

Undisciplining Dance
in Nine Movements
and Eight Stumbles

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Edited by

Carol Brown and Alys Longley

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INTRODUCTION

(UN) KNOWING DANCING

CAROL BROWN AND ALYS LONGLEY

The notion of discipline is ever-present in the terrain of dance studies, creating specific terrains of practice, defining professional attitudes, connoting forms of punishment that determine acceptability and unacceptability. Discipline can be a gate-keeper, a kind of shame, a pathway to virtuosity and professionalism, a form of sophistication and an application of control and power. Despite the “corporeal turn” of much recent academic discourse, dance studies as a field has produced disciplined bodies persistently subjected to the commands of writing.¹ If much of what we teach and come to know from within the disciplinary regime of dance is founded on a certain kind of mastery, what scope is there to challenge, criticize and undo this knowledge from within the academy? This was the provocation that Elizabeth Dempster offered the field with her essay re-published in this collection, “Undisciplined Subjects, Unregulated Practices: Dancing in the academy” (2004). In problematizing the identity of dance studies as a discipline within the academy, Dempster, writing from the perspective of an Australian dance scholar, claimed that “the disciplinary difference of dance practice and research has not yet been fully embraced and recognized.”² Her critique called for a more precise and nuanced handling of the relationship between critical practices and dancing, between dance as a subject of study (*phrenesis*) and dance as an object of study (*techné*). She invites this ontological renewal through a strategy of “thinking through performance” and a critical unpacking of the foundational assumptions of professionalized

¹ André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: performance and the politics of movement*. (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2006).

² Elizabeth Dempster, “Undisciplined Subjects, Unregulated Practices: Dancing in the Academy,” *Proceedings of Dance Rebooted: Initializing the Grid, July 1-4* (Melbourne, Australia, 2004).

<http://ausdance.org.au/articles/details/undisciplined-subjects-unregulated-practices>

embodied knowledge. Underscoring her writing is an understanding of the limitations of the academy as a place for “undisciplined” creative inquiry and endeavor. Much has of course changed since 2004 however the question remains, what possibilities are there for not just thinking through dance but engaging in radical acts of dancing that are courageously open-ended experiments in what a dance can become. This book and the Symposium that catalysed it, attends to the theme of “undisciplined dancing”, through multiple registers of writing, moving and visual documentation.

The Undisciplining Dance Symposium, hosted by dance studies at the University of Auckland in June 2016, invited participants to attend to the changing status of disciplinary knowledge in dance and performance in the context of an increasingly transdisciplinary and decolonized field. Provocations we sent out in our conference call were to consider:

- What are the foundational assumptions of professionalized embodied knowledge in the academy?
- What is the impact of a persistent somatophobia on dancers in the academy?
- How does colonialism persist in contemporary discourses of the discipline of dance studies?
- What discipline-specific methods of practice and research have currency in contemporary academic contexts and how might these be part of a wider context of decolonization?
- How to create space for dance students to bring their diverse voices into the classroom and studio, while teaching international vocabularies (of dance technique, history, critical thinking) to a high level?
- What might be key acts, tropes or pedagogies of undisciplining in the context of various dance industries?
- What might it mean to undiscipline?

We proposed that this provocation might align with pulling down fences between ways of working, resisting hierarchies (in subtle and obvious ways), questioning power structures, celebrating difference and fluidity over normalization and control. The symposium suggested that the twenty-first century presents us with a huge task: to understand the inherited knowledge and embodied practices of previous eras, while allowing space to imagine different futures and ways of moving and creating in an evolving world demanding continuously adaptable forms of creativity. Inherent in this is the demand for recognition of those redundant

discourses that inhibit our ability to bring about a better future.

This book aims to make space for chaotic, permeable and leaky practices and ways of understanding the body from the periphery to the centre to celebrate rowdy, inspired, mobile, fluid, surprising, intent, bent, queer, non-conformist, inclusive approaches to dance making and research. It is sequenced through a series of nine movements and eight stumbles. The movements are in-depth essays exploring key themes that emerged through the Symposium. The eight stumbles disrupt these discussions, tripping up expectations of writing, discipline and dancing in different ways.

