing on the ornamental wall and on the railings





Figure 9: Men don’t lift women

The process aimed at developing awareness of textures within the environments that the dancers were engaged in. This amplified their body awareness and encouraged them to focus their training and virtuosity on enabling rather than completing the investigations. Their own sense of inter-relationship with each other shifted in emphasis and expression and was extended to a realisation of the mutuality of each as an individual within an environment. Pulses of presence and place emerged both individually and collectively. The inter-relationships of the dancers to each other and the shifting environments can be described as qualitative transformations during which elements of both environment and movement fuse. Brian Massumi in his Introduction to *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* writes: “When a body is in motion, it does not coincide with itself. It coincides with its own transition: its own variation” (4). I would extend this and suggest that the body in motion, through a quality of continual becoming, makes transitional states of potential, emergence from which becomes the pulse of self-presence-place.

The spectators themselves were not kept within set areas, but were left free to choose where they wished to be within the courtyard. The consequence of this was that the dancers might have had to negotiate new paths around, through and between spectators and to risk encounters with unexpected situations. The opening to the dance took place without announcement. Spectators had assembled in the courtyard adjacent to the large glass panels where the first dancer became visible. This was the dancer’s own choice and for her it referenced the conditions under which her own movement took place where she felt as if she was continually contained and viewed. The glass panels themselves reflected the spectators so that they could see themselves superimposed on the dancer. Her progress through the doors into the courtyard was for her quite a symbolic moment, emerging into movement she felt was more an expression of her-self.



Figure 10: Working with artificial light



Figure 11: Moving into the studio theatre

Following the sequences in and around the courtyard, spectators accompanied the dancers to the Studio, moving through different locations, for example a very small room where a dancer interacted with artificial light sources (see figure 10, above). Eventually this led spectators to the more conventional performance setting of Studio 1, where one dancer continued to blur the distinctions between supposed types of movement closing the blackout shutters with a remote control. The darkness of the studio was broken into by bright sunlight flooding through the safety doors as they were opened, through which the rest of the dancers entered (see figure 11, above). From the first moments to this point of entry, the dancers had continued to, in Kramer’s words, “decentralise the dance”. Attempts were made to adapt and utilise Flexer’s approach, where the spectators are regarded as active participants in dialogue with the dance.[[12]](#endnote-13) The dialogue is aided by the processes of movement recognition at a cellular level analysed in Part 1 and particularly in Chapter 2.

In keeping with the idea of textured place that I am describing here, the intention was to attempt further to dissolve limits, to enable the dancers to establish individual and group self-place-presence as processual and emerging. When the dancers and the spectators moved through the several environments they encountered they became part of, and added to all the other traces and trajectories of people continuing their work on the university campus, and generally accessing the areas involved. The dancers’ movements showed their shifting relationships with each other, the spectators and the locations.

Textured places were both immanent and emerging as part of the movement and awareness each of the dancers brought - a form of affect evident throughout *Emerging Never Arriving.* Braidotti writes that: “affects are the body’s capacity to enter relations – to be affected. Relations are the virtual links that a body can form with other bodies” (104).

Dancers’ bodies are never detached, or removed, but need to be understood as processes of embodiment in relationship with environments of textures.

## Narratives of the Interior.

The final performance of *Motion Traces ii* had taken place in Studio 1 and was performed to a seated audience in front of an image of Chichester cathedral projected onto the cyclorama curtain. It was, in all respects, a very conventional setting. After that performance all the dancers agreed that the work had inevitably taken on quite different associations in the studio setting. The impact of affect through movement that had been generated in the south transept of the cathedral had largely dissipated. In particular, some of the dancers felt that the sense of their own presence had diminished and that the performance, while accurate and technically well delivered, was more a demonstration of learnt movements.

The second part of *Emerging Never Arriving* also took place in Studio 1, but as a result of the experience gained from *Motion Traces ii*, *Emerging Never Arriving* was set up quite differently. Dancer Emma Evans’s closing of the automatic blackout had been realised using a very deliberate and visible gestures, matched by the way she then walked across the floor to open the double safety doors, revealing the other five dancers backlit by natural light spilling into the now darkened studio.

During the research and development of *Emerging Never Arriving*, and building on conclusions from *Motion Traces ii*, digital choreographer Natalie Rowland had worked with the dancers to find ways of further interrogating the studio framing of performance. Rowland developed a section with them in which individual dancers chose an aspect of themselves which was in turn projected live onto the cyclorama wall from a static floor mounted camera. Campbell, for example, chose to concentrate on her gaze and used her hands and spread fingers to create different effects so that one eye, or part of the mouth or the upper part of the face was visible. Another of the dancers, Kathryn Peters concentrated on the movement of one hand and part of her forearm, making continuous movements which at full extension went beyond the range of the camera. What became evident was the interplay between possible real and possible virtual framings of each of the dancers. Brian Massumi, in *Parables For the Virtual* proposes that: “the virtual, as such, is inaccessible to the senses. This does not, however, preclude figuring it, in the sense of constructing images of it” (133). The dancers were creating a whole succession of visual images of the virtual that appeared to draw on Massumi’s words, “not in their content or form, but in fleeting, in their sequencing or sampling … The appearance of the virtual is in the twists and folds of formed content, in the movement from one sample to another” (133). To some degree, each of the dancers was sampling images of themselves seen as glimpses, fragments of a more complete self.

The section was followed by a series of duets between Evans holding the camera, and another dancer holding a small portable light, again with the resulting images immediately projected. Each dancer chose to illuminate a particular part of their body as they moved. Dancers used the technology as extensions of their movement, as affordances rather than simply becoming functional operators. Whilst not suggesting that this became an example of what Braidotti describes as the “technologically mediated other” (91), it did perhaps suggest that: “machinic vitality is not so much about determinism, inbuilt purpose or finality, but rather about becoming and transformation” (91). Both these sections were intended to see what might be revealed by the interaction between camera and moving figure, and in the dancers’ choices over where the concentration of a projected image fell. Their movements were transformed by and in turn transformed the technology involved. The filmed sections were carried out with the dancers, as in the whole project, understanding that what was being attempted was not new to the dance form. Rosemary Butcher, for example, was used as a reference point through her work transferring dance to film. In *Rosemary Butcher: Choreography, Collisions and Collaborations*, Susan Melrose writes of how Butcher explores the dance’s “performance specificity”, which she describes as being “ ‘reduced’ and intensified through recourse to filmic register” (181). Melrose considers that Butcher over the course of filming seeks to reveal something in her concentration on a dancer’s face, upper torso, arms, hands. She writes that: “what is, or might be, revealed, is not of the immediate surface – yet paradoxically the surface is its site” (181). She continues: “to identify it, where it appears, those of us who spectate need a founding story about human complexity, a relation to the exterior perceived, of one or another story of interiorities” (181).

An example of Butcher’s “sustained, choreographic observation of tiny, particulate movement” (181) can be seen in *Lapped Translated Lines,* which I saw performed at the Lilian Baylis Studio, Sadler’s Wells, on 10 October 2010. Butcher had collaborated with dancer Elena Gianotti to produce an examination of movement within an installation designed as a viewing frame. A film of Gianotti’s movements was projected slightly out of register and selecting parts of her body from different angles and ranges of view. The “founding story” that was revealed here was of the intense affect that Gianotti’s sustained, fluent, embedded exploration of the exterior revealed. In *Emerging Never Arriving*, a similar exploration of a possible interiority of self within perceived exteriors took place. In the sections using counterpoint between projected image and the body moving, I would suggest that the dancers were examining their own complexity, giving the opportunity for an emerging narrative of interiorities.

Rowland, from her viewpoint as a digital choreographer, also saw the camera as part of an overall movement structure and encouraged whichever of the dancers was using it at any given moment to build that into the structure of their movement (see figure 12 below). The dancers continued their textured approach so that the technology involved was also regarded as co-extensive, textured and interactive. Throughout this section, investigation of understanding of the body’s materiality and its connection to objects was continued. Rowland, explaining her approach, said that she wanted spectators to be aware of “the effect that camera position and movement have on the viewers’ relationship with the performers … and the changes in rhythm, sense of space and accentuation of stillness”. Rowland saw this section as a continual dialogue or interplay between emerging frames with the spectator able to see “the framed space of the projected image set against the foreground of the live action, where the out-of-field is presented … uncaptured”.



Figure 12: Working with held lights and camera

The recorded online and DVD versions of *Emerging Never Arriving* and the live performance itself took place at different times. The dancers made changes and adjustments for the ‘live’ performance as a result of these recordings. An example of this was the sequence where individual dancers filmed themselves, or were filmed. The dancers felt that they should all be involved in reacting to and interacting with both the figure dancing and the projected image. Instead of sitting and directing their gaze towards the dancer being filmed, the rest of the dancers adopted a much more active approach - for example directing their gaze first at the projected image, then to the dancer, moving position and examining the projected images. Whether they used it or not, the dancers wanted the freedom to respond immediately to the impetus of moments of individual need. They felt their own sense of self would require their own gaze active. They wished to ask themselves questions about what they were experiencing, what ground they occupied and what further transformations or revelations emerged.

The dancers suggested that there was an inherent passivity in a projected image and questioned whether the spectators would actually free themselves from that passivity.

Campbell makes the following critical observations of the section where dancers filmed specific parts of their bodies:

Dancers, including myself, film themselves in a close up shot and perform a sequence of movements around one body part … I chose to centre my sequence on my face … because of this I never see the projected image on the screen - I am staring into a camera lens with no idea of what the sequence looks like. I only have the experience of the feeling in my facial muscles. (email. 17 September 2014)

There is an underlying unease in Campbell’s analysis and the accuracy of her representation of the power-relation between her and the lens. However, she is suggesting that her own sense of agency and alterity in this section does not remain solely in what she can see. The experience of feeling her movement, rather than checking it against a projected image, takes over. Richter-Rose offers another view when she writes that: “movements and moments, solos and groups emerged and dissolved from different places and always we were shadowed and mirrored and followed and copied, caught by light and lens” (email 8 July 2014).

A different aspect of what Braidotti describes as “radical transversal relations that generate new modes of subjectivity” (92) saw an original animation sequence of people walking in the rain projected onto the cyclorama wall with the dancers foregrounded in their own personal versions of this water walk (see figure 13 Below). The dancers intended there to be a counterpoint between themselves, the animated images, and the play of shadow, reflection and light the sequence gave rise to. Their own movements retained what Richter-Rose described as a “continuous structure-re-structure dialogue”. The way that each dancer responded to the animation was again a choice based on what movement was felt most appropriate to their response to the ordinary everyday business of walking through rain, encountering others doing the same, and what this enabled them to reveal of them- selves through that movement. It was at this point also that recorded sound was introduced for the first time.



Figure 13: Interacting with animation sequence

Solo sections, work in pairs, and group movement each flowed out of and into each other. If the water walk signalled a major contrast to the outside section, it was also a consequence of it and of the movement into the studio theatre. Richter-Rose wrote:

Our movement language connected to the events as we were creating them, establishing a common ground … I found that one thing could not change without the whole being minutely different, without the rest altering around it … I felt that what was required … was a greater awareness of being part of the scaffolding of someone else’s environment … we exist in the same space as soon as we are part of it. There is a flow of energies between the environment and you … which is increased when the audience become a breathing conscious part. (email. 8 July 2014)

I suggest that what Richter-Rose is explaining here is what Massumi, in *Parables For the Virtual*, terms “qualitative transformations”. He proposes that: “from an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation, the slightest, most literal displacement convokes a qualitative difference” (1) He suggests the reason for this is: “because as directly as it conducts itself it beckons a feeling, and feelings have a way of folding into each other, resonating together” (1). The qualitative transformations that take place as “a flow of energies between the environment and you” (Richter-Rose) also involve increasing affect that arises through movement as part of the dynamic process of self-place-presence.

