

Activating Intersubjectivities in contemporary dance Choreography

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## ABSTRACT

This doctoral project examines Maurice Merleau-Ponty's account of phenomenological intersubjectivity and addresses a gap between his account of intersubjectivity and intersubjectivities present in the contemporary dance event. This gap concerns a specific type of performative practice which highlights the tension between person and persona. In order to focus on this area of the gap, the methodologies of choreological studies, phenomenological intersubjectivity and original choreographic practice have been employed. There are current choreographers such as Jonathan Burrows, Atsushi Takenouchi and Angela Woodhouse as well as choreographers of the past such as those from the Judson Dance Theater whose work has revealed intersubjectivity. However, there has not yet been a reflective practitioner who has undertaken an analysis of Merleau-Ponty's ideas on intersubjectivity, questioned their relevance to the contemporary dance event and proposed developments to his account of intersubjectivity in relation to contemporary dance choreographic practice.

The research proposes a new synthesised account of intersubjectivities which is a development of Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity and promotes this new synthesised account of intersubjectivities as more relevant to the contemporary dance event which values empathy, human connection and immediacy.

The doctoral project undertakes a hybrid mode of investigation consisting of practice-based research and practice-led research to produce an outcome which is mixed-mode in format: a combination of academic and creative writing and DVD documentation. These processes of inquiry have prompted a shift in focus towards a part of the gap that addresses Contemporary Dance technique and has provoked a critique of this technique, looking instead to psychophysical training. This research therefore challenges European mainstream Contemporary Dance

technical training today with an aim to promote a meaningful, experiential engagement between the maker, performer and audience.

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Extended thanks to my father for countless philosophical discussions which truly informed this thesis and to my mother for having always encouraged my dancing. Finally, my deepest thanks go to my husband Iain Tucker who has supported me through the whole process with intelligence and humour.

## **Author Declaration**

1. During the period of registered study in which this dissertation was prepared the author had not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this dissertation has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.
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## Introduction

This doctoral project comprises a dialogue between contemporary dance practice and phenomenological intersubjectivity. The dialogue unfolds in the context of three premises. First, that as embodied<sup>1</sup> human beings we are capable of more than existing as vehicles for subjectivity (i.e. a non-dual perspective of mind and body). Second, this research locates itself within a hybrid research mode merging practice and theory and utilises a hybrid approach to practice-based research and practice-led research.<sup>2</sup> The use of this hybrid approach means that the new knowledge emerging from this study manifests in both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ forms. Robin Nelson<sup>3</sup> has devised a research model for Practice as Research that recognises three modes of knowledge with equal weight. His model validates ‘hard’ knowledge (traditional theoretical knowledge), ‘soft’ knowledge (embodied knowledge) and critical reflection. This doctoral project recognises Nelson’s model and uses it to provide a vocabulary for the dialogue that extends between contemporary dance practice and phenomenological intersubjectivity. The study accepts that both hard and soft knowledges are working together in an interdependent relationship to provide a complete picture of what this research has uncovered. The third premise under which this research operates is that European Contemporary Dance<sup>4</sup> has

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<sup>1</sup> Embodiment assumes that “consciousness is not ‘pure’, but exists within a membrane of flesh and blood” (Bullock & Trombley (Eds.) 1977:264)). Additionally, as Gail Weiss (1999:5) puts it, “The experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies.”

<sup>2</sup> Further information on these terms and a description of the hybrid model which I am using for this doctoral project will be explained later in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Robin Nelson works as a Professor in Contemporary Arts at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK.

<sup>4</sup> See pages 15-16 for an explanation of how this doctoral project differentiates between the terms ‘contemporary dance’ (lower case) and Contemporary Dance (proper noun).

lost its immediacy and become remote from audiences; a problem which stems from an imbalance in values where the importance of persona is placed over that of the person in mainstream Contemporary Dance training. For the purposes of this study the idea of persona embraces the view that “The persona is the character we adopt to play the part” (Dimbleby and Burton, 1998:57). Therefore this thesis advocates a type of contemporary dance training and performance that aims to highlight human presence over that of a persona deliberately adopted to enable the performer to represent something other than themselves.

Chapter 2 discusses why persona is a problem, and why and how Contemporary Dance technical training methods are perceived to be at least partially responsible. This third premise also assumes that immediacy is something that was in existence between performer and audience but is now lost. An anecdote is given in the next chapter which reflects historically on Contemporary Dance and which is used to shed light onto the root of the problem that lies within the value system upheld in Contemporary Dance training. This thesis advocates that this value system favours persona over person.