The first section of this book (chapters one to five) explore strategies and tactics for careful reappraisal of conventional tropes of choreographic research. Efva Lilja's chapter *Artists as Facilitators of Change* discusses the role of the artist through the politics of the everyday. According to Lilja, choreographic artists "find enhanced living in movement" through attending to the fabric of moments and relationships, to the hierarchies embedded in languages and the enabling of alternative forms of expression. Her article emphasises the need for engaging movement in making social and political change. Elizabeth Dempsters' *Undisciplined Subjects, Unregulated Practices: Dancing in the Academy* carefully reflects "upon the disciplinary identity of dance studies and dance research," and the kinds of critical spaces enabled and prevented for dance within the academy. She suggests that dance as a body of thinking can be highly disciplined in academic settings, in ways that may not be conducive to artistic thinking or embodied exploration. Dempster's article weighs up the compromises that dancers often make in order to be accepted into institutional frameworks for knowledge conceived out of traditions that have long histories of somatophobia and textual preference. She highlights that "when we take up the place the other reserves for us, there is a danger that key assumptions underpinning our discipline, specific methods of practice and research, and the discourse that has evolved around them may not be critically examined." Choreographer Zahra Killeen-Chance reflects on the fluid boundaries between embodiment, matter and atmosphere, recognising possibilities for creative practice through detailed haptic exploration in the conditions of exchange between human and non-human materials. Other-worldly states of physical presence move from performance to page, through forms of writing where the bodies of letters participate in choreographic exchange. These formulations of choreography work to "lead the spectator into a paradoxical realm of dynamic, emergent relations, and multiple meanings" (Killeen-Chance) – resisting fixed positions. In particular, these choreographic propositions undermine

assumptions that dance is defined by visual spectacle, instead emphasising modes of practice grounded in sensory, felt, aural and relational modes of exchange.

The field of dance education is not immune to conflicted discourses about cultural and racial difference, yet these are often underexplored in a field which remains dominated by Western dance theatre disciplinary practices such as ballet and contemporary dance. Alfdaniels Mabingo, who is a dance education researcher from Uganda, and Susan Koff, Associate Professor Dance Education at New York University, investigate the subject of race, education, and dance, problematising the hegemony of the Euro-American canon of dance history in education. African dance pedagogies, such as inter-generational learning, propose an undoing of “white privilege,” not so much in who teaches but in the ways in which dance is taught and its referents. Through a diversification of dance education processes, Mabingo and Koff propose that students benefit from intercultural competencies, kinesthetic diversities and an expanded worldview.

The following stumble authored jointly by contemporary artist Shigeyuki Kihara and choreographer Jochen Roller can be seen to be a rejoinder to Mabingo and Koff’s call for the diversification of not just dances but methods with their inherent cultural biases, that dance and performance studies addresses. Through an ironic and playful dialogue, Kihara and Roller reveal the tensions of creating work collaboratively in the intercultural space of ‘folk’ or indigenous performance between New Zealand and Germany. “Them and Us” challenges assumptions of decolonial thinking, by drawing upon two dance traditions which share some similar kinesthetic actions: the Samoan Fa’ataupati and the Bavarian folk dance, the Schuhplattler. Kihara and Roller’s project involved both artists engaging in a cross-cultural encounter which was reciprocal, however not without problems. They claim that having cross-cultural experiences is not in itself sufficient, it is what you do with these experiences that matters. Roller and Kihara’s writing brings to our attention the impact of their work as it toured Germany, the encounters with audience, the risks of re-exoticising Pacific traditions and the everyday struggles with racism and cultural mis-appropriation that persistently surfaced. Their unsettling of racial stereotypes through kinesthetically-based cultural exchange between European and Pacific dance traditions, proposes an exuberant practice of decolonised dancing.

Practices of indigenous performance in Aotearoa New Zealand are the focus of a discussion between performance maker Charles Koroneho and choreographer and researcher, Carol Brown. *Te Arai: Re-addressing the space of grief, bereavement and lamentation* takes as its starting point the

ancestral body, and Māori ceremonies that surround death. Koroneho's work in development presented as part of the Symposium programme, *Tua o Te Arai* activates spaces associated with pre-colonial Māori ceremonies of death and mourning and has emerged through his extensive research into indigenous ontologies and practices. Not so much an un-disciplining of dance through critique, but rather an exploration of how we are in our bodies, Koroneho engages with the performance of community through his work. *Tua o Te Arai*, returns to the customary space of *te atamira*, where the body of the deceased was part of a ritual recomposition through practices of *te hauhunga* (exhuming and cleansing bones). Koroneho's research seeks to re-affirm, not so much these now disappeared practices of exhuming bodies and recomposing their remains, but the sense of a common shared space that they activated.