## Conversations and Permissions.

This investigation into a sense of a self in contemporary dance movement progressively conflates with, and makes interdependent, presence and place as part of processual emergence: of becoming. It gives rise to questions concerning power relationships revealed through dance movement. An important aspect of this is the comparative absence of the voices of the dancers themselves and what these voices might reveal. In part, the choice of Lee and Flexer as focal points in the thesis was decided by the degree to which the dancers they were working with were visible over and beyond a function to perform choreography. This section of the chapter gives voice to the dancers themselves and the responses they made whilst actively engaged in a project designed to interrogate self-place-presence. The dancers offer glimpses of permissions they gave themselves that emerged, or were discovered through their investigations. These glimpses come from two main sources, one of which is from written material sent by the dancers at the completion of the project, and the second conversations between individual dancers and myself that took place throughout the process. In the first case, the material was reflective, completed after the project had ended and the result of an agreed undertaking with the dancers from the start. In the second, material came from direct, unscheduled conversations with individual dancers that were an integral and ongoing part of the process. These conversations were significant factors in the direction the work took both on an individual and group basis. There were also conversations, communications and discussions between the dancers themselves, part of creative exchanges as they devised and improvised material.

Exchanges were often centred on questions over approach or technique, or what the aims of the dance were. There were also questions about how to approach ideas and trajectories that a dancer wanted to explore. Campbell, for example, writes that: “I didn’t feel very present in myself when working or creating. There were frequent moments of confusion and wanting a more in-depth understanding of the task, wanting to know ‘why’ more than anything” (email 17 September 2014). This is important because in describing a project that depended to such a large extent on the dancers’ agency and alterity a mistaken impression might be given of smooth progressions, of seamless development. Where matters of technique were concerned, the dancers most often discussed possibilities with Fiona Wallis, Senior Dance Lecturer at the University of Chichester, and this was an invaluable and continuing resource for helping the dancers in their investigations.

To a greater or lesser extent, the dancers each revealed their dependencies on a methodology in which a choreographer explained goals and specific aims and they responded directly and as far as they were aware only to those requirements. Campbell expresses this accurately when she writes: “whenever I work with a choreographer … I want to know their drive and their focus. What do they want to achieve, what are they wanting to find in this work?” (email. 17 September 2014). There is the clear suggestion here that Campbell, whatever independence she brought, regards the choreographer as a focal point, the creative source, and that her role as a dancer is in response to that. It is revealing of accepted power relations, in which the choreographer is the creative source and the dancers are mute servants, trained bodies. It is also a mirror image of mind/body dichotomies perpetuated through this most directly physical of art forms.

This section is called “*Conversations and Permissions”* because as well as direct exchanges with and between the dancers, I sought to foster a similarly investigative approach within each dancer individually, an internal monologue which, it was hoped, would develop in partnership with emerging, developing methodology and which would lead to them granting themselves permissions to proceed further. Peters wrote:

Duffield reinforced the idea of ‘self’ as an important factor throughout the process, but always as something that we had to discover for ourselves through movement exploration. With this in mind we moved as ‘ourselves’, even when moving as part of a group or with another person (email. 1 August 2014).

Dancer Callum Anderson observed that:

As a dancer I was able to explore more freely the idea of what movement is, and how it can link people and ideas without having to be an obvious narrative. I found the idea of having my own inner narrative whilst there was no definitive overarching one an odd concept at first. (email. 27 July 2014)

Richter-Rose commented later that the performance was “not a performance of pure technique but an open, personal exploration of what it meant for me to be in that piece, in that place, dancing” (email. 9 August 2014).

The quotations above give only an indication of the degree of reflection the dancers brought to the project. As has been suggested, it was hoped that the overall methodology would promote such self-reflection. Indeed the project depended on it. Initially, this meant prompting discussion, sometimes producing provocations. An early and important example was where each dancer was asked to look at their current dance practice and see what, if anything, it concealed or included of their own view of themselves as dancers, and what more might be suffused within layers of expertise and technique. Peters for example revealed that she felt technically underdeveloped and compared herself unfavourably to others. As a result she aimed for accuracy of learnt movements above all, and this had a limiting effect on what she felt she brought of herself to her movement. She spoke of having a feeling of containment, of being looked at but not fully seen, a revelation that provided the opening section of the dance. She wrote that on a physical level reflection, discussion and exploration “encouraged me to lift my focus, something that I have always struggled with” (email. 7 August 2014). Evans wrote that she had “been able to really meditate over the ideas of the connection between mind and body in relation to contemporary dance as well as free my choreographic instincts from my own “safe” movement vocabulary”.

While there were no set choreographies brought to the process, movement patterns did emerge and remain as the investigations proceeded. Improvisation of whatever kind is not an unstructured activity itself, and just as the idea of working on understanding textures and deterritorialization of expected dance locations was part of our approach, so too was the use of other structural components to anchor the whole process to. The progress from environment to environment, the use of sound, light, film and animation, were each structural elements requiring attention, practice of use and examination of contingent factors. As the project developed, the way that the dancers responded to these structures changed parallel to their growing sense of themselves, of their own presence and place. My own role in putting structures in place could be described as somewhere between an animateur and dramaturg, helping to point to how the process formed its own method. The dancers each had levels of dance skill that I did not share or had arrived at from a different perspective, and so a flexibility to respond to the methods they were able to bring was important. Since the reason behind the project stemmed from my own research, matters of consistency, coherence and overall relevance needed attention. A lesson learnt very early in my own theatre background from Peter Brook’s *The Empty Space* remained relevant: namely, that arriving at the start of something with a complex plan of approach and set of aims is a mistake. Andre Lepecki, writing in *Rethinking Dramaturgy: Errancy and Transformation*, comments: “it is the work itself that has sovereign, performative desires, wishes and commands. It is the work that owns its own authorial force” (190). He goes on to explain that a particular imperative of dramaturgy in relation to dance is to help to uncover: “a dancer’s specific body, mode of moving, mode of being and temperament; a gesture’s, or step’s, or phrase’s coherence within its own logic” (191). He continues that this is located “within the overall logic of its articulation with other succeeding, and surrounding gestures, steps and phrases” (191).

The dancers themselves were investigating their own bodies and “modes of moving, modes of being”, and my own relationship to that had to balance their discoveries with seeking coherence and consistency to the original aims of the research. It was not a passive role, and provocations played a part. For example, as an attempt to destabilise established dance procedures, formal dance terminology was not used when I sought to explain where directions might go, or what explorations might emerge. Conversations, discussions and exchanges helped the process but the most revealing aspect remained what each dancer offered individually from their explorations, what permissions they gave to themselves and to each other. The work developed its own internal logic, its own form of embodied narrative, its own trajectories and its own pattern of permissions to always go further.

## What the Dancers Said.

In the first four sessions, I talked with each of the dancers individually to see how they might describe their own movement. The exchanges were not designed to result in any specific response, simply to initiate the kind of investigative approach that the project was concerned with. Any individual focal points that resulted could then be brought to the work for further exploration. I asked each dancer what they thought they revealed of themselves through their dance movement.

Chris Sullivan, whose movement was at first view the most athletic and virtuosic of the dancers spoke frankly of an internal tension in the way he moved. Part of his athleticism, he felt, was “as a defence, a way of hiding myself away behind big moves, fast sequences” (Conversation with the author, 11 June 2014). He went on to say that he did not feel that he was fully present in his dance work and that the more vulnerable aspects that he felt were part of him remained submerged. This discussion was a trigger for him to explore those aspects he felt remained hidden. He gradually allowed his vulnerability to emerge, gave himself permission for his sense of hybrid self to become more completely present, his fixed, athletic approach more nomadic. Sullivan’s process of reconciliation between the movements he used partly as disguise and the movements he felt should accompany them, resulted in his training and skill contributing to his body intelligence being allowed to expand. Sullivan pursued different perceptual possibilities and the permissions he gave himself were concerned with his re-alignment of the self-presence contained in his dancing.

Sullivan’s exploration was mirrored by Callum Anderson, whose dance movement had been effectively separated from his work as a classical musician. Anderson explored the possibilities of bringing the two together, allowing them to be expressed as an interactive part of his movement, rather than as self-contained and almost mutually exclusive. We discussed the intensity of the movements he brought to his classical training and playing as a violinist, the textures of the sounds he produced, the idea that he might hear through touch, or see the patterns of his music. Anderson eventually worked with Sullivan to develop a section in which both of them explored the fractured aspects of their movement expression of self, through Anderson playing/dancing his own composition and entering a counterpoint with Sullivan. Anderson later explained:

Using similar ideas and techniques to create the sound as I used for movement I was able to keep it in the same ‘world’. Working together with Chris [Sullivan] I was able to see how my composition would fit with his movement, and vice versa. It was interesting to see how we could develop our relationship beyond dancer and accompanist. (email.27 July 2014)

Anderson had existed with two sets of strict frames, which he kept separate and distinct; as he explained, they were also kept separate by those with whom he worked - as if while one might use the other, each was a distinct and isolated form. Anderson’s explorations enabled him to allow one to flow into the other, be fed by it and in so doing expanded agency in his process. In this case, the materials of body and instrument became co-extensive. Anderson and Sullivan became immersed in fluctuating narratives that were concerned with their understanding of physical properties.

I considered in detail the idea of the in-between, hybridisation and a sense of unhoming in the chapter looking at Flexer’s work. Her juxtaposition of tactics and strategies of interaction with attempts to remain, to find habitation, put emphasis on shifting ground, impermanence, a sense of becoming torn from circumstance. Her use of spoken language and of the live music of Karni Postel acted at times as a counterpoint to other movements but also as a movement in its own right, a textured and dynamic part of the processual relations of the dancers to each other and to the emerging environments of the dance. In particular Aya Kobayashi’s use of Japanese and Flexer’s use of Hebrew drew particular attention to the hybrid, the unhomed, and the in-betweens of transitions between borders.

In *Emerging Never Arriving*, Sarah Richter-Rose’s acceptance of her own hybrid presence was expressed in her use of German, spoken during and in counterpoint with a solo she developed to explore this hybridity. For Richter-Rose, the fact that she was bi- lingual did not provide the kind of tensions that Anderson and Sullivan talked about. For her, it was a consequence of her upbringing and family background, to be used at the moments most appropriate to it. For this reason her exploration of the sounds and rhythms of German in her movement were carried out as an experiment, a sort of “What if…” approach.

Richter-Rose had said that she found the more demonstrative, virtuosic aspects of dance, perhaps those that Sullivan found a sense of conflict in, to be antithetical to her inner feelings of movement. She explains this feeling further:

There are dancers who use their prodigious skill, strength and flexibility … to showcase their bodies and training in an awe-inspiring display. Then there are dancers who seem to use their bodies as an extension of their minds, who dance as a whole. These dancers bring a different presence to performance … they remain anchored to themselves as they project. (email. 8 August 2014)

She was at pains to emphasise that she is not dismissing technique as “empty and worthless”, but that the use of it for her needs to be “a dialogue between states of being”. The comments above were the result of her own explorations of her unease with certain types of virtuosity, but also emerged from a provocation I made, suggesting that she might look within her own movement for a developing understanding of qualities of movement; for example, what the difference might be between speed and what we called “the fast”. In her written reflections later she stated that:

I understand *fast* now as a change of intention, a channelling of energy into a movement or moment which gives it greater intensity … moving through something at a greater speed does not (necessarily) give it more intensity or more importance or more urgency … *Fast* takes it further, draws it out, charges from a peripheral digit right through the body. (email. August 2014)

Richter-Rose’s approach to her use of spoken word and movement benefitted from her analysis of qualities and intensities in her movement which she expressed through ideas of speed and fast-energy. She felt that having grown up with German as a language, she had “an innate almost physical understanding of its rhythms and tones”, and that she might bring this to her movement. She also felt a sense of dislocation at first, as if she were watching herself producing an image of herself. She partly resolved this dislocation by looking at the different uses of breath speaking required, how changes of tone, emotion, intent, emphasis impacted on the way breath is taken in, held, exhaled. Richter-Rose considered the parallel that dance movement requires of breathing, how different exertions resulted in changed intensities of air. She wrote: “Putting these two rhythms together at once and finding out how they can pattern over each other … allowed me to discover more dynamic qualities … natural pauses and accelerations arising from necessity”. Her term

“fast-energy” became the medium through which she was able to join the changing requirements of use of breath in the combined movements of spoken word and dance.