Therefore, the research question that this doctoral project addresses is: Could experiments in persona versus person in contemporary dance practice lead towards a strategy to activate (or de-activate) intersubjectivities in the contemporary dance event? The importance of intersubjectivity arises out of the first premise which assumes that as human beings, we are capable of more than existing as vehicles for subjectivity and this will be discussed in due course.

However, it must be highlighted initially that the subject of performance and the way in which this study relates to performance is pivotal. It will be argued that intersubjectivities are best fostered within an arena of non-performance. Non-performance paradoxically manifests itself as a laying bare of practical processes which aim to focus the attention of the members of the triadic relationship<sup>5</sup> on these processes within a performative frame. The terms: 'performance', 'performative' and 'non-performance' are complex in their relationship to this project and will be discussed in Chapters 1 and 4.

The term 'triadic relationship' was articulated by Valerie Preston-Dunlop (2002:12-16) to describe the inter-relationships between maker and performer, performer and performer and performer and audience. The terms: 'maker', 'performer' and 'appreciator' are used in the field of choreological studies and are substituted for the more traditional terms: 'choreographer', 'dancer' and 'audience' to illustrate that in the evolving genre of contemporary dance. These roles are not fixed. This thesis acknowledges the blurring of these roles and it adopts the terms: maker and performer in place of choreographer and dancer. Yet, the term appreciator is seen as problematic because it still implies passivity in the audience and denies them critical power by assuming that they will *appreciate* what they experience.

Performance theorist, Peggy Phelan, notes the 'need' of the spectator to participate empathically in performance and suggests the term 'witnessing' as a means of defining this engagement. The 'witness' to an event not only watches what unfolds before them but shares in the event by taking some degree of responsibility for the human experience they perceive. To 'bear

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<sup>5</sup> It is another paradox found within this research that the term intersubjectivity relies on the existence of a separately identified entity in order for 'inter' to take place.

witness' is to acknowledge the shared nature of our human experience and to refuse the option to be a passive recipient of action (Phelan in Etchells 1999:14). For a spectator to become thoroughly involved in the lives on stage they must feel that they are sharing in a spontaneous 'lived' moment *with* the performers. (Nunes Tucker, A. and Price, A. In McClean, C. and Kelly, R. 2010:192)

Terms such as 'witness' or 'experiencer' are perhaps more appropriate given the nature of this study; but both witness and experiencer are also characteristics found in the roles of maker and performer. Therefore, it becomes confusing to give the name witness or experiencer only to one role within the triadic perspective. For the sake of clarity I have chosen to reinstate the traditional term audience but it is not used without acknowledging the shortcomings of the term which still insinuate the passivity of the role.

The research question that this thesis addresses locates itself within the belief embedded in the first premise which proposes that mind and body are unified. This first premise serves to verify that as embodied human beings we are capable of more than existing as agents of subjectivity. This premise will be unpacked in Chapter 1 where the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity is proposed as a catalyst to explore the relationship between intersubjectivities and the contemporary dance event.<sup>6</sup> The word *intersubjectivities* has been used in the title as opposed to *intersubjectivity*, to illustrate that in the context of the dance event there is more than one intersubjective relationship

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<sup>6</sup> 'Dance event' will be used as a term throughout this work and will hold the definition assigned to it by Preston-Dunlop (2002:34), "[...] dance as an event includes the notion of process – of rehearsal, research, thinking, etc, which leads to the selection of what is relevant / essential to any work to be the work [...] process not only precedes, but is *not* [italics mine] excluded from the moment of performance."

present. This is the dynamically active triadic relationship involving maker, performer and audience. This study will propose that if efforts are made to blur the roles identified in the triadic relationship within the performative frame then this could aid in the activation of intersubjectivities.

Traditionally each of these perspectives is associated with a role; namely, a choreographer, a performer, an audience member. This tradition encourages the problematic assumption that choreographers create (and do not perform and do not appreciate), that performers perform (and do not create and do not appreciate) and that audiences appreciate (and do not perform and do not create). (Preston-Dunlop, 2002:12)

In practice, blurring the static orthodox nature of these roles challenges the subject/object divide between the members of the triadic perspective. Chapter 1, in its discussion of phenomenological intersubjectivity, will propose that within the intersubjectivities located within the triadic interrelationship the experience of intersubjectivity *itself* is multi-layered.