Anything can be considered bloody if you think from inside the body. Choreographer Tru Paraha's chapter & *darkness* recalibrates simplistic notions of embodiment to consider bodies as post-human material entities always at the edge of horrors' precipice, inscribed by darkness as much as by light. In Paraha's writing, the affects of performance are translated to text with attention to the poetics, spatiality and graphic features of the page. This stylistic play allows the process of reading to be performative and active, at the same time the space to draw meaning out of material remains open and endless. Paraha fractures the stuff of type into blocks of light held by darkness, or darkness punctuated in light with the blackness of ink paralleling the blood in your hands sensing through to the touch of paper in an "obliterative palimpsest of choreo-graphic blackening." Paraha's work has clear parallels with André Lepecki's discussion of speculative choreographies of blackness, "Speculative theory opens our encounter with darkness to estranged territories advancing concerns for a shadow side of life, unbearable recesses in a cracked world, toward even more bewildering notions of a world without human."

Alissa Mello's chapter, *Body Material, Material Bodies* discusses the contribution of choreographer Mary Underwood in the work of Company Phillippe Genty, a company that is internationally renowned for their creative and technical innovation in experimental performance and interdisciplinary practice. Mello outlines how Underwood's experience in diverse dance techniques has played a central (and widely under-rated) role in developing the idiosyncratic performance language of Company Phillippe Genty. This chapter clearly articulates how Underwood's approach to embodied practice has brought the conceptual, dramatic and narrative skills of Phillippe Genty's work into experimentation with kinaesthetic and spatial forms, leading to work that creates unique connections between

performance vocabularies. Mello describes specific interdisciplinary workshop tasks for diverse creative specialists (puppeteers, actors, dancers). Her descriptions provide insight into methods of rehearsal process that generate dynamic collaborative relationships and unsettle disciplinary boundaries.

Whether the gatekeepers of our creative institutions enable and encourage undisciplined approaches to artistry or not, many parts of our work are being undisciplined for us, as the rise and rise of screen based, virtual cultures reshape practices, audiences and means of production. Becca Woods' stumble *Choreoauratics: An unwiring* evokes digital choreographic methods that actively resist the scopic dominance of much screen-based dance work, prioritizing "listening as a counterpoint to the vision-centred and highly mediatized capitalist culture we inhabit." Wood examines how sound-and-site-based, participatory choreography can be enabled through digital sound based choreographies, focussing on somatic and sensory modes of engagement. Wood's dance work creates ephemeral communities of dancers, who together move through sophisticated choreographies of sensing and moving in works that are both improvised and choreographed, pre-determined and inviting of new possibility.

Caroline Broadhead and Angela Woodhouse discuss choreographic methods that untether dance from conventional vocabularies of motion to amplify intensity in "minute yet charged interactions," with subtle movement and physical touch between dancers and audiences. Their chapter *Between: Intimacy and Spectacle in Dialogue* evokes an ontology of dance in which an intensity of feeling and relationship is organized in subtle yet carefully structured passages. In *What would it be, if it didn't have to be like that? Undisciplining the travel of dance ideas in the neo-liberal university* Jenny Roche and Alys Longley present a series of poetic stumbles regarding expected academic structures for collaborating, sharing knowledge, and defining research, prioritising somatic, improvisational and choreographic thinking in their account of shared research practices. This stumble reflects on processes of conditioning toward success in the university system and asks, "What happens when we don't behave? What happens when we find integrity in resisting the tropes of institutional properness? What is radical in this context?"