Richter-Rose’s growing awareness of qualities and intensities in movement brought together all aspects of her movement, which included breathing and spoken word, resulting in a solo that was an expression of the moved-spoken. She extemporized the actual content of her spoken movement, so that during development, recorded performance and live performance the actual words used were never identical. She describes this as follows: “I spoke often about a sense of release, freedom, partings or journeys … about walking, the flow of time, suspended walking, and steps both physical and metaphorical”. For those who did not understand German, she made her expression of self through the combination of sounds, textures, rhythms into a strong empathetic connection. Richter-Rose asked: “Could it possibly be called a private virtuosity? Something a viewer is free to share but which does not depend on being witnessed to be alive … I felt alive in that short-long moment of performance”. Commenting on the whole process she wrote that she was able “to deal with being yourself, the materiality of your own body and the entire context it brings with it, progressing on a personal level which was not revealed all at once” (See figures 14-15).

The material presented in this chapter has described a dance project that set out to investigate ideas of self-place-presence and their interrelatedness. The project worked through concentration on materiality of the body, situatedness, and a growing awareness of the textured environments the dancers were infused by. As the project developed and the dancers began to examine and extend their own self-awareness, contributing to use of intelligent rather than obedient bodies, they each found new connections with their own feelings of alterity and agency. They were able to express these elements both in the movement patterns they developed and in the discussions and written commentary that were generated during the process. Each of the dancers was able to make connections between their own sense of a self as dancer and the creation of a dance work for performance through an improvisation process that invited them to find new permissions from within themselves. Their experiences revealed parallels with the work of Flexer and the experience of her dancers, with Lee and her understanding of the intelligent body and with Burrows and his reflections on agency to which I will return in the next chapter.

The title, *Emerging Never Arriving*, grew out of the experience rather than existed as a starting point. Grace Campbell concluded that “when you create dance I’m not sure you ever arrive. Arrive sounds so sure, but in a process of feeling and experiencing there is never any certainty” (email. 17 September 2014). Within this uncertainty, the dancers found moments of habitation, becoming part of the textured environment and as a result leaving or moving along the emerging trajectories. The dancers each established their individual presence and triggered pulses of place through the intensity of their own processual becomings. Richter-Rose’s personal observation quoted earlier and worth repeating here applied in different degrees to each of the dancers: “And so when I move, I find myself. Because when I dance it becomes everything and therefore nothing, or rather I become nothing, so everything falls away and all that’s left are shifts in time and space, a co- responding pattern. That is my presence here. (email. August 8 2014)



Figure 14: Richter-Rose’s solo: extemporising speech



Figure 15: Richter-Rose’s solo: corresponding patterns

The comments of Richter-Rose and the other dancers involved have clear affinities with those made by dancers Birch, Kobayashi and Vesty in Chapters 3 and 4. Rather than reconciling hybrid qualities, attempting to unify them, their expression and in some cases their recognitions gave permission for crystallisations of self through multiple subjectivities, the nomadic trajectories traced through this thesis. In *Nomadic Theory*, Braidotti emphasises that the nomadic is a discontinuous expression of “reinvention of self” (154). She describes this as a “dynamic vision of the subject as assemblage … central to a vitalist, yet anti-essentialist theory of desire” (154); and that desire “is the propelling and compelling force that is driven by self-affirmation” (154). Transformation, affirmation, empathy, are each vital to the idea of intelligent bodies expressing imaging of movement through dance. It is an expression of desire for the dynamic self-realization of movement as affect.

This chapter uses the direct experiences of dancers in specifically designed projects to investigate a sense of self emerging. It is the voices of the dancers themselves, adding to those from the chapters on Lee and Flexer, that provide insights into their singular narratives. During the process, the dancers, from their own perspectives, reveal the various ways in which agency and alterity can be further understood as part of processual becoming. The dancers give testimony to the dynamic relationship between self-place-presence and alterity and agency and show the vital connection between this interrelationship and movement as affect. The dancers explore the materiality of their bodies through their involvement in an investigative, somatically based process. In the course of the process, ideas concerning resistance and the dancer as nomad become increasingly evident. The chapter opens paths of further enquiry into resistance, materiality and affect followed in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 6: NOMADIC PRESENCES

## Affect and Materiality.

Drawing on the evidence from the projects analysed in Chapter 5, as well as from the examples from the work of Lee and Flexer, this chapter looks further at materiality of presence and the idea of the dancer as nomad. Affect and desire are argued to be vital to emergence of a sense of self, a process that has resistance woven through it. Proposals concerning what can be meant by resistance in a dancer’s sense of an emerging self, are discussed and developed with the assistance of insights gained through email exchanges with Jonathan Burrows, and include detailed analysis of *Rebelling Against Limit*, to which the email exchange was linked. Further relevant material is taken from my collaborative work with Yael Flexer and Three Score dance company. Resistance is proposed as an integral and continual aspect of the discourse of the body and the notion of the body as a site of discourse is argued to be co-extensive with an understanding of dancer as nomad.

This chapter continues the trajectories of enquiry begun by the overall aims and questions of the thesis, and proposals made weaving these trajectories together. These are not seen as conclusive statements, but as potentials for further positive investigation. Consistent with the overall, non-binarised, posthuman approach of the thesis, proposals in this chapter draw together interconnected and intersecting threads linking emergence of a sense of self through dance movement with agency and alterity.

Affect can be described, in some senses, as a conjunction of *things*. Tension between immanence and becoming at this conjunction reaches levels of intensity that result in a pulse of self. This pulse exists in a passing duration of presence, not measurable in linear terms. It is a fleeting establishment of a place of habitation. Affect is neither a predetermined outcome of conjunctions, nor is it conferred on specific combinations. Henri Bergson, in *Time and Free Will*, considers that it is necessary to distinguish between the “so- called affective and the representative sensations” (32). He states that we pass from one to the other, not as a linear progression, but as diffusion. He warns that “we are unwilling to see in the affective state anything but the conscious expression of an organic disturbance, the inward echo of an outward cause”. Bergson suggests instead that “we rise by imperceptible stages from automatic to free movements, and that the latter differ from the former principally in introducing an affective sensation between the external action which occasions them and the volitional act that ensues” (33). Bergson points to the difficulties inherent in trying to find what there is in common between “a physical phenomenon and a state of consciousness” (34), and explains that: “The affective state must … correspond not merely to the physical disturbances, movement or phenomena which have taken place, but also and especially, to those which are in preparation, those which are getting ready to be” (34).

Affect flows out from the force of interconnectedness of things being-in-the-world. It is a consequence of recognising, permitting a desire for a briefly situated self. It is my proposition in this thesis that the dancers from the variety of sources, training and backgrounds presented here share in a process that is nomadic, a continual movement between the affective and representative. Within that process is the constant potential of the yet-to-be, of becoming. Vida Midgelow, in “Nomadism and Ethics in/as Improvised Movement Practices”, proposes that “as a figuration of non-unitary subjectivity the nomad is the embodiment of lived experience that is fluid, situated, and relational” (4). It is a process of duration and, as Bergson explains: “the deep seated conscious states have no relation to quantity, they are pure quality; they intermingle in such a way we cannot tell whether they are one or several” and that “the duration which they thus create is a duration whose moments do not constitute a numerical multiplicity” (137).

The dancer’s movement, its roots in bodily awareness and intelligence, become successive points of precipitation, invitations for exchange, sites for recognition, and for situatedness. The dancer both performs with and performs through textures and qualities of intensity and flow, as Richter-Rose suggests in her comments about self-in-the-moment when “everything falls away and all that’s left are shifts in time and space, a co-responding pattern” (email. 9 August 2014). Brian Massumi presents a similar view when he concludes that an “emotion or feeling is a recognised affect, an identified intensity as re-injected into stimulus-response paths, into action-reaction circuits of infolding and externalization” (61). What is important here is connection to emotional intensities, rather than specific moments of broadcast emotion, to the affective rather than the representational. Massumi writes of affect as emergent rather than realised, and considers affect to be “synesthetic, implying a participation of the senses in each other” (34). He goes on to assert that affect’s autonomy is linked to its continual escape from confinement to particular bodies, although he describes it as a body’s “vitality or potential for interaction” (35). For Massumi, affect is captured and closed through “formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions” (35). He states: “Emotion is the most intense (most contracted) expression of that *capture* - and of the fact that something has always and again escaped” (35). It is as if, in order to become subject in one’s own narrative, then that narrative must always elude precise definition.

Another perspective of this paradox is provided by Braidotti when she writes in *Nomadic Subjects:* “when it comes to subjectivity, we cannot do better than to offer a view of the self as autonomous, yet endowed with fluid ego boundaries and capable of agency and accountability” (32).

In this thesis, I am emphasising the interdependence of nomadism, minoritarianism and deterritorialization as a necessary parallel to the interdependence of self-presence- place. This provides for the dancer some release from individualism and the majoritarian position of extreme physical virtuosity within set boundaries. It is release into the potential of multiple subjectivities, which are expressed through embodied becoming. I suggest that becoming nomad is both the precondition and the effect of desiring self through multiple subjectivities and that this also necessitates the unstable ground of deterritorialization, as a site for becoming. In this context, dance becomes minoritarian, creative of self rather than expressive of it. Resistance is inherent in the idea of becoming, as it is in the nomadic, and the minoritarian. Affect is the charge that emerges and dissipates at the point of emergence. Expressed another way, becoming is constant re-negotiation through acts of resistance, out of and through which shifting pulses of singularity travel as pulses of self- presence-place. These are the mutual, interdependent, emergent qualities of embedded, located embodiment. It is not solely a transformation, or some transcendent instant, or simply a movement from one point to another or indeed from one identity to another. The materiality of these qualities is expressed through “becoming-subject” a desired becoming, spoken in movement.

Materiality can be a slippery concept to deal with and in many cases can seem to have lost its connection to what are thought of as materials. In *Being Alive,* Ingold points this out with the same incisiveness that he uses to problematise embodiment. Directing his critique at what he sees as “abstract ruminations of philosophers and theorists” (20), he insists that:

One looks in vain, however, for any comprehensible explanation of what ‘materiality’ actually means, or for any account of materials and their properties. To understand materiality, it seems we need to get as far away from materials as possible. (20)

Ingold here makes clear the need to re-examine and problematise ideas of materiality. The same necessity can be applied to ideas of affect. In the position being taken in this chapter, affect and materiality are both shifting but interdependent qualities. To call them qualities is not to be confused with adopting the impenetrability that Ingold dismisses so decisively above. The use of the term in this thesis is bound up in the relationship of the body with its environment. Its encounter with other objects-in-the-world, including other bodies, is always already located within and interactively concerned with other materials. The body is not separate from them, but part of them. Materials themselves are not collections of static, given objects, but active constituents filled with their own flows and vitality. Ingold asks how the body engages with the world and in asking this rejects the idea that: “the material substance of the world presents itself to humanity as a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*, for the inscription of ideational forms” (21). Ingold maintains that the surfaces of things are not separations, but “interfaces between one kind of material and another” (24). He goes on to remind us:

Like all other creatures, human beings do not exist on the ‘other side’ of materiality, but swim in an ocean of materials […]The forms of things, far from having been imposed from without upon an inert substrate, arise and are borne along - as indeed we are too - within this current of materials. (24)

We are part of a collective immersion in multiple textures and material forms of movement, and “grow within the current of materials, and participate from within in their further transformation” (29). Through this collective experience, nomadic currents emerge that are opposed to the majoritarian. It is here, through the collective, shared, vital movements of material embodiment, that agency is generated.

## Moving Within, Moving Through.

Figure 16: Opening sequence to *Emerging Never Arriving*



The triptych of images, above, were taken from the opening sequence of *Emerging Never Arriving.* Each of the images is intended to suggest a complex of relationships between a self, a place, an environment and the flows, densities and mutualities that potentially accompany them, through their interface with multiple surfaces and materials. Different viewers may well not come to the same or similar conclusions about what the images reveal. However, as discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, active engagement with the images is what is important.

The figure behind plate glass, partially obscured by reflections, another figure walking bathed in bright sunlight, others leaning against roof supports, were part of a sequence during which the dancers wished both to blur the boundaries of the quotidian and draw attention to the contact a body continually has with materials. When these particular images were taken there was bright early evening sunlight, increasing the differentiation between light and shadow and how the dancers responded to the shifts between one and the other.