This research therefore points to Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity in order to support both a practical and theoretical investigation into the idea of intersubjectivity in contemporary dance. As the title of the thesis: *Activating Intersubjectivities in contemporary dance Choreography* suggests, intersubjectivities are something that can be activated or conversely, de-activated. This asserts that intersubjectivities are already present in contemporary dance and that there are means by which they can either be drawn out or inhibited. This adds another facet to the research question which incorporates the importance of the triadic perspective in the dance event. With that in mind, the research question is developed to read: Could experiments in persona versus person in dance practice

lead towards a strategy to activate (or de-activate) intersubjectivities across the triadic relationship in the contemporary dance event?

Before providing a brief chapter summary of the contents of this doctoral work, a clarification of further terms is necessary. The term 'contemporary dance' used in this study is not synonymous with the proper noun: Contemporary Dance.

Contemporary Dance refers to particular genres of dance,

[...] which includes the techniques of the American and German modern dancers (e.g. Graham, Cunningham, Leeder) and developments of the modern dance. Post-modernism, avant-garde dance, and the New Dance of British choreographers who use release-based techniques. The term 'Contemporary Dance' was coined following the setting up, by Robin Howard, of the Contemporary Ballet Trust in 1966, and later London Contemporary Dance Theatre. (Bassett in Preston-Dunlop (Ed.) 1995:18)

The Contemporary Dance scrutinised for its technical training methods in this thesis sits in a narrow band referring to European mainstream Contemporary Dance and does not include tanztheater.<sup>7</sup> Contemporary dance (lower case) adopts a much less rigid definition than Contemporary Dance.

Exactly what contemporary dance is, remains to be discussed, although we might generally agree that this work seeks to challenge and refresh our notions of what dance can be today. Beyond classical ballet, the modern dance presented a revised view of the dancer and the dancing body and of dances themselves. In our current time, contemporary dance fuels this revisionary tradition by continuing to ask: How is the body moved? When can our actions be called 'dance'? What might dance ask its audiences to respond to?  
(Anonymous, 2002)

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<sup>7</sup> "The name 'tanztheater' refers to a performance form that combines dance, speaking, singing and chanting, conventional theater and the use of props, set, and costumes in one amalgam. It is performed by trained dancers. Usually there is no narrative plot; instead, specific situations, fears, and human conflicts are presented. Audiences are stimulated to follow a train of thought or to reflect on what the production expresses. Tanztheater has been described as a new twist on an old form: German Expressionism." Langer, R. (1984:14)

This study's scrutiny of Contemporary Dance is contextualised by my own placement within a subfield of contemporary dance (lower case) that encompasses improvisation, somatic practice, and image work adopted from the butoh dance tradition. This specific area represents my own dance training history. The initial dance training I received was rooted in the American modern and post-modern dance lineage.<sup>8</sup> My mother was a dancer and dance teacher throughout my childhood. She worked in a studio where I participated in classes in free improvisation. In these classes we danced with all sorts of things: scarves, hula-hoops, cellophane and sticks. As these classes took place in California and the weather was often fine, we frequently took the dancing outside into parks and beaches. Later, when I undertook my first degree in dance in 1990 I studied codified techniques such as Graham, Cunningham, Limon and Humphrey. Then, nearly a decade later, after years of living and working in a yoga community in the mountains of northern California and after the completion of my Masters degree in dance from Laban (London), I embarked upon an intensive period of self-motivated study in more alternative movement forms and I became interested in somatic practices.

Somatic practices investigate movement as a mode of thinking and researching.

Martha Myers describes somatics as a practice that,

“[...] explores beneath the level of gross muscle action and deals with the subtleties of individual movement, deepening awareness and the critical ability to sense and respond to micro-movements of the soma.” (2008:90)

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<sup>8</sup> In this study, 'post-modern era' refers to the late 1960s onwards. See Banes (1994:48).