Rules, in contemporary choreographic practice are often broken. For to make a dance or a performance you have to deal with the reality of what it is to make a dance or a performance, beyond the process of coming up with an idea. Practitioner writing in this volume draws attention to, not only practice or choreographic thinking, but the processual corporeal logics of the work through affective and empathetic relations. Nisha

Madhan discusses contemporary participatory performance in the context of Jacques Rancière's concept of performance as assembly, bringing bodies together in a shared place and time. Critiquing the manipulation of the audience as participant by privileged performers who confer a kind of fake autonomy on audience members invited to perform with them, Madhan discusses the gentle inter-relational operations at stake in work by Auckland-based performance artists val smith and Sean Curham. Through uncertain, volatile and subtle operations, these artists, she contends, propose a benign rebellion, one in which the political is staged through empathic relation rather than the exertion of power over the audience. What Madhan brings to awareness is the unsettling of the relation between performer and participating audience within collective events in which both are implicated through forms of agency that are porous and in flux.

Gentling the choreographic is a method also explored in Christina Houghton's stumble, *Don't Hold your Breath: Choreographing Lilos and Life Rafts*. Houghton's serious play, involving water-based safety drills with lilos, follows a methodology that responds to Efva Lilja's call for artists to engage in exercises that activate a role for them akin to being survivors in troubled times.³ Participants in Houghton's exercises and drills listen attentively, the usual sense of urgency that accompanies such drills is softened with humour and a lightness of enquiry drawing upon somatic and kinesthetic technologies of care. As a further instance of undoing the disciplining of performer and audience relation, Houghton explores the potential for being-with as fulfilling what Lepecki describes as choreo-political in the contemporary present.

For both Madhan and Houghton, the political is not given in advance but is a kind of experiment. Their work calls for evidencing how the political emerges through relations, between people, between people and things, and between us and the weather. It comes into the world through experience. Dissensual and non-policed, they propose techniques for reinventing choreography as, following Lepecki's description of the choreo-political, the possibility for the political to emerge.⁴

For Janine Randerson, the choreo-political can be found or discovered through an attunement to the non-human biota of our rapidly technologizing world. Discussing site-based augmented choreography by Zahra Killeen-Chance, *Breath of Air (Overpass)*, and the screen dance and machine vision

³ Lilja, Efva, 'Artistic Creation in Troubled Times' Accessed 29th Sept. 2017. <http://www.radionz.co.nz/concert/programmes/upbeat/audio/201806684/artistic-creation-in-troubled-times>.

⁴ André Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics of, the task of the dancer," *The Drama Review* 57, no. 4 (2013): 14.

work, *Study # 1* and *Study # 2*, by Jennifer Nikolai and Gregory Bennett, Randerson draws attention to the invisible flows of energy that swirl beyond the edges of the body. Her essay brings together the work of Vilém Flusser on the universe of technical images, and Rosi Braidotti's post-humanism to articulate how such work, generated in proximity of technology, can be read through an attunement to the ambience generated by the less visible qualities of particles that "dance" as air, atmosphere, sound waves, and through the invisible apparatus of the camera. Randerson proposes we consider the choreo-political dimensions of this "dance," through the non-human agency of flows as a further dimension of experience that brings about a state of attunement that is non-hierarchical and beyond the binaries of representational apparatus.

For Michel Foucault, the intellectual's role is not to report on the truth but "to struggle against the forms of power that transform us into its object and instrument."⁵ The political anatomy of a "discipline" can be seen to mould the postures, attitudes and sensibilities of those who are subject to it. In this way, disciplinary techniques can be both coercive and productive. Disciplinary techniques in the fields of writing, dance and film operate in Rhea Speights contribution to this volume as the catalyst for a cross-talk highlighting the ways in which we might perform the post-disciplinary. In *The Carpet*, Speights uses conversation, between herself as a film-maker and herself as a dancer, to deconstruct patterns of fixity between disciplinary registers, uncoupling them and, at the same time seeking to explore the potential for new methods of making and experimenting in the space between.

Writerly and corporeal gestures that propose a kinetics of un-disciplining the canon come together in the mobilising of twentieth century dance history's hidden stories. *Shouting Across the Centuries: Affective archives and the politics of transmission*, takes hold of Foucault's claim that the new can be discovered in the returns of history. Proposing an "insistent dialogue," Brown explores the possibilities of returning to the diasporic traces of the Gertrud Bodenwieser method of Central European Ausdrucksstanz as a method of "release" from historical fictions which perpetuate injurious discourses of erasure. Beyond the mastery of a discipline, Brown's project develops new gestures and offers for the future, through a prosthetic extension of history, as a form of corporeal genealogy in relation to embodied archives and dancers' agency.