A glimpse is offered in the images of how the figures moved within and through varying intensities. The dancers were aware that perspectives shift, light angles change, sounds occur, significances are suggested and melt away. Surfaces exchange dynamic flows. These were textures of movement that were being explored. Affect arises as a result of the shifts and flows that are part of the complex interactions in the dancers’ movement. Movement is at all times relational but there are still particularities, crystallisations, resolutions where affect emerges. Being carried along within Ingold’s current of materials, our own interface with them also potentially becomes a point of affect. In *Movement, Affect, Sensation: Parables For the Virtual*, Massumi expresses something of this when he writes of affect as a “critical point” and mutuality of intensities as “resonating levels”. He contends that:

A germinal or “implicit” form cannot be understood as a shape or structure. It is more a bundle of potential functions localized, as a differentiated region, within a larger field of potential. In each region a shape or structure begins to form, but no sooner dissolves as its region shifts in relation to the others with which it is in tension. (34)

Susan Melrose, writing in *Rosemary Butcher: Choreography, Collisions and Collaborations* provides a related example of this, while analysing Butcher’s work with expert dancers. She suggests that: “what a dancer makes available to choreography is *particulate,* mediated by energy productions and use, rather than it is solid or hard-edged, or monolithic” (179). Melrose considers that: “The expert dancer is gifted in this offering of potential – and aspires, in turn, to qualitative transformation” (179). She goes on to explain that: “In these terms, this expert bodywork is both given (in part), and is emergent … rather than given as such. Its operations are fleeting, while its particles are momentarily stabilised, coalesce, are theatricalised” (179).

The images at the start of this section serve as a potential example of localization within fluid potentials of shifting relations. The dancers’ movements, seemingly frozen in the apparent stasis of the images, still grow out of and fuse into the structure of the environment of which they themselves are also explicit presences, dynamic selves. The quotidian, ordinary uses of corridor, concrete floor, roof support, post, door, carried received expectations in their exchange with the dancers, and reach new critical points of emergence through other immanent possibilities. The materiality of situatedness becomes charged with the possibility of affect. Roof supports exchange tactile emotionality with a dancer’s hand, concrete floor echoes to the sound of a movement of a foot, and its particular placements. Nothing remains and yet something has emerged. In the processual exchanges taking place, affect, which is always nomadic, emerges as positive force. The images themselves are a virtual representation of the dancers’ brief environments. The origins of the virtual representations used here were movement in its application of fluidity and dynamic interrelations. Massumi proposes that affect is the “simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual” (35), and goes on to expand on this, proposing that: “affect is the *virtual point of view …* For affect is synesthetic, implying a participation of the senses in each other: the measure of a living thing’s potential interactions is its ability to transform the effects of one sensory mode into those of another” (35). He also suggests that: “affects are *virtual synesthetic perspectives* anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them” (35).

In the chapter dealing with *Emerging Never Arriving*, a degree of focus was placed on what was described as textures of movement. This did not imply a fixed exchange in which movement bestowed texture on things. It fitted the description Massumi gives above in which texture is transformational. In *Touching Feeling*, Eve Kosofsky observes: “Texture … comprises an array of perceptual data that includes repetition, but whose degree of organisation hovers just below the level of shape or structure” (16). It has been noted in earlier chapters that we, for example, touch sounds and hear shapes, indicating an exchange during which different sensory/emotional perceptions are interdependent, as well as a form of tactile emotionality. The force of Sedgwick’s comment on texture is that it suggests shape and structure as a potential that emerges, rather than a state confirmed and pre-existent. Sedgwick goes on to conclude that: *“*Affects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, ambitions, institutions and any number of other things including other affects” (19). It is how affect is attached to ‘things’ that is most relevant here. The dancer’s hand touching a roof support, for example, acknowledges all the other traces, since “to touch is always already to reach out … and … to understand other people or natural forces as having effectually done so before” (14). Specific, affective pulses of self-presence belong to a quality of emerging potential that is “below the level of shape or structure” (16).

The dancers here and in the other examples used earlier are both author and character at the same time in order to be present subjects within their own narrative. Seyla Benhabib in *Situating the Self* analyses the expectations of subjectivity as being “structured by narrative and by the symbolic codes of narrative available in a culture” (214). She acknowledges that from this perspective it is “unthinkable” to envisage subjectivity outside such influences, important to a sequential narrative of the ‘I’. She refers to cultural identity and biography as accepted structural codes for subjectivity but counters this when she suggests that: “we must still argue that we are not merely extensions of our histories, that vis-à-vis our own stories we are in a position of author and character at once. The situated and gendered subject is heteronymously determined but still strives toward autonomy” (214). Benhabib goes on to stress the importance of agency as part of autonomy and it can be further argued that the combination is present in the interface of the ordinary and the performed, what Yael Flexer sees as the in-between.

In her collection of observations in *Ordinary Affects*, Kathleen Stewart offers glimpses into how it is possible to understand affect as part of what she terms ‘ordinary’ interactions and events. She humorously warns that “rogue intensities roam the streets of the ordinary” (44) and that “the affective subject is a collection of trajectories and circuits” (59). She suggests that affect is generated through self as “a fabulation that enfolds the intensities it finds itself in. It fashions itself out of movements and situations … compelled by something new, or buried in layers of habit” (58).The images at the start of this chapter contain within them ordinary objects, familiar situations in and through which the dancers are both compelled by, and themselves compel the emergence of new experiences, surprising juxtapositions. A process of exchange between habit and other potential intensities through movement “is a thing immanent to fragments of sensory experience and dreams of presence. A layer, or layering to the ordinary, it engenders attachments or systems of investment in the unfolding of things” (21). Stewart’s picture of “rogue intensities” roaming the streets of the everyday is a wonderfully vivid image that punctures the solemnity and otherworldliness of affect-as-awe. She situates affect within the embodied, embedded experience of what she terms the “ordinary”. We move through, generate, respond to, and are located within the affect of our experiential narrative, open to that processual shift of intensities. Affect is indeed nomadic.

In the chapter on Flexer’s work, especially in relation to *The Living Room*, attention was drawn to tensions she created in the dancers’ game of making, placing, displacing, owning and then giving away apparent pieces of furniture through their movement. The tension was not restricted to that mostly playful process, but to its relationship with actual attempts to find habitation, to remain, to counter the continual sense of ‘unhoming’ with moments of connection that successively followed the game playing. Room for living became the immanence of fleeting opportunities for exchange and self-acceptance. Stewart captures this in the quote above, where she writes of fragments and layers of experience, but above all “dreams of presence.” Flexer’s dancers each had their own dreams of presence which they exchanged and expressed continually. These dreams of presence might be conceived as resistances against limit. *Emerging Never Arriving* shared with *The Living Room* a continual passage of the body-as-organism through changed and changing conditions and in this passage became nomadic, transient, moving from location to location, with their movement a consequence of the changing environments that were co-extensive with it. Games and play flowed into and out of multiple layers and textures. Charged with affect and wrapped within intensities, their movement permitted fluidly emergent selves.

## Views of Self.

In February-March 2014 I worked alongside Yael Flexer in the capacity of dramaturg in a project with Three Score Dance Company, based in Brighton. The company itself is made up of people of the age of sixty and upwards, with varying degrees of both dance experience and physical mobility. The completed piece, titled *Après Moi*, was performed on 5 March 2014, at the Brighton Dome Corn Exchange, before Flexer and Sandilands’ *Weightless*.

Flexer’s idea was to use the project to explore in part some of the physical implications of ageing. This material was to be used in juxtaposition with movement sequences drawn from the dancers themselves expressing amongst other things aspects of each person’s sense of a self, although this was not the term she used, remaining clear about her positioning of the work in the interstices between the everyday and the performed. Flexer combined movement with use of voice and, as is customary with her work, the use of voice was intended itself to be experienced as an expression of movement. The combinations of groupings that accompanied this were to be used in a contrapuntal relationship, during which, typically of Flexer, elements of both game playing and humour contributed to the levels of intensity within that relationship. During rehearsal and development sessions that were short in number but intense and of long duration, Flexer teased out movement sequences from the dancers that stemmed, in many cases, from discussions on and anecdotes concerning the way the participants regarded themselves in relationship to the whole project, and how they might cope with the physical demands made. A particular implication was how the ageing process affected and, indeed, limited movement and what consequences that might bring for each person’s perception of their involvement in ‘dance’.

Some of the dancers were not at all comfortable with the use of what they saw as limiting stereotypes. My own role, as a member of the same age group providing insights into the physicality of people within that age group proved no more insightful or relevant. In fact, the dancers’ rejection of this mode of operation served to underline just how problematic making generalised conclusions about physicality can be. They wished to separate their movement within any performance from associations that might be seen as admitting limit stemming from being a particular age. Instead, for many of them, the whole idea of dance was as an elevating activity, an opportunity in some sense to transcend the perceived barriers of their ages. This makes a direct contrast with the dancers in *Emerging Never Arriving*, who were attempting to go beneath their training and virtuosity, or were at least seeking to use it to find a different order of self-presence, one emanating from their own intelligent bodies rather than from the demands of a set choreography.

Those in Three Score who were interested in the possibility of transcendence, were, in some senses, looking back to, or seeking to find an idealised version of themselves through movement: a self-presence that might suspend their experience of their own quotidian movement, or create moments of denial of it. Alternatively, it simply expressed how they felt about themselves and what they considered to be real. In addition, they wished to be involved in choreographies that they felt would be aesthetically pleasing both to themselves and others. Stewart’s “rogue intensities” roamed the rehearsal space. What had been intended was for the work to bring awareness, in Stewart’s words, that: “structures grow entrenched. Identities take place. Ways of knowing become habitual at the drop of a hat. But it’s ordinary affects that give things the quality of *something* to inhabit and animate” (15). Instead, “rogue intensities” provided evidence that they do indeed “incite truth claims, confusions, acceptance, endurance, tall tales, circuits of deadness and desire, dull or risky moves and the most ordinary forms of watchfulness” (44).

Initially, my role as dramaturg had been to work with Flexer to develop a written text concerned with ageing taken from my own experiences and from comments from others, found from a variety of sources. This material proved problematic from the outset. Flexer expected it to be the basis for some humorous interventions and the material was shaped with this in mind. Flexer uses this approach regularly in her work, often aiming elements of humour at expected roles and identities. As dramaturg, the new, developing texts had to be negotiated between Flexer, the dancers, and myself as material for exploration. The dancers had become watchful in a negative sense, defensive or protective of their perceived roles and a lot of the material was at odds with this. However, the material did at the same time provide a basis for discussion and argument, from which new possibilities for expression arose - one of which was self-directed humour drawn from the dancers’ own experience, rather than material from elsewhere. The process that developed from this produced a shift of approach during which the defensive aspect became an eagerness to find solutions rather than impose conditions. The watchfulness acquired a different perspective as each dancer’s body gradually became a refocused site of discourse.

The dancers’ heightened watchfulness provided Flexer with the opportunity to resolve tensions by improvising with them sequences in which they were asked to find movements that they felt were indicative of their own view of themselves, where the “tall tales” and “truth claims” could be worked through. The outcome was to produce a process through which the dancers consciously sought for physical expression of a self that brought with it increased awareness of their alterity and agency. The dancers, in a comparatively short space of time, developed a more acute form of bodily awareness. Stewart points out that: “the ordinary is a thing that has to be imagined and inhabited. It’s also a sensory connection” (127).The dancers began to immerse themselves in a process from which connections emerged with themselves as multiple subjects. They allowed themselves to work on unstable ground within which self was no longer solely the fixed ‘I’.

Through this embodied practice, Flexer encouraged the dancers to show through their movement, both individually and collectively, that they were involved in transformation rather than transcendence, immanent becoming rather than recuperative realisation. Flexer encouraged the dancers to see their own movements as the most relevant source for material to investigate, select and develop. The dancers began to experience their movements in a different way, seeing them in juxtaposition to their received cultural assumptions about dance, through which other ways of relating and perceiving emerged. Flexer prompted the dancers to find personal movement signatures and to become subjects of their own narratives rather than objects of a received text comprising either learnt expectations of what dance should look like, or what a dramaturg seemed to impose from a distance. In continuing her exploration of the in-between of the everyday and the performed, Flexer was encouraging their narratives to be partly autobiographical. Emma Meehan, in the Sandra Reeve edited *Body and Performance: Ways of Being a Body* suggests: “autobiographical material derives from an ongoing, shifting set of relations, where individual autobiographies intersect with a wider environment to create collaborative autobiographies” (39). Flexer encouraged the dancers to submit, as it were, their emerging autobiographies to the possibility of intersections, and engagement with wider environments.