It was Martha Myers whose initial writings on “Body Therapies” spurred the dance world’s interest in somatic education in the 1980s (IADMS and Batson, 2009:1). The focus somatic practices took on movement awareness and its underlying philosophy of “dismembering mind-body dualism in pursuit of personal autonomy” (ibid) provided an alternative as well as a complimentary pedagogy to that existing within traditional dance. Somatic practices allow for a focal shift from product to process whereby emphasis is placed on internal experience rather than on an external aesthetic. My extensive training in yoga and the improvisational work I was exposed to at Laban under the guidance of Rosemary Butcher who “was the first British choreographer to absorb the ideas of the Judson Church postmodern artists” (Meisner in Butcher and Melrose, 2005:38) supported the characteristics of somatic practice. Therefore, the work I started to undertake in Feldenkrais, the Alexander Technique and Pilates all felt very accessible.<sup>9</sup> When I started teaching dance in universities in 2003 my technique classes retained the flavour of somatic practices.<sup>10</sup> I devised a series of warm-up exercises for my students that promoted anatomical and physiological exploration and deliberately avoided the use of

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<sup>9</sup> In some sources, Pilates is listed as a somatic practice. See Fitt, S. (1996:xii and 304), Fraleigh, S. and Hanstein, P. (1999:221) and Paskevaska, A. (2005:4). Yet there is some discrepancy around its categorization. According to Leena Rouhiaine, “The exercises of the Pilates Method are not open-ended. They involve a defined goal and require a specific manner of performance. In addition, in its classical form as taught by Pilates himself, the method was a vigorous regime executed according to a command style of pedagogy. Perhaps owing to these features that are still to an extent visible in current practice, there has been some prejudice against placing the Pilates Method in the somatic category. Nonetheless, if we think of Hanna’s emphasis on first-person perception and bodily regulation, the Pilates Method could be considered a somatic practice” (2006:123).

<sup>10</sup> “The twentieth century was characterized by more porous boundaries within dance education, with influences from Contact – and other forms of improvisation, Skinner Release Technique and other forms of ‘Release’ work, ethnic dance, martial arts, and circus performance [...] not only solo and collaborative movement explorations but also imagery, touch, voice, music and even technology could become the primary creative stimulus for helping expanding the arena of mind-body (and therefore dance) training” (IADMS and Batson, 2009:1).

mirrors and rigid timing. I became a strong advocate for feeling over form and I pressed my students to seek the internal experience as opposed to aiming for the imitation of physical shapes.

Teaching had the effect of drawing out my personal values concerning my own dance practice and it was around this time in my early career as a Lecturer in Dance that I sought training in butoh dance. Although traditionally a highly codified form, the butoh dance to which I was exposed was less about the rigidity of the form and more about the internal experience. My teachers were also second and third generation successors to the founders of the butoh tradition and had let go of a concern for aesthetic shape making. The butoh I learned and later performed was primarily aimed at manifesting physically the internal landscape. This shared an expressionistic trait as found in modern dance but I did not find this restricting. On the contrary, it enabled me to access a more radical movement vocabulary. Butoh's interest in death and suffering allowed for an expansion of my movement vocabulary in terms of physical expression and its use of improvisation mirrored my early childhood exposure to free dance movement. The facets of my training consisting of improvisation, somatic practices and butoh dance have served to construct a perspective on contemporary dance that values empathy, human connection and immediacy, thereby navigating the research question toward a manifestation of these values.

Returning to the three premises that were proposed at the beginning of this Introduction it is important to identify how and where these premises fit into the overarching structure of the thesis. The integration of mind and body is considered in Chapter 1. Chapter 1 provides an account of Merleau-Ponty's views on intersubjectivity but also proposes a new synthesised account of intersubjectivities which is used to address the dynamic triadic relationship in a performing situation. The proposed synthesised account of intersubjectivities acknowledges Merleau-Ponty's views on the subject but also elucidates states of consciousness that are not identified by him. Chapter 1 therefore begins to tackle the research question: Could experiments in persona versus person in dance practice lead to a strategy to activate (or de-activate) intersubjectivities across the triadic relationship in the contemporary dance event? The question is tackled by discussing Merleau-Ponty's ideas on intersubjectivity as applied to contemporary dance performance and proposes that intersubjectivity is offered in degrees, supported by a multi-layered construct.

The second premise under which this research operates pursues the claim that European mainstream Contemporary Dance has lost its immediacy and become remote from audiences; a problem which I argue stems from an imbalance in values where, in Contemporary Dance technical training the importance of a performance persona is privileged over that of the person. The bulk of this premise is addressed in Chapter 2 where issues concerning persona versus person and training methods are discussed. Chapter 2 also begins to disentangle the research

question by proposing four practical training methods/processes which aim to reveal person and deactivate persona. These methods/processes I have called: *reaction*, *readiness*, *repetition* and *replication*. Each of these will be discussed and scrutinised using documented choreographic practice, critical reflection and analytical methods within choreological studies (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002).