⁵ "Intellectuals and power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze" <https://libcom.org/library/intellectuals-power-a-conversation-between-michel-foucault-and-gilles-deleuze> accessed 15th November 2016.

Embodied knowledge operates as homage and/or critique in many of the writings in this volume as they zig-zag transversally between movements, actions, pedagogies, critical theories, and artistic processes. But what is the status of these diverse ways of thinking through dancing within the academic, community-based, professional and educational contexts they are located within?

Recent debates in dance studies identify tensions between dance as art and dancing as culture.⁶ The growth of Performance Studies has seen dance as a medium-specific discipline challenged by a renewed emphasis on the performativity of things as much as bodies. At the same time, there is an ongoing divide in many dance programmes between an emphasis on Western Theatre Dance, read as “contemporary dance,” and “cultural dance” approaches to the field.⁷ In this book, contemporary practitioners such as Moana Nepia, Yuki Kihara, Jochen Roller and Charles Koroneho, blur distinctions between ethnographic and choreographic, between professional and community, between theory and practice.

Theory and practice operate co-extensively in Māori contexts, and are rooted in the environment; in landscapes, seascapes, and cosmological narratives, and in genealogies of knowledge transmitted through oral and performative traditions. The weaving of words, actions and language through the land and in the physical pathways of learning the student embarks upon frame the post-disciplinary, not as something new, but ancient and enduring in indigenous Māori ontology. One way of understanding “theory” in this context is as *whai whakaaro*, which literally translates as “to follow the thought.” Emerging as it does through an event initiated in Aotearoa New Zealand, many of the essays in this collection engage with this conceptual space. The concluding essay in this collection by Māori scholar and artist Moana Nepia, returns us to the *powhiri* (Māori welcome) that initiated the Undisciplining Dance Symposium, at the University of Auckland’s Waipapa Marae. Nepia took up the *wero* or challenge in the question of what it is to become undisciplined in his opening keynote performance. Nepia’s practice and thinking, developed here in essay form, is rooted in *mātauranga* and *tikanga Māori*, in particular the Māori concept of void, *Te Kore*. Māori time-space, characterised by interconnectedness expressed as movement and positioning through *whakapapa*, a genealogical paradigm, is positioned here by Nepia as an invitation to contemporary practitioners and scholars into a conceptual-

⁶ Solomon, Noémie, “Inside/Beside Dance Studies: A Conversation: Mellon Dance Studies in/and the Humanities,” *Dance Research Journal* 45, no. 3 (December 2013): 5-28.

⁷ *Ibid*, Manning, S. 8.

corporeal-divine space that acknowledges and reconciles ancestral, cosmological and contemporary dimensions of experience. At the same time, he calls for accommodation of the maverick and the strange in this concluding essay that resonates with his performative voice.

Dancing, and especially the patterning of movement we call choreography is understood here as a mode of theorizing. The essays contained in this volume illuminate how dance practice theorizes corporeality, identity, otherness, non-material agencies, the taking place of performance and its relations with the divine. This vision of the field, as an undisciplined discipline, posits that dance studies differs in kind from other modes of enquiry within the humanities and social sciences. And, it proposes that creative documentation and performative writing is a way to mark that difference. Scholarship in this context has something to learn *from* the wisdom of the body as it directs our attention to contemporary issues of inclusion, diversity, indigeneity, radical forms of expression, hidden histories and movements of the choreo-political.

This un-disciplining of the discipline of dance proposes a choreopolitics of simultaneity. In resisting disciplinary silos, in working in the spaces between, matrices of exclusionary practices are contested and we open new “geometric possibilities”⁸ through unbinding limits to thought. This vibratory scholarship draws upon bodily sensation, movement memories and embodied difference to mark a new kind of work. Beyond the drive for mastery we move into unknown and partial spaces. Like Koroneho’s vivid articulation of how movement operates in ceremonies that activate space between the dead and the living, there is movement at the threshold between.