The dancers of Three Score became engaged in a process of deterritorialization, entering the process through which their movement emerged into the nomadic. The dancers were increasingly developing a heightened sense of body awareness that was complementary to a developing understanding of their potential as subject. As Feldenkrais points out in *Awareness Through Movement*: “Instinct, feeling, and thought being linked with movement, their role in the creation of the self- image reveals itself together with that of movement” (12). Instead of ruling movements, phrases, utterances in or out on the grounds that they might stereotype, placing each of them in a reflective loop of expectations, the dancers allowed those same movements, phrases, and utterances to become part of a weave of “shifting relations”. Nothing then remained fixed.



Figure 17: Start of exploring self-image

Figure 17 above, shows some of the dancers from Three Score beginning to explore possibilities of a self-image. At this point, the dancers suggest a collective gestural similarity, in wide, almost declamatory stances that represented to many of them what a dance movement ‘looked like’. This sort of movement punctuated every stage of the early research and development sessions. The developments that followed were as a result of Flexer encouraging the dancers to see these movements as a starting point for a wider exploration. Watching the progress made, I found that they became more flexible, both in their movement expression and in their willingness to push boundaries. As a result, they also recognised that it was not a replacement of their original positions, but a use of them as a base. Flexer encouraged the dancers to see their movement as a statement of possibility rather than the completion of a move. The discovery that nothing remained fixed in a learnt choreography meant that the dancers gave themselves those important permissions to accept their bodies as sites of discourse that has been a motif throughout this thesis. It was not an exercise in denial or exclusion, but in progression and acceptance. What resulted was that in several instances dancers used the very concerns about perceptions of the body that they had wanted to keep at bay to allow new expressions, revelations and discoveries to emerge. Mobility of hands, picking objects up from the floor, reaching and touching points of the body that were, individually, at the extremes of flexibility, holding steady or still, and a variety of other concerns became translated into pulses of self-presence and affirmative affect. Figure 18 below, gives a glimpse of this stage of the process.



Figure 18: Developing ideas of self-image

In *The Affect Theory Reader,* edited by Melissa Gregg et al, Sara Ahmed points out that affect does not necessarily have autonomy, or a correspondence to objects. Instead, she suggests beginning with “the messiness of the experiential, the unfolding of bodies into worlds, and the drama of contingency” (30). She proposes that we are “touched by what we are near” and that “situations are affective given the gap between the impressions we have of others and the impressions we make on others” (37). The dancers went through a process of unfolding their bodies into the world, and were contingent on those others engaged in the same processual unfolding. Each became affective through their engagement with movement towards self-image and their co-extensiveness with others.

This chapter locates the nomadic as a resulting quality of processual unfolding. A sense of a self in movement is not, and cannot be other than an emerging intensity. Such emergence expresses a possibility of the nomadic. The whole process is also concerned with deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Here, the pulses of self-presence-place grasped from unstable ground have expression as affect, already dissolved in the moment of realisation. The process gives rise to the minoritarian in a Deleuzian understanding of the term, since it is concerned with subject as processual becomings which are minoritarian by predisposition. As Braidotti comments in *Metamorphoses* “Nomadic embodied subjects are characterised by their mobility, changeability and transitory nature” (70). She goes on to explain: “The key idea here is that desire is the first and foremost step in the process of constitution of a self” (71). Three Score Dance Company became an apt example of desire to say, speak, know what their dance work engendered. They were immersed in a “process of a constitution of a self”. Mary Starks Whitehouse, in *Authentic Movement*, edited by Patrizia Pallaro, explains: “since we are in general convinced that the body is our personal possession, an object, it feels strange to allow it, as subject, the independence of discovery” (53). Through Flexer’s enabling work with them, the dancers had an opportunity to allow themselves to experience this independence. The crucial discovery that was made was that, as Whitehouse states: “movement, to be experienced, has to be ‘found’ in the body” (53).

Three Score’s effort and exploration, whatever the somatic practices they became partly engaged in, still had for them a point of maximum validity in its performance to an audience. For the company, this represented a celebration of the whole project and a successful completion of it. For all of them, remembering the ‘moves’ and accurately following the narrative of *Après Moi* that they had worked so hard to shape was of paramount importance. So too was the need to be ready, for their bodies to cope with the demands of the new location and for the spectators to receive them warmly. Of themselves these are desires at their most transitory, but also offering the possibility of resistance through a continual emergence of self-subject along the fault lines of will and desire that performance gives rise to. Three Score’s dancers saw the public performance as a culmination of a process involving hours of committed physical effort. It was also, as Massumi writes in *A Shock to Thought: Expression After Deleuze and Guattari,* involvement in “the evasive in-betweenness of expression’s emerging into and continuing through a cluttered world” (xxix). The performance was never a self-contained or autonomous event since, as Massumi continues: “Only *process* is autonomous. A process is by nature relational

… the only autonomy is of unfolding relation” (xxix).

## Resistance and Endurance.

The publication in 2010 of Jonathan Burrows’ *A Choreographer’s Handbook* coincided with initial investigations I had undertaken into the possibilities claimed of mirror neurons. In a book that combines suggestions, questions, references, experiences, and observations in a rich mix of possibilities and provocations, particular claims or conclusions stood out from the overall text and invited further attention, for example that: “physical skills set up patterns in your brain that will pull your body in the direction of those patterns. Freedom to escape those patterns is only relative” (68). Burrows also makes brief use of material from sources concerned with neural movement control, making conclusions illustrated by statements such as: “when you first learn a new pattern your brain looks for similar existing patterns to copy” (69).

There were clear cross-currents with my own areas of enquiry here that offered the possibility of gaining new insights from the perspective of a dancer and choreographer who had been at the forefront of experimental dance work for some time. As a result a brief, fruitful email correspondence was initiated with Burrows on 14 February 2013, during which he both responded to and entered into discussion prompted by my research and the areas from *A Choreographer’s Handbook* illustrated by the quote given above. What became clear was that Burrows responded through offering illustrative examples from his own experience rather than entering into a question and answer process. The material is relevant at this point rather than earlier in the thesis because what emerged was a suggestion of minoritarian resistance. The email exchange took place during a period when Burrows was also developing *Rebelling Against Limit*, and he suggested some parts of the exchange contributed to it. He shared the initial text for the performance and it is from within this initial text that nomadic trajectories of resistance appear.

In the first email, and in response to a digest sent to him about my work, Burrows made the following comment:

As you wrote in your explanation, the area of mind/body perception has become popular recently, and the role of dance as having been at the forefront of this human exploration is often overlooked. It’s one of the reasons dance has moved so well into community work, and now into new, more participatory approaches that lie beyond the black box. But it’s very easy as a dancer to forget or undervalue what one knows at a physical level, because it has become invisible within your own body and has little value in the commercial world. (email. 26 March 2013)

He acknowledged the way that dancers were “drawn to body-practices of one kind or another, almost in parallel with more theoretical aspects of their work, and it seems as though we’re still trying to find better ways to integrate the personal and perceptual level in dance with the more conceptual” (email. 27 March 2013). As an example of this, he recounted an exchange with Ramsay Burt who pointed out to him that: “it is precisely the relative stillness of conceptual pedestrian movement at Judson, the standing still, walking, lying etc. in front of a rapt audience, which made room in some way for the perception of the somatic in performance. So the two are linked from the start” (email. 27 March 2013).

Burrows first response to being asked whether he could expand on the quotes given above from his own practice was to go immediately to the somatic and to recount what he termed a ‘story’ about a period of time he spent learning about Body-Mind Centring with Rose Anne Spradlin. He had asked to study with her after being affected by a piece of her work and not knowing why. Burrows writes of this period that: “initially, I was confused, because although I enjoyed the Body-Mind Centring, I wasn’t really clear what connection it had to Rose Anne’s performances, except in a vague magical way, and I had even less idea what I might draw from it in terms of my own choreography” (email. 27 March 2013). Earlier in the email, Burrows had asked rhetorically whether too much exposure to other people’s ideas might dilute one’s own perceptions, revealing that he kept much private to avoid that possibility. The comment came with a question regarding the extent to which this might be part of “mythologizing and mystification of the body.” Burrows wrote that he was afraid that what he was learning might make him self-conscious on stage “as though I was risking thinking too hard about things I should just let be.”

This illustration from Burrows’ own experience provides some focus for what was meant by “thinking” in the negotiations taking place between an act of dancing and body patterning. Action recognition and understanding is not a simple process of identification, but a complex interaction, part of which is metaphoric imaging – the ability to recognise movement as creative expression of a sense of self. In recounting the story of his experiences of Body-Mind Centring, Burrows was giving insights into how the negotiations might operate. He recounted that after some years he “started to notice how I was allowing myself as a performer to risk certain attitudes or approaches that I couldn’t have risked before – that the scope of what seemed possible had increased” (email. 27 March 2013).

Burrows suggested that he could trace some of that different perception of possibilities back to the “experiential focus” of his study, but that his notes taken at the time did not reveal a direct connection with what he was doing; he felt he could equally trace what he was doing to other study undertaken at the same time. He wrote that:

It was all muddled up and the most muddled was the somatic work, which refused any attempt at real definition. All of which points to a difficult aspect of dance practice, which is that physical and sensory information and learning is slow to be absorbed, slow to pass into unselfconscious use and slower still to reappear as a useful tool. (email. 27 March 2013)

The email went on to say that, in some senses, the initial impetus to know and to act on that knowing is only a stimulus that has set a process in motion. He called the area “fleeting and delicate” and described the emergence of influences from that initial impetus to know as gradual and elusive.

The initial request to develop further what was meant by the recurring idea of negotiations with the patterns the body is thinking was not answered directly in the email. Set against this story, the reasons become clearer. In a tangential way, and typically, Burrows was moving the enquiry away from answers into what further investigations might arise. He had revealed his concern over the effect of particular types of exposure to other peoples’ ideas on one’s own perceptions. The cautionary aspect of the tale was the possibility of missing what negotiations imply, and to signal that they are always located, but always processual and ongoing.

In one specific respect, Burrows provided support for part of the investigations being undertaken here. Observations of Flexer’s and Lee’s work had, in their different ways, foregrounded the intelligent body, the site of discourse. *Emerging Never Arriving* had attempted to revisit processes that would dig beneath the surface, and were designed to work against what Whitehouse described as “a great deal of activity and movement but nothing of the individual, reflective, discovered or spontaneous. It had all been learned” (53). What was being looked for was “open waiting, which is also a kind of listening to the body” (53). Burrows, despite cautions against unquestioning acceptance, wrote that: “there is one other key part of how more perceptual awareness liberates the dancer, which is the shift away from the body as a focus for vanity and brilliance as the [**only**] subject” and that this shift was “towards a space which at best feels more organic, authentic and democratic (email. 27 March 2013). Burrows continued that he thought he was “always striving to bring more conscious somatic awareness to my actual dancing”, but that “now it seems to me that the shift in performance when you pursue new perceptual possibilities is more to do with how you walk onstage and endure, resist or confront that audience – it’s about self- image, attitude and permission”. He suggests it is this combination of courage and resistance that he responds to when watching other performances. For Burrows, then, action recognition and understanding could be said to lie in part in the empathetic responses he brings as a result of his own perception of his own sense of a self, exposed on the unstable ground of performance. In a query over the location of performance, and the idea of a performance space, he wrote that one relationship of performance to space was “the way that to varying degrees the environment exposes or protects the performer”.

The idea of negotiation runs throughout *A Choreographer’s Handbook* and for Burrows that applies to what he writes about what he sees as performance space.

Negotiation is present in the process of entering into a dialogue between the material and the space. He proposes that:

If you perform in a found environment you raise references, meanings and questions in addition to those belonging to the material which you create. What dialogue can your material have with this space you have found? Can the material arise out of the environment itself? (39)

One result of this negotiation provides a basis for dialogue with the spectator. There is much in common between this view and the approach that Yael Flexer takes in the way she structures her work as an exchange with the spectator and the possibilities for the dancers involved to respond to what they perceive as particular types of engagement with the spectators. Continuing the quote above, Burrows goes on to ask whether “the material you make [can] complement or give friction to the context, energies and meanings inherent in the space? … What dialogue does the space and material invite with an audience?” (39) What is suggested here emphasises fluid possibilities that belong to unstable ground, rather than fixed notions of performance/spectator relations. However, the idea of space presented here, despite the suggestions of dialogue and negotiation, is a little at variance with the overall view being expressed in this thesis. What is, or could be a “found environment”?