In Chapter 3 the characteristics of *reaction*, *readiness*, *repetition* and *replication* will be identified in a selection of choreographic works by dance makers Jonathan Burrows, Atsushi Takenouchi and Angela Woodhouse. Alongside the critical analysis of these choreographic works, Chapter 3 will discuss how these works deal with the issue of intersubjectivity. These particular dance artists were chosen in the early stages of this doctoral project for their relevance to this study. Since the commencement of this doctoral research in 2001, it is recognised that although these particular artists address intersubjectivity in their work, they are not the only contemporary dance artists who now do this. As this research progressed and as the presentation of research in Chapter 3 will illustrate, glimpses of intersubjectivities in performance are becoming less obscure and other dance makers have taken up the challenge of promoting intersubjectivity in performance.<sup>11</sup> Chapter 3 also examines the first of three original choreographic

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<sup>11</sup> A recent research project (running from October 2005-June 2009) managed by Stanford University, USA, University College London and Exeter University, UK looks at the issue of 'performing presence'. Presence, as highlighted in this doctoral project, is a key element of consideration in relation to the activation of intersubjectivities. 'The Presence Project', as it is aptly named, looks mainly at the work of theatre practitioners but does not exclude those working with psychophysical training methods (as addressed in Chapter 3) such as Tim Etchells (of Forced

works created for this doctoral project: *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005). This choreographic work brings deeper reflection to the research question: Could experiments in persona versus person in dance practice lead towards a strategy to activate (or de-activate) intersubjectivities across the triadic relationship in the contemporary dance event?

Chapter 4 examines the research question in more detail by suggesting ways in which intersubjectivities might be activated. In the course of unravelling this, a mode of performance paradoxically called 'non-performance' is introduced. Chapter 4 recognises a junction in the research; a crossroads at which sits an idealised state of absolute merging which proposes an unfragmented knowledge of self as described in Eastern philosophical schools of thought.<sup>12</sup> This junction is acknowledged but not pursued as it opens up an area of philosophy too vast for the scope of this study. Chapter 4 also considers the qualities of a performance frame for non-performance. Again, the methodology of choreological studies is employed here, facilitating a discussion of how conflict between the interests of performance and non-performance can de-activate intersubjectivities. This discussion is contextualised within the second of the original choreographic works created for this doctoral project: *Living La Pedrera* (2006). Critical reflection upon this work shows how and why what was attempted in terms of activating

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Entertainment), Bella Merlin, Vayu Naidu, Mike Pearson, Mike Brookes, Fiona Templeton and Phillip Zarrilli. See: <http://presence.stanford.edu>: 3455/Collaboratory/Home

<sup>12</sup> A description of an unfragmented knowledge of self is referenced in ancient yogic texts called the Siva Sutras (late 9<sup>th</sup> century). A state of consciousness called *mayiya* meaning 'a fragmentation of knowledge where everything is experienced in terms of a subject/object split, is contrasted with a state of consciousness called *jnana* meaning 'knowledge'. The knowledge that is described as *jnana* is aimed at acquiring a state called *samadhi*, where there is no perceived divide between object and self. (Hari Dass, 1981 and Pomedá, 2007).

intersubjectivities was not achieved and thereby expresses what was learnt generally about creating conditions for a proposed new mode of performance called 'performative non-performance'.

Chapter 5 speaks to choreographic research carried out between 2007-2009 with performers Louise Douse, Annie Lok and Alex Staines. This chapter includes the third choreographic work made for this doctoral project: *Grappling* (2009). The work was made in response to the lessons learnt from the previous two works: *Dismantle Map* and *Living La Pedrera*. The chapter re-addresses the performance frame and illuminates further experiments in persona versus person in dance practice which have worked towards a strategy to activate intersubjectivities in the contemporary dance event.