If dance studies as a field draws upon diverse contexts, knowledges and histories, it is also in the twenty-first century an assemblage of corporealities, agencies, environments and designs, both human and non-human. The growth of practitioner-scholars, the impact of somatic approaches to dance, performance studies and indigenous ontologies are strongly in evidence in these writings as they address the un-disciplining of discipline. Returning to Dempster’s call to think with and through performance, we propose a model of scholarship that foregrounds movement, and blooded thought as the ontological ground of (un)knowing.⁹

The prefix “un” in our title, *Undisciplining Dance* and in this introduction, *(Un)knowing Dancing*, proposes an opposing force of tension to what is assumed by the noun discipline and the verb knowing.

⁸ Donna Jeanne Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’ in *The Haraway Reader*. (New York, Routledge, 2004) 32.

⁹ Dempster, *ibid*.

Like a dance that is never singular, but always moving in at least two directions or orientations of space at once, these terms acknowledge that the construction of dance knowledge through an emerging process that combines somatic-corporeal, material, conceptual, ancestral, situated and choreo-political dimensions, seldom follows the sequence of disciplinary norms in the humanities and social sciences. Whereas to be an academic conventionally requires a thorough-going knowledge of one's discipline, its contexts and discourses, to make and create through dancing requires a continuous practice and a reflexive process of questioning and reconfiguring the registers of the discourse itself. Deborah Hay uses the analogy of house renovation to describe this process:

The questions that guide me through a dance are like the tools one would use for renovating an already existing house. Like a screwdriver being turned counter-clockwise, or a crow bar prying boards free from a wall, the dancer applies the questions to re-choreograph his/her perceived relationship to him/herself, the audience, space, time, and the instantaneous awareness of any of these combined experiences. The questions help uproot behaviour that gathers experimentally and/or experientially.¹⁰

Choreographic artists like Hay see their practice as a form of enablement for the invisible perceptual potentials of the body's conscious articulation of space and time. This rigorous process arising from a fidelity to practice and a reflexive engagement with what constitutes that practice involves unlearning how to dance as much as undoing the accretions of habitual thought patterns and movement codes. It does not presuppose an acquaintance with past models of practice or contemporary theory and philosophy, although these may help contextualize that practice and provide resources for facilitating the kind of critical and tacit knowledge that supports the construction, performance, teaching and reading of dances. Like Hay's description of her process, dance studies as a field entered the academy relatively recently and has been tasked with renovating an already existing house of knowledge. The "un" in un-disciplining in this context might be less a force of negative opposition than a turning, corkscrewing, spiralling action that rotates, releases and reconfigures our critical and creative "homes."

¹⁰ Deborah Hay, "How do I recognize my choreography?" (2007.) *The Deborah Hay Dance Company*. http://www.deborahhay.com/Notes_how_do_I.html.

It was twentieth-century Anglo-American discourses of modernism and postmodernism that created the “canon” for dance studies scholarship into the 1990s. However in the twenty-first century, claims of “racial blindness” have led to critiques of the historical hold of dance modernism on dance studies as a field.¹¹ Calls for both interdisciplinary and medium-specific dance research, challenge us to engage critically and imaginatively with the specificity of choreographed movement and the publics it addresses. Internationally, a diversified and decentred dance studies field embraces non-Western approaches to dance making and performances of (un)knowing. Dancers working in University programmes today draw on intellectual traditions other than those of Western modernism, including the relational thinking characteristic of Māori and other Pacific life worlds.

While we can come to know difference through dancing as a practice of somatic intelligence and interdisciplinary potential, the difficulty remains in getting this epistemological difference acknowledged and understood by the gatekeepers and regulators of academia. Predecessors chose to “play the game” and work within institutional constraints to change regulations and shape the professionalization of the field. They legitimized the discipline by relying on the canon of Western theatre dance, but this strategy was one of losing a place of openness “outside” what is known and enunciated by established discourses.

If dance studies is to find ways to theorize through states of performance marked by disorientation, instability, not-knowing, and indeterminacy in order that we might learn from them, how might it also become attentive to different ways of knowing, including cosmological thinking in the worlding of dance? Our hope is that the multifarious responses to the question of un-disciplining dance in these essays activates further dancing as serious play in the ebb, flow, and interruption of the spaces between academic and non-academic contexts, between scholarly and community practitioners, between professionals and non-professionals, and, crucially, between non-Western and Western forms of dance. If, as Dempster (citing Threadgold 1996) claims, becoming “disciplined” means being able to enact successfully the favoured discourses and narratives of the academic field and its genres, then we can also ask how doubt, uncertainty, and failure might create disorientation and loss of place, simultaneously offering challenging ways to learn of new potentialities within and across disciplines as well as genres of dance.