Burrows suggests that reciprocal discomfort is part of dialogue with spectators, which can be used to stimulate further negotiations both within the feeling itself and through it to other possibilities in creative material. He writes that: “as spectators we read this discomfort as a fertile place which reveals something about ourselves and our own uncertainty and bloody-mindedness in the world” (email. 28 March 2013). This strong image parallels his suggestion, in *A Choreographer’s Handbook,* concerning the moment of entry onto stage when he explains that:

Perhaps the most clues are in the moment when you walk onto the stage. What can you tell us in that moment? What principles or thoughts about performance might inhabit that moment? Can you re-assure me that I’m sitting in the right way to watch your performance? (79)

The shared discomfort that Burrows describes can indeed be a fertile sharing of recognitions. The moment when something is revealed is also when negotiations start and when dialogue begins. It is also where trajectories interweave, and where co-extensive and multiple subject narratives emerge. In the paper “How the Body in Action Shapes the Self”, Gallese and Sinigaglia propose that: “Before any explicitly reflective recognition of oneself as the author of one’s own actions and/or as the owner of one’s own body, there is a sense of self as bodily self that … is actively engaged with other bodily selves, shaping both one’s own and others’ self experiences” (134).

Burrows is linking discomfort, uncertainty and bloody-mindedness with this process of recognition and shaping. I am suggesting that what is being described by both Burrows and by Gallese and Sinigaglia is the strong pulse of self-presence, through which alterity and agency take hold. It is the moment when affect flares and dissolves. Bloody-mindedness is a challenging but recognisable way to express a moment of emergence, of something gaining presence. It speaks loudly that “I’m here, still here.” It is also in such moments that resistance against the fixed and the majoritarian is expressed. Burrows’ love of some aspects of ritual tradition provided another glimpse of this form of resistance when he wrote of it as “that kind of endurance in the more worn out type of ritual folk tradition … the kind that must dance all day with grim joy through all weathers” (email. 29 April 2013) - bloody-mindedness indeed.

Burrows suggested that both dancers and audiences since the 1990s had grown receptive to a move away from somatic approaches towards more conceptual work. He hinted at the need to escape from what might be a growing orthodoxy and even hinting at some impatience with possible introspection when he explained: “A part of me thinks, well I am a physical entity so I am going to perceive and embody whether I bother about it or not” (email. 29 April 2013). At the same time, he explained “it’s very easy as a dancer to forget or undervalue what one knows at a physical level, because it’s become invisible within your own body”. There is a tension here between what is known and what emerges, between acceptance of a process that goes on anyway and the need to be more consciously or actively engaged in that process. At its most acute, there is almost a sense of the process over here and involvement in it somewhere else, in other words of a possible standing away or being displaced. Burrows also suggested that: “Maybe that’s the space that dance produces, the arrival back at the acceptance of our physical self as being pretty weak and limited, but with just enough of a hint that flight might be immanent” (email. 29 April 2013).

The email exchanges that took place were intended to provide further insights into aspects of a sense of a self, emerging. What they in fact did was to demand a re-connection with the flesh and blood of individual selves engaged, with the endurance and commitment that dance forms demand. Embodiment is not an ethereal, almost removed process but one fixed in immediate exchange; and if it is indeed processual, then that still requires “grim joy”, endurance, recognition of limit and continued resistance through accepting all of those. Endurance is also a form of shared, ordinary, everyday affect and the recognition of limit is less a matter of creating barriers or obstacles, but more to do with the necessity of a certain economy of focus that also recognises the plasticity of barriers. Kathleen Stewart reminds us, in case understanding of affect should become lost in abstraction, that: “free- floating affects lodge in the surface tensions of low-level stress, loneliness, dread, yearning, a sense of innocence, backed up anger, the ins and outs of love” (94), and that “the ordinary is a thing that has to be imagined and inhabited” (127). I find something of the world of the ordinary in the bloody-minded resistance and the endurance that Burrows draws attention to and from which immanent flight is possible. This is what Stewart describes as “the affective subject”, which is “glimpsed unsteadily in the light of the present” and is inhabited “as a pattern you find yourself already caught up in (again) and there’s nothing you can do about it now” (59). This is the condition of the in-between that Flexer’s dancers negotiate and are the porous boundaries of a nomadic subject, through which Braidotti maintains in *Nomadic Subjects*: “the body, or embodiment, of the subject is to be understood as neither a biological nor a sociological category but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological” (4).

The idea of giving permission to oneself is expressed or implied throughout the email exchange with Burrows as it has in the preceding chapters here. Burrows wrote of “the vague thoughts and justifications I employ to fool myself into keeping going regardless, even when the usual tropes such as the idea of an inner-dance or mental dance seem exhausted” (email. 29 April 2013). The effect of such comments is to puncture certainties that insinuate themselves, and to refocus questions about the emergence of a sense of a self in dance.

Burrows wrote that, in his partnership with Matteo Fargion, he had come to “increasingly think of what Matteo and I do as music” (email. 27 March 2013). This was not meant to suggest a move away from dance, but it did refer to crossing the traditional boundaries attributed to art forms. He described this shift as a permission to “bring other mediums into play, to amplify and reveal what the movement element has always been doing” (email. 29 April 2013), and that through such shifts and cross-fertilisations “the dance doesn’t go away but is at best made more itself and tougher by standing next to other elements”. Earlier, Burrows had spoken about his constant attempts to bring a more conscious somatic understanding and awareness to his dancing. Now he had slightly altered that aim, and that though it remained important, finding new, interesting material, needed something more. Burrows suggested that the shifts in performance required when pursuing new perceptual ideas, for example those encountered when moving outside received traditional boundaries for art forms as cited above, required an adjustment to awareness of self-image and attitude entailing a need to give oneself permission to resist approaches that were becoming set. While understanding the general thrust of that position, it does not seem at odds with the possibilities that a somatic approach offers for increased awareness and understanding, or that such awareness could be contained within received limits. Rather, it is a major contributory factor in moving towards multiple, nomadic subjectivities and in dissolving boundaries. Self is a process of continual transformation and reinvention.

Burrows was developing the performance text of *Rebelling Against Limit* (the preview performance of which was given at the Lilian Baylis Studio, Sadler’s Wells, to an invited audience on 13 June 2013), during the email exchanges analysed in this section. Part of the subject matter found expression in that text, which he sent to me on 15 July 2013. The analysis of *Rebelling Against Limit* that follows concentrates on the text Burrows provided. The performance itself has a combination of three interlocking elements that provide a form of dialogue. As well as the spoken text, there is also the piano work of Matteo Fargion, Burrows’ long term creative partner and the projected cartoons of Peter Rapp, with whom Burrows has worked before. Burrows himself spoke the text and in the preview at the Lilian Baylis Studio, he performed a series of complex hand gestures at specific points. These gestures seemed almost to punctuate the spoken word, and they also contained a wry but incisive humour that frequently surfaces in the collaborative work of Burrows and Fargion. There is a constant dialogue between them at an unspoken level. The performance is full of movement through flows of possible significances within gesture, exchange of glances, moments of suspension. It is a restless experience and one which asks continual questions about the construction and the dramaturgical form of what is being witnessed.

The text begins with consideration of performance from the perspective of the spectator and quickly shifts to the performer, although such hard and fast distinctions are blurred. Burrows calls up the idea of the spectator effectively trying from their own process of trace elements to bring shape, and perhaps meaning to what is being experienced. Burrows reminds us of the kaleidoscope of traces that are brought to bear, commenting that: “these traces of buried form sing, speak, dance, think, feel and act alongside every performance we watch […] manifesting themselves within our own physical memory to direct, re-order and anticipate at sensory-level the flow of what we’re seeing”(email. 15 July 2013)*.* Burrows adds that the minutiae of communication between performers themselves widens the range of traces that affect a spectator, and this is particularly true of his work with Fargion, which is studded with exchanged glances and guessed at, possible significances. Burrows then switches the perspective to that of the performer caught, as the spectator is, within the cruel necessities of “our habitual marking out of time”, freedom from which, he asserts, is both immanent and impossible. Both bring to the experience “all the residues within my body of other texts, film, dance, song, music, touch, motor-pattern […] What the body remembers”. He goes on to speak of this accumulation of residues as an embodiment, shaping and giving affect to what can happen: “the performance sings through the spectator, whose own bodily response gives permission for the performers to draw the logic forward towards what might be immanently revealed”. He speaks of a “crowded space” and the possibility of relative freedoms to “choose our pathway between beginning and end”. The effect of this opening is not clear cut and, whether intended or not, the lines between spectator and performer are effectively changed, their texture becoming transparent, membraneous, in a recognition of shared experience. However, for both spectator and performer, Burrows suggests, there are no permanent solutions, no fixed explanations, no final freedoms. All remains both immanent and impossible.

Burrows is also referring to types of embodiment. Set against the multiple traces and influences that performer and spectator bring to the experience, embodiment is seen as a process of forming and shaping where “such embodiment meets, shapes and affects what can happen.” It goes beyond what he calls the “form of the piece” although it is not clear what or where that ‘beyond’ might be, except that “it can manifest itself as visceral, tangible force, or as a whisper”, and even in the absurdities of superficiality, in the ironic and, memorably, in “the daft as a brush”. It is a trademark of both Burrows’ performance and writing that things are punctured, even deflated, at the point when they become most abstract. He returns the spectator, the reader and the performer to the moment of entry. From this return comes new insight and in this case a perception that “embodiment unconcerned with form becomes anyway its own form”.

In this section of the performance text, Burrows is talking about formal scores and structures, the organisational properties of performance dramaturgy. As is usual, he presents opposing strands; on the one hand, the formality of scores and structures can be overly controlling; on the other, they may be a means of provocation. In any event, what he returns to is the insubstantiality of perceptual shifts and the sense that “the organisational part gives way eventually to [this] sensory realm” as part of a continual exchange during which “I must ask myself am I the agent of the score or have I become subject to it?” Dynamism comes from this fluctuation, even if from some points of view there is a remote feel to the speaker’s position as omniscient narrator. Burrows is presenting a complex view of self as subject weaving the narratives of deterritorialization into a rich textile of movement; the image that Aya Kobayashi used. Whether or not Burrows chooses ways of working that question his agency within the “score”, he remains at the centre of multiple emergence, and of flows of becoming that do not by definition exclude choices over form and structure, but resist ideas of fixity and permanence. Burrows remains nomadic in relation to any ideas of settled content or fixed meaning because of how he perceives embodiment and because of the dramaturgical structures employed. He says that:

The body is also sometimes called a score, being that repository of memory and possibility at a cellular level, which holds within itself a map of where you’ve been and might yet go: the body as an archive of trace elements, configuring and re-configuring themselves on the border between the private and that which is communicated.

Burrows moves from this point in the performance text to a series of questions offered from a first person perspective. His body may be a repository of trace elements, an archive, but he still speaks of the possibility for a balance between an “I” and searching for forms of control over material that allows plasticity to remain. He asks if he is doing enough to find “a working practice which embodies within it the room I need also to play.” He presents himself as caught between play, delight and the potential for “easy self- satisfaction”. Burrows is between those poles where delight in rehearsal and performance is checked by the need to be certain that he has resolved the dilemma between doing enough and doing too much. He confesses that: “between these two uncomfortable positions I catch glimpses of my own score and all it embodies”.

These glimpses can be described as moments of performative shift, when the connection to familiar ideas drawn from that archive of traces contained within and through the body, results in a transformation, in the emergence of new perspectives, and in different metaphoric and associational connections. Burrows is describing one way in which action recognition and understanding operates through the generation of metaphoric, possible images of movement, as Damasio proposes in *Self Comes to Mind*. In *A Choreographer’s Handbook,* Burrows refers to the body operating at a cellular level and it is at this cellular level that the conditions of his dilemma are also played out. In *Rebelling Against Limit* he speaks of “wrestling with traces of meaning”; the very struggle also operating at that cellular level, where trace elements and continually new sensory information coruscate and are exchanged.