This doctoral project exists within a mixed mode of research which is a hybrid form of practice-based and practice-led research. It is not easy to pin down definitions for the various terms 'practice as research', 'practice-based research' and 'practice-led research', nor is it straightforward to articulate how they differ from other current modes of study such as: performance as research, research through practice, research by practice or research into practice. Like Angela Piccini,<sup>13</sup> one wonders, "whether distinctions are helpful" (2002). Nevertheless, it is worth providing at least generalised definitions of the main modes of research that are

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<sup>13</sup> Angela Piccini was a Post-Doctoral Researcher on the Practice as Research in Performance (PARIP) project. See [www.bris.ac.uk/parip](http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip)

adopted by this study. First, however, a working definition of practice as research is provided:

Practice as Research is research through performance practice, to determine how that practice may be developing new insights into or knowledge about the forms, genres, uses, etc. of performance. (Kershaw in Piccini, 2002)

The hybrid mode of research used in this study utilises both practice-based research and practice-led research and these are defined as follows:

Practice-based Research is an original investigation under-taken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. If a creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-**based**. (Candy, 2006:1-3)

Practice-led Research is where the primary focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice. If the research leads primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-**led**. (Candy, 2006:1-3)

The hybrid form used for this doctoral project has come about because, as opposed to applying a pre-formed research method before commencing this study, the research methodology developed in response to the evolving nature of the research enquiry. Like the action research<sup>14</sup> methods which preceded these new forms (e.g. practice as research, practice-based research, practice-led research), the practical (action) and theoretical aspects of the research share an interrelationship. The development of the practice had an effect on the research question and the theory implemented to tackle the question fed into and affected the practice. Therefore, a cycle where practice and critical reflection and theoretical interrogation were continually over-lapping and becoming interwoven manifested in

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<sup>14</sup> See McTaggart, 1997

a method which could not be pigeon-holed into practice-*based*, practice-*led* or practice as research.

The hybrid mode of research used for this study therefore supports 'practitioner-based enquiry'<sup>15</sup> and honours the role of the reflective practitioner.

A reflective practitioner must be attentive to patterns of phenomena, skilled at describing what he observes, inclined to put forward bold and radically simplified models of experience, and ingenious in devising tests of them compatible with time constraints of an action setting. (Schön in Murray and Lawrence, 2000:27)

Operating within the role of a reflective practitioner, the research in this study is partly practice-based because the new knowledge offered by way of a synthesised account of intersubjectivities for the contemporary dance event came about through original choreographic practice and practitioner-based enquiry / critical reflection on the outcomes of that practice. The original choreographic practice has been documented in an unedited form on DVD 1 accompanying this written thesis.<sup>16</sup> This creative artefact is the basis for the development of the synthesised account of intersubjectivities proposed as a result.

Additionally, the research in this study is partly practice-led because although a proposed synthesised account of intersubjectivities emerged as an outcome of this doctoral project, the focus of the research was propelled by a desire to offer

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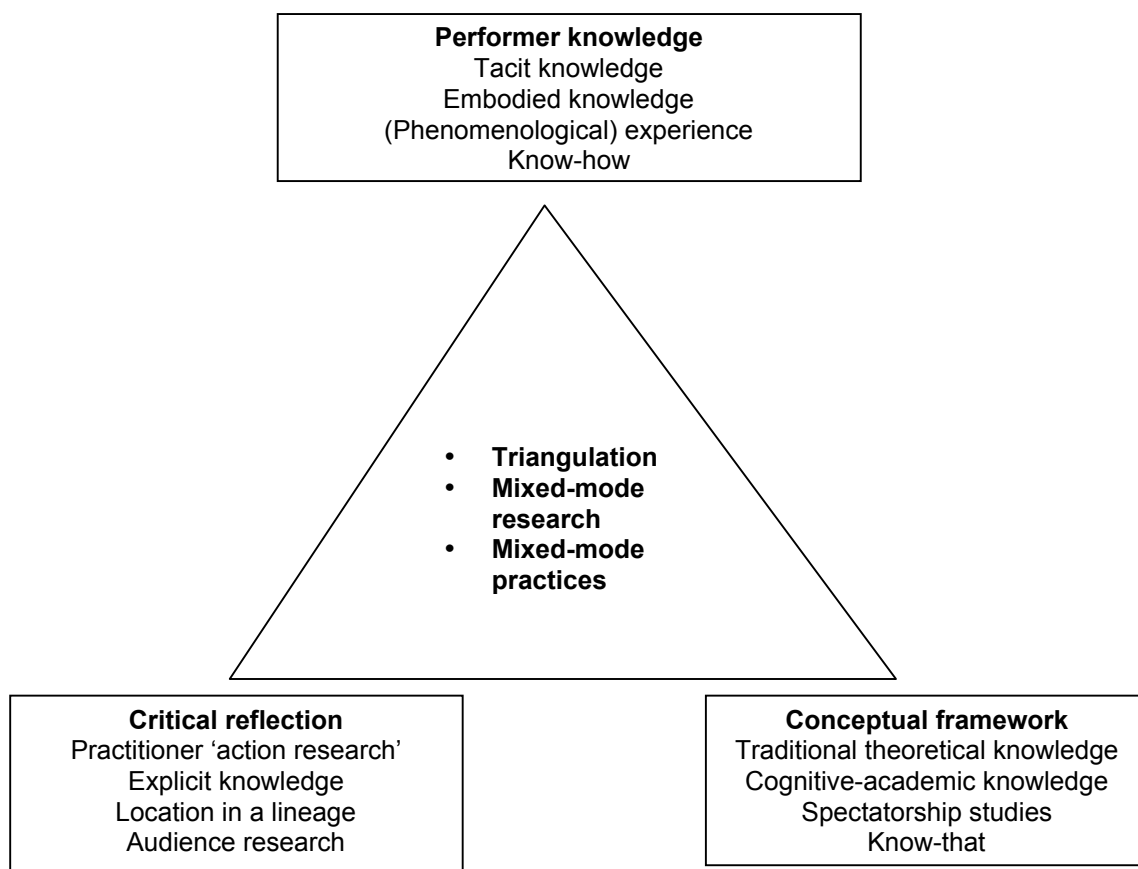
<sup>15</sup> Practitioner-based Enquiry (PBE) is a methodology used originally in the fields of education and nursing (Murray and Lawrence, 2000) However, recently (2005) movements have been made to apply its principles to research in the creative industries (See McIntyre, 2006)