¹¹ Ramsay Burt, “The Specter of Interdisciplinarity” *Dance Research Journal* 41, no. 1 (2009): 3–22.

An evolving world demands continuously adaptable forms of creativity, it also demands recognition of the redundancy of those discourses that inhibit our ability to bring about a better future. Dance as research probes the angles and rhythms at the interfaces of performing bodies and performatively-constructed worlds. We overcome the division between thought and action through body gesture. The silent understanding of a gesture allows for the discovery of forgotten and misrecognised movements, shedding a different light on our corporeal generation, inventing new structures of thought.

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CHAPTER ONE

ARTISTS AS FACILITATORS OF CHANGE

EFVA LILJA

*The setting: When the audience enter they hear some “feel good” music, images projected on the screen, drawings and a lot of paper on the floor (the script from my last book), a monitor showing the documentation of *The Art of Dance in a Frozen Landscape (Arctic Ocean 2002)*, a music stand holding my text and some of my books, the score from my performance on the floor, handwritten text (my script for the talk) on transparent thin paper, me dancing, making drawings and more... a multitude of impressions. Just like in daily life.*

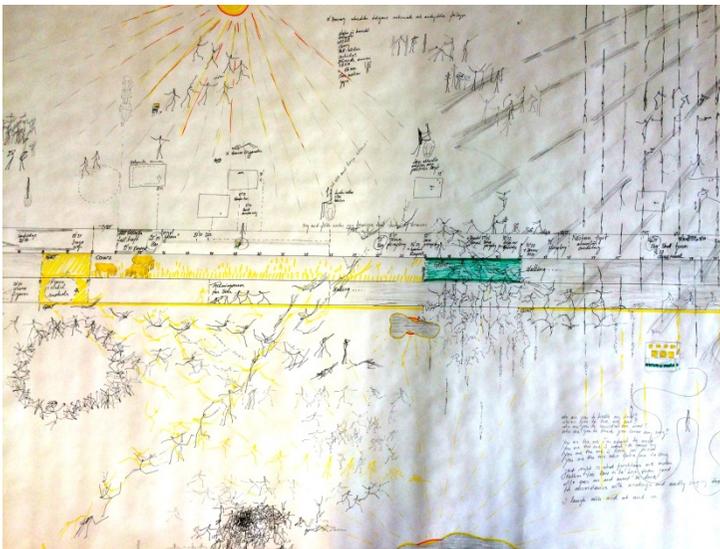


Figure 1.1 Efva Lilja, excerpt from the score *A House, A Cow, A Woman*, solo performance, 2015.

Whispering, squatting downstage left: The mists of what has been rise from the ground. The dead are taking a rest. Being able to lean on all they have said and done is a good thing, but what is it I have to do? It is the HERE and NOW I have at my disposal. It is now I am. All the rest will be played out in the future.

I am constantly reminded that the now I am living is the outcome of what I have previously lived and thought. What other people have lived and learnt. No single person can ever begin their life without baggage, nor can they live that life - or conclude it - without the past being present. Furthermore, we are supposed to live this now on the understanding that it will also determine what is to come, the future. Our existences, the world we live in, encompass memories, experiences and dreams about the future. It is in encountering this that we come into being. I inhabit an in-between space, the space between what was and what will be, the space between the person I was and the one I will be. History often blinds you. We dress conventions up as traditional figures and hesitate before the innovative, as if we are encountering a foreign language. Choreography becomes textual, a way of inscribing movement into the contemporary.

Walking in a circle: introducing myself and my plan for the talk.

Whispering, squatting centre stage, facing back: Dependence. We are all dependent. We human beings become human beings by being with other human beings. We are dependent on meeting others in order to catch sight of ourselves, of our ideas, thoughts, opinions and tastes. In my case, I feel that my powerful need to be alone comes from a need to work on all the things that come rushing at me when I encounter other people, impressions, and events. I cannot catch up with myself unless I get time to think about what each new experience amounts to, to feel my way around it, to try it out. I keep coming back to the question of meaning. Some people believe in God, I don't. Not believing in God means that I have to profess a different belief or a different view of meaning.