Burrows, it appears, regards processes resulting in performative shifts, even transformative shifts, a term he also employs, as those that bend our perception of time. He suggests that they shift time from its habitual employment as linear measurement, into experiences with different qualitative durations. Burrows presents himself as an “I” caught always between control and loss of control; between structures imposed and structures emerging; between delight realised and delight self-indulged; between one thing and the next thing. He feels: “I must always write towards the meanings which will imminently reveal themselves, through the gaps between one possible thread of unfolding connection and the next, in which momentary emptiness I am most myself and most lost”. Burrows is not expressing here a desire for decisions that solve problems, or for momentary solutions. What he describes is not amenable to such things. He is woven into an allusive, mercurial complex of meanings, which are sought for, for meanings as trace elements, and for meanings masquerading as intuition. I believe he is describing a search for a form of agency, but not that understanding of the term Kathleen Stewart describes as “a beefed-up agency”, which “becomes a breeding ground for all kinds of strategies of complaint, self-destruction, flight, reinvention, redemption, and experimentation. As if everything rests on agency’s shoulders” (59). Instead it is agency that comes as a result of those balance points of an in- between, where what he calls “emptiness” is also the place of performative and transformative shifts, where, paradoxically, he is also lost. I suggest that what Burrows is describing are the pulses of self-presence with their accompanying charges of affect, during which time and place shift into flashes of intensity that have already become trace elements before they are fully grasped.

Burrows is in part speaking of his creative processes and struggles in *Rebelling Against Limit*. The title itself is a reference to Seamus Heaney’s comments on language, quoted by Colm Toibin, when reviewing Heany’s collection *Human Chain* in the *Guardian*, 21 August 2010. Toibin writes that:

Heaney saw poetry itself, no matter what its content or tone, standing against the dull thought of life as a great emptiness. "When a poem rhymes," Heaney wrote, "when a form generates itself, when a metre provokes consciousness into new postures, it is already on the side of life. When a rhyme surprises and extends the fixed relations between words, that in itself protests against necessity. When language does more than enough, as it does in all achieved poetry, it opts for the condition of overlife, and rebels at limit”.

That quotation speaks, to a degree, of moments when language breaks away from the impositions of received meanings, “extending fixed relations between words”. In *Illuminations*, Walter Benjamin writes of this from another trajectory when he says of storytelling that:

It does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. The traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel. (91-2)

In expressing continual resistance against the impositions of structure that, throughout its process, performance always suggests it is in need of, Burrows is also mirroring the struggle for alterity and agency in quotidian experience. He refers to the putative beginning and end of performance as “unavoidable structural bullies”, but nevertheless as a condition that generates a form of release when one becomes aware of “the logics of familiar conventions”. Such an awareness alters possibilities and gives rise to momentary suspensions, in which, Burrows claims, “we catch sight of our own giddy absences”. He goes on to say that it is here that the performer’s inner sensory world is apparent, where performance occurs – where, in Benjamin’s words quoted above, the “handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel” (92). However expressed, it is the moment when a sense of a self emerges to grasp habitation.

In our supposed continual proclivity towards looking for or imposing a ‘score’, Burrows suggests that we must also recognise the insubstantiality of such a concept. He writes that:

There is an amount of change without which the dancing or moving body seems only to be searching for itself, and it is to avoid this searching that one sometimes turns to a score or structure. Or perhaps it is to avoid this searching that one … buries them deep. (email. 26 April 2013)

In the final section of the text of *Rebelling Against Limit* Burrows proclaims:

For this most immaterial and impermanent of art forms in an increasingly disposable global art market, no structure, score, improvisation, material, image, movement or idea can ever matter enough to argue. In this most immaterial and impermanent of art forms we begin and end with the image of a human being walking onstage to endure, resist or confront an audience, whose discomfort reveals something to us about our uncertainty and bloody- mindedness in the world.

Burrows is touching on what Henri Bergson means, in the conclusion to *Time and Free Will,* when he writes “we run the risk of mistaking for the colouring of the self the reflection of the frame in which we place it, i.e. the external world” (223). The “score or structure” that Burrows points to as an avoidance of a body searching for itself is to a degree synonymous with Bergson’s “reflection of the frame”. It is here, at a point of maximum tension in resisting against the reflection of the frame, that Burrows sees the sensory inner world of a performer emerging. It is in acts of resistance to limit at the point of maximum potential containment that things shift, structures dissolve, and performance occurs. The dancer’s nomadic presence, expressed in Burrows’ terms through endurance and bloody- mindedness, uncertainty and discomfort, confronts the spectator. However, at the moment of confrontation, nomadic presence also confirms the spectator’s own role in the fluctuating process of becoming and as part of nomadic presence. In perceiving a sense of a self emerging, we give permission for understanding our own emergences into multiple subjectivities. It is a view that presents dance at its most transient, fragile and paradoxically most resistant and embodied.

This chapter on nomadic presence ends here with the image of bloody-minded endurance, with the dancer accepting their own emergence as a solid, resistant but still transitory form. It is what Benjamin offers in the trace of the potter’s hand as evidence of materiality, of emergence into narratives of becoming. Burrows’ image of what he calls the human being “walking on stage to endure” is always one of entrance. The performance seems yet to come, but in fact the performance has already taken place while it is also in the process of entry. Endurance and bloody-mindedness are not declarations of permanence, but of possibility. It is what Flexer sees in her assertion of a dialogic exchange being possible between the dancer and the spectator. It is what Braidotti affirms in *The Posthuman,* when she writes that becoming-posthuman “expresses multiple ecologies of belonging, while it enacts the transformation of one’s sensorial and perceptual co-ordinates, in order to acknowledge the collective nature and outward-bound direction of what we still call the self” (193). Nomadic presences, trajectories through multiple subjectivities and becomings are narratives of continual arrival. They are assertions of a self, emerging as place-presence, realising alterity and agency in a flare of affect as movement.

# CONCLUSION

At the centre of this thesis has been investigation into an emerging sense of self and its mutually dependant relationship with presence and place. Locating the investigation within the dynamic physicality of somatically linked dance, the body has been made central to, and the site for, unfolding discourses. These discourses themselves have also traced the ‘nomadic trajectories’ of the title. The body has been argued to be complex, self-sustaining, and concerned with the processual emergence of self, with dynamic exchanges of information from a cellular level on. The thesis has firmly supported, and been supported by, a posthuman approach. It is an approach opposed to mind-body dualism and has countered such thinking through the radical immanence of embedded and embodied, multiple subjectivities. An emerging sense of self has been argued to be both vital and material, and concerned with alterity and agency within patterns of becoming.

Division of the thesis into two major parts provided the opportunity clearly to present the theoretical positions of the investigation, and then follow these positions using a dance based examination and interrogation. Theoretical positions on plasticity, on the ecological, interactive context of environments, on the relevance of posthumanism and on the processes of body as mind, have been exemplified in the choices for discussion of, amongst others, Elizabeth Grosz, Tim Ingold, Rosi Braidotti, and Antonio Damasio. The first part of the thesis included a presentation and discussion of recent developments in neuroscience on action understanding and its relationship to self, and linked the work to becoming and emergence, rather than to measurements and fixed conclusions. Having set out the current ground in this area, regular connections were made to dance work and to writers on dance.

Here and at frequent relevant moments in both parts of the thesis, important reference has been made to the work of Moshe Feldenkrais in somatic education. His work has been referred to frequently and used to give weight to recent developments on the importance of movement awareness for an understanding and development of self.

The research is marked by its anti-phallocentric and non-dualistic stance and its proposal of dance as nomadic, minoritarian and concerned with multiple subjectivities. These positions have given evidence of the effect of posthuman thinking on the research, and added to a growing body of writing following posthuman lines of argument.

Drawing evidence and support from across knowledges, the thesis has continued and added to a movement in dance writing that follows similar aims. Examples of this can be found in recent publications like the 2015 book *Attending to Movement: Somatic Perspectives on Living in This World*, edited by Sarah Whatley, Natalie Garret Brown and Kirsty Alexander, and Derek McCormack’s 2013 book *Refrains for Moving Bodies.* In this thesis, a particular example of using support across knowledges was offered through the cross-section of recent work in neuroscience, which dealt with awareness of self through action recognition and understanding. I suggest this made a specific contribution to breaking long held disciplinary barriers between creative arts and applied sciences.

The thesis has offered a singular combination of material as support and evidence for its main proposals. This combination has been drawn from direct contact with current dance practitioners, from original dance material developed for the thesis, from original dance material the thesis has helped produce or contributed to, and through the voices of dancers themselves involved in the creation and performance of the material used. Whilst there has been a thorough approach to theoretical material, evidence from dance has been of major importance throughout. The voices of dance makers, and performers has figured strongly in the research, with the intention of adding to the growing acceptance of their importance. This thesis has endeavoured to provide comment, analysis, insight, creative engagement and consistent interrogation from those perspectives. Nomadic trajectories in dance are also the multiple subjectivities of choreographer, dancer, writer and performer. These trajectories have been presented as interlocking and mutually supportive. As such, any claim for the contributions this thesis makes, is not based solely in how it advances each of the three areas separately, but in how it specifically brings them together in a study on certain practices in contemporary UK dance. The whole purpose of this combined approach has been to give validity to what I suggest are new proposals on pulses on mutually supporting, interactive and co-extensive self-place-presence emerging through dance movement.

## Possibilities for Further Writing and Research.

Each of the areas to which this thesis makes a contribution offers the potential for further research and writing. This is not necessarily because of the breadth of these areas, but because each has a particular role to play within posthuman thinking and beyond.

Posthumanism provides impetus for looking again at the relations of power and resistance that are either buried within or endemic to forms of contemporary dance. New readings and understandings, going beyond and through conventionally held knowledge boundaries, are available through the creation of conceptual argument and forms that interrogate and dismantle ordinary, long-held, received and naturalised dichotomies and hierarchies. Forms that provide potential for further critical unpacking and mapping include those that have figured in this thesis, particularly hybridity, and the nomadic. There is also a need for further work within ideas of ‘un-home’ and dislocation, especially in view of the specific political events and diasporas of the contemporary moment. The physical dynamism of dance, with its continual potential for engagement in discourses centred within the body, provides a powerful focus for such work.

I suggest that research that is either practice-based or practice-led might contribute significantly to further dance-centred work. In particular, the whole area of the relationship of ever expanding and intriguing neuroscientific discovery concerned with movement and awareness of self, as well as other developing areas - for example, neuroaesthetics exemplified by the work of Professor Semir Zeki of University College London - might provide a focus. However, there still remains much antipathy towards involving the so called ‘sciences’ in the investigation of the so called ‘arts’ and vice versa. This is a situation that posthuman thought addresses. Encouraging examples of innovative research already exist combining various forms of knowledge and practice. Calvo-Merino et al’s work on aesthetic responses to dance, Bläsing et al’s research into neurocognitive control in dance, and a number of pioneering investigations by Emily S. Cross, for example, into the effects of physical ability and training in perceptions of dance, into dance and action understanding, and into observation of dance by dancers, lead the way. Chapter 4 of this thesis makes use of an example of practice research in the practice-led work of Yael Flexer, which provides another model and direction for investigation into dance.

The area for further research that I would wish to draw most attention to concerns the voices, thoughts, experiences and expertise of dancers themselves. Here power relations, multiplicities of experience, and resistance are most evident and most embodied. I believe that the example of work presented in Chapter 5, supported and developed by dancers, might be taken further, using professional dancers, but not made exclusive to the professional dance world. There is much to be investigated concerning power relations - for example, in dance training and education.

Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz, who figure prominently in this thesis, place the importance of gender at the centre of their thinking and analysis of hierarchies on knowledge. There is much from these hierarchies that still drives dance, not least the physical presentation of maleness and femaleness. There is considerable work still to do on the questions surrounding gender representation in dance, quite apart from the apparent dominance of male choreographers and dance makers. The voices of the young dancers at the start of their careers heard in Chapter 5 that urged “men don’t lift women” deserve further articulation. There are clear research opportunities possible in addressing the way the body in dance is represented and by whom. Research can also grasp the political realities of gender relevant to this current moment and embrace the permissions to do so that posthuman thought, and the various waves of feminism, is offering. These research opportunities might well include work concentrating on hybridity and ‘un-home’. They will certainly include coming to grips with trans-gender, becoming-cyborg, and the trans-human. These are all also the nomadic trajectories of contemporary dance, through which a sense of a self is emerging.