Dancing/humming

Standing by the stand: What makes us human? Perhaps it is our capacity for thought, our ability to communicate, or to love? Perhaps it is our capacity to imagine worlds and situations that are totally different to the ones we find ourselves in from day to day. We can make reality different. All we have to do is find the tools that suit us best, whether it's ideologies, politics, religion or the arts - as long as we don't get stuck and

stay enthusiastic. Enthusiasm is not incidental. As contemporary artists, we seek strategies to influence society through art, arouse individuals to be active and capable of taking a stand, of making a difference. To do this, we must move.

Exercise no. 7: Run barefoot as fast as you can in a small room. Put on good shoes. Run the fastest you can, as far as you can, across an open space. Walk back in and, standing still, express your experience of running.

Do it.

Stillness is the foundation of all movement. Stillness offers rest and awards our thoughts some space. To depart from stillness, you need a trigger. You may be out of balance, forced to make a movement to avoid falling, you may need an action to still your hunger or you are in a fit of coughing that seizes your entire body with spasms. Or, you are motivated simply by a thought that demands movement - a shift. Thinking pushes you forward, by intuition and other unconscious strategies.

We must work to expose alternative expressions, to bring spatial as well as conceptual sites into dialogue with both the contemporary and the traditional, to find enhanced living in movement. That is how attention is sharpened. That is how alternative expressions are created. The act of living embodied in and through movement. We see, hear and feel movements that are space and time at the same time. Some of that is dance.

Walking: To live and be observant demands training. Part of the training is undressing. *Taking my shoes and socks off.* The body is exposed to impressions that activate all the senses. The receptors on your skin react to mild or violent touch, to heat or frost. Your reaction is movement. You observe and read your surroundings, shifts in the terrain or in events, and respond with movement. You hear and react by moving. The body expresses experiences through movement. Training your sensitivity, your attention and your ability to move is a precondition for applying what you have lived, and for retelling this with new imagery and narratives. A measure of distraction serves to obstruct a precipitous clarity.

Standing on paper/ crumpling paper with my hands. In a loud voice: I choreograph the processes of thinking, transforming them into linguistic and audible layers. Through choreographed movement I speak of experiences, from experience, about the hierarchies that guide language, art and everyday life, about infrastructure, power and about who owns the right of interpretation. HALLO – CAN YOU HEAR ME? Much of this

daily brain wracking is unarticulated, a given state like breathing or coughing. Through observation of actions, by documenting, drawing, writing, dancing and engaging in dialogue with others, I train myself in the techniques of unmasking.

Singing something... dancing...
Putting socks and shoes on

Standing by the stand: Working is a way of dealing with imbalances. Choreography offers tools for the composition of physical and cognitive movements. Through choreographic actions we are stimulated to think beyond the commonplace, beyond what we have already seen and learnt to believe. All our senses are activated to see other improbabilities than those our so-called reality offers. Choreography operates dialectically and discursively; altering, preserving and transforming as a proactive artistic dimension in society. It offers a wealth of linguistic expressions for action, thought, reflection and awareness. You think and act through movement. Language has its abode in the body that is the foundation for thinking. Choreography is the practice of thinking transformed into survival strategies through action.

Talking/humming: Through these actions we unfold all the creases in the juxtaposition of layers that block our view. A well-developed ability to move, to observe movements, offers a language and a voice to the individual that is the foundation of democracy. Whoever listens carefully, will hear and interpret the on-going world and will be able to express whatever creates new movements. Whoever is in command of choreographic techniques can make use of experiences, insights, questioning and other strategies to influence others.

Talking normal: Dance and choreography are often referred to as silent art forms, since we are expected to work outside of verbal or literary formats. The presumption is that those who do not speak are silent. This is underpinned by how the dancer's identity is formed, generally dominated by physical skills training based on imitation and repetition. Studios are still equipped with mirrors to certify the physical progress. Dancers are to this day mostly supposed to work from the idea that the body is their only tool. This attitude is devastating, undermining both the dancer's confidence and understanding of the self. The dancer turns silent, since she is not expected to have a voice.