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“Will get onto it while I’m in Amsterdam…” Email to the author. 26 March 2013 “Hi there and attached you’ll find a PDF…” Email to the author. 27 March 2013 “I too sit in a beautiful place…” Email to the author. 29 April 2013

“Showing is 3pm…” Email to the author 28 June 2013 “Hi Alan…” Email to the author. 15 July 2013

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1. # ENDNOTES

   The influence of my email exchange with Jonathan Burrows on Rebelling Against Limit was something he specifically drew attention to. He did this on two occasions. The first was at the preview performance and post-performance discussion at Lilian Baylis Studio, Sadlers Wells on 13 July 2013. The second was at the performance and post-performance discussion at the Caryl Churchill Theatre, University of London Royal Holloway on 10 February 2014. It was an unexpected and unplanned outcome, but nevertheless one that was of crucial importance to selecting it from amongst his body of work. The questions that Burrows raised and the ideas that were stimulated in the performance text are dealt with in detail in Chapter 6. Since the email exchange was a free-flowing and discursive one, originally prompted by my contacting him to discuss my research ideas, I have taken the text of the performance into areas that are relevant to the thesis, for example ideas of resistance. These are not claimed to be representative of what Burrows intended in the performance, and to a great extent should not be, given the questioning approach that it adopts. The performance text that Burrows sent to me prior to the Lilian Baylis performance was a work in progress and so future performances may well have departed in some way from it, though not in more than detail. In any event, Burrows does not regard performance as a series of static repetitions. At the performance at Royal Holloway, University of London, Burrows left out hand gestures entirely and when asked about this did not give a real explanation. At a later time returning to the same question, he deflected the question by suggesting he forgot to include them – an interestingly unlikely possibility. The gestures were included at other performances and similar motifs can be seen during *Counting to One Hundred*. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. One of Elizabeth Grosz’s continuing contributions to feminist thought is to express what she considers it might become, to what it might aspire. She is concerned with how feminist thought can generate new approaches and concepts and how this can be located in relation to other current disciplinary forms. She is concerned with the generation of new knowledges, of adopting and developing new and different methodologies and practices. She points to the proliferation of women’s and gender studies departments and programmes in universities and other institutions even though she considers that feminism has not achieved what she sees as genuine equality, nor autonomy for women in shaping their own environments. Grosz argues that feminist theory needs to look outward, to become open to what she sees as a more complex understanding of the potentials of emergence and difference, rather than inwardly directed critique and definition. It is in this form of engagement that she sees resistance developing. She also points to the importance of sexual difference and to reconceptualising ideas of subjectivity within a context of movement, change and becoming, though not change or becoming that is continued in a predetermined or established path. Grosz maintains the body at the centre of her discussions and proposals. She argues that what she terms ‘identity politics’ alone is insufficient, since it is concerned with describing what we are or seem to be rather than what the body can become in its materialities, how human bodies affect and transform, rather than describe life. The use of Grosz in this thesis is as a support for the ideas being put forward on the form of discourse body is the site of. By implication this is a feminist discourse in the sense that it is concerned with becoming, transformation and materiality. However, this thesis uses Grosz, as well as Braidotti and Ingold, to lay foundations on which further investigation of a sense of self in dance can take place. I suggest this belongs to feminist thought, and to an examination of power relationships surrounding the dancing figure and to what extent she is still trapped within the effect of humanistic binary thought.

   Grosz regards sexual difference as always being a provocation, whether towards types of practice, positions of negotiation, or in framing concepts which she sees, along with Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy*, as a future direction of philosophy. She points to the continual presence of questions concerning sexual difference affecting ideas of control, power and regulation across cultures and history, as well as continuing to be a fundamental concern of general feminist thought. She proposes that feminist theory needs to place this in the context of what she sees as animal becomings, including at the microscopic level. She does not view sexual difference through a comparative or contrasting perspective, but rather as constitutive, as an indeterminable difference within processes of becoming. Sexual difference framed by the dichotomous thinking of a male positive to which female is in a complementary role is as always rejected. Her constant critique is against the binary of strong, rational masculinity, the seat of reason, of mind opposed to the pliant, body oriented, and emotionally conditioned notion of femininity.

   Whilst development of these positions and others stemming from them is present in all of Grosz’s work two publications have proved of particular assistance in both summarising and signposting where Grosz places herself in relation to feminist thought in general. These are*: Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections of Life, Politics and Art* and *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power.* It is impossible not to turn on many occasions to *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. As a way into anti-essentialism and specification of differences in feminist thought, *The Irigary Reader*, edited by Margaret Whitford, has been of real benefit. Elizabeth Grosz has several discussions, interviews and lectures easily available online. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Yael Flexer deliberately plays, often through humour, with fixed ideas of social groupings. These can include groupings concerned with, for example, sexual choice, gender preference, particular location, or ethnic background. In this case she uses arbitrary organisations of furniture to demarcate boundaries of imposed social behaviour as well as supposedly fixed locations where these boundaries occur. The dance within these imposed structures is subversive and increasingly destabilises the imposed restrictions and codes. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Rosi Braidotti takes an anti-humanist position through which she rejects the binary thought that devolves from humanism. She particularly opposes the regulatory practices which she sees as resulting from humanism’s model of the human as transcendent, and the dominant position of masculinity in that model. She points to the marginalising of what is considered to be outside this model and the effect of this on how race, gender, sexuality and other critical areas are generally understood in Western thought. Braidotti considers that this has led to a mistaken and oppressive conception of an essentialist view of ‘human nature’ and to the equally mistaken view of a unitary subject.

   Braidotti argues for the idea of a relational subject. Key to this is a more complex, fluid and shifting understanding of, to take examples of material that is discussed in the thesis, embodiment, empathy, affect and desire. Sexuality is an important element of her proposals too and there are paths set out in the thesis for the way in which the dancing body might be understood in the light of them. Braidotti considers the social systems emerging in the contemporary world to be complex and nomadic through which the idea of the relational subject provides starting points for new understandings of forms of resistance to dominant power structures, at both the material and theoretical level, effecting potential change to social structures and cultural representation.

   Braidotti’s posthuman theory opposes the idea of the right for one species to be dominant over all others, enshrined as a given. She supports a vitalist approach to matter which is post-anthropocentric and anti phallogocentric, and is concerned with open-ended and interactive processes. She argues that this enables boundaries between forms to be dissolved and replaced with a view of a dynamic self-ordering structure for life concerned with transversal, generative vitality. Consequently, the posthuman subject is seen as relational, multiple and multi-faceted, and includes both the biologically and technologically mediated aspects of the posthuman. Nature-culture distinctions are replaced by a view of a whole, fluid, interactive environment, akin to that expressed by Tim Ingold, and a central influence on this thesis. The notion of becoming is vital to an understanding of posthuman thought. Braidotti uses the expression “multiple ecologies of belonging” which acts on the perception of and direction for the self. As in Ingold’s view, Braidotti proposes that the subject does not possess or indeed control what she sees as a “common life-space” (which I equate to environment), but simply inhabits and interacts in it. Braidotti’s posthumanism concerns the embedded, embodied, non-unitary subject through multiple nomadic subjectivities. It is dynamically affirmative, vital, and positive. Posthuman thought, excitingly, is still evolving and the benefits it offers to future research on dance are pointed out in the Conclusion.

   Braidotti regards feminist theory as transformative, and involved in a debate with gender and ideas like gender mainstreaming. She rejects the idea of separation between culture and science seeing one as embedded in the other and sees feminist thought as being involved in a redefinition of that relationship through its transformative potentials. She emphasises examples of the interactive relationship that already exists between knowledges and the necessity to continue positively to expand this interaction. Gender issues, for example, have also to be considered in the light of increasing scientific information on coding. She points to the influence of Deleuze and Guatarri on how some feminists now understand matter and consequently how materialist theory is affected – that matter is alive, that it is sexed, that it is reproductive in humans and many other forms.

   From Braidotti’s work two publications in particular have been of particular help in understanding and applying posthuman thought. These are the seminal *Metamorphosis: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, and particularly *The Posthuman*, from which much of the material above is taken in precis form. I would also recommend Brian Massumi’s *Parables For the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* and Donna Haraway’s *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature.* [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. Llinás is not suggesting some form of separation or hierarchy here, in which the muscular system is in some way separate from and more important than skeletal support. He is concerned with what we are immediately aware of, our first point of immediate connection with our own movement. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. In a tribute on the ResCen website for Niki Pollard after her death, ([www.rescen.net/archive](http://www.rescen.net/archive)) Rosemary Lee wrote of their creative work together and the importance to her of *Beached: A Common Place Book.* The book, which has no formal pagination (and so quotes from it in this thesis do not have page references) is laid out in a series of short recollections, comments and revelations noted during the process, and extracted from both Lee and Pollard’s notebooks. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. There are often moments when I am watching, or working with dancers, when a movement, or sequence of movements, seem to give rise to a feeling of ‘rightness’. In this context this appears to be a feeling that a movement corresponds or resonates on a critical level and with a particular immediacy that almost takes it out of the situation in which it occurs. ‘Rightness’ here does not in any sense indicate discovery of a once-and-only fundamental state. It is enough that such congruity is possible, that perhaps for that instant, and using Burrows’ idea, we are sharing the patterns our bodies are thinking.

   During interview, Lee used the word fundamental more than once and I have repeated that cautiously. There is no intention either to suggest that Lee used, or uses the word as a reference to some originary or pure state that can be rediscovered. It has more in common with Feldenkrais’ belief that we should be able to develop an awareness of established routines of movement and address the qualities of those movements. However, the term ‘Tathata’ which equates to suchness, present in the title *The Suchness of Henie and Eddie*, refers to the Buddhist concept of the way things are in truth or in actuality. It is used particularly in Māhāyāna Buddhism to denote the essential nature of reality and the true mode of being of phenomena, which are beyond the range of conceptual thought. The term is one of a range of synonyms for the absolute, which includes emptiness, the limit of reality and true suchness. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. During that time Flexer worked regularly with performing arts and dance students I taught, conducting dance workshops and choreographing original short pieces for performance. In some ways Flexer’s work has stayed under the mainstream radar, but her work with community dance groups, colleges, schools and universities has nevertheless led to her influence being widely felt. This material, though organised specifically to examine Flexer’s recent work in connection with the chapter, is also a continuation of the insights and discussions that have punctuated my contact with her over a much longer period and in a variety of contexts. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
9. The idea of the V-effekt is often misunderstood through its translation as alienation effect. It is important to recall that the term has to be seen as meaning making strange, or unfamiliar, so that the shock of recognition is one of a new understanding of what seemed familiar behaviours. Marxist theories of alienation refine this considerably it is true, but here Flexer is using the V-effekt as a tactic to recharge recognitions. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
10. Un-home has been referred to a number of times but it is appropriate here to acknowledge its link to the term unheimlich. Dissonance, displacement and making strange are joined by a feeling of the uncanny, the disturbing. However, I do not wish to make connections with Freud’s use of the term. In the context of this thesis, the emphasis must lie on the transportation of elements, some of which juxtapose uneasily, between cultures and experiences, and the unstable ground of habitation. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
11. It is important here to emphasise that the dancers’ training and expertise was not in any way undermined or dismissed. Instead, sessions drew on the qualities that each brought, and described ways through which these could be used as starting points for other investigations. Several of the dancers, in any event, were familiar with, for example, somatic approaches, or had independently extended their knowledges. When the dancers came to construct their solos, it was with this sense of investigation and somatic awareness, and that resulted in them avoiding expressions of individualised virtuosity in favour of exploring relational subjectivities. Indeed for two of the dancers, Kathryn Peters and Chris Sullivan, the avoidance of pure virtuosity was a necessary stage in what they saw as some form of liberation in their movement from long established patterns, or in Peters’ case the need match what she supposed were superior techniques. The relationship of these aims in Sullivan and Peters, as with the other dancers, has much relevance to Feldenkrais. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
12. I have acknowledged my debt to Flexer in my approach to working with dancers, and this is no less evident in the way she has influenced my thinking on spectator/dancer dialogue. I am also concerned with the dissolving of the fourth wall, but more in terms of seeing that conventional separation in a wider context of the possibilities of dynamic and porous spaces of relationality, exchange and becoming. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)