<sup>16</sup> See Caroline Rye (2003) and Elena Cologni (2003) who, as performance researchers, provide varying opinions on the dissemination and documentation of knowledges which arise from 'practice as research' projects.



original knowledge in the form of contemporary dance choreographic practice. The outcomes concerning the framing for a contemporary dance event with a value for empathy, immediacy and human connection lie within the parameters of practice-led research.

Within this hybrid mode of research there are varying types of knowledges that arise. In 2003 Robin Nelson devised a model for testing these varying types of knowledges; within it he configures a triangulation of data sets for practice as research in performance.



*Figure 1: Robin Nelson's analytic model as suggested for use in Practice as Research projects (Nelson, 2003)*

It is important to highlight that first, Nelson's model is relatively new (2003) and Practice as Research PhDs were awarded before the development of his model.<sup>17</sup> It is also important to point out that Nelson's model was devised to address types of knowledges found in practice as research. This thesis will use some of Nelson's terminology to identify and cross-reference the varying types of knowledges emerging from the study in order to support the findings produced but it will also look to the scholarly work of Max Van Manen.<sup>18</sup> Information from Nelson's model will be bolstered by Van Manen's research to support discussions in practitioner-based enquiry (PBE) and critical reflection found in this written thesis.

The hybrid research mode of this study which takes into account PBE also utilises the methodologies of choreological studies, phenomenological intersubjectivity and choreographic practice. Given the nature of the research question posed by this project, these particular methodologies have been selected to enable both an exploration of embodied thinking and practically applied theoretical thinking. Therefore, the knowledges produced through this doctoral project are offered in a mixed-mode format. This includes, in addition to this written thesis, DVD documentation which contains the three original choreographic works: *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005), *Living La Pedrera* (2006), *Grappling* (2009) and an untitled solo improvisation (2004) and my personal website: [www.newnessdance.org.uk](http://www.newnessdance.org.uk) (available online but also documented on DVD in the appendix of this written

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<sup>17</sup> See for example, PhDs by Carol Brown (1995), Chris Bannerman (1998) and Sarah Rubidge (2000).

<sup>18</sup> Max Van Manen works as a Professor of Education and specialist in phenomenological pedagogy at the University of Alberta in Canada. He has undertaken research (2002) into phenomenological modes of knowing that contribute to the understanding of human relations.

thesis). Inclusion of documentation of the website serves to evidence an ordered source of systematic data for analysis in a written record.

It is in writing up the exegesis that the knowledge obtained through reflective practice is revealed to the world and which allows the research activity to be appraised by peers leading to publicly verifiable outcomes. The [written record] is designed therefore, as an adjunct to the creative work, giving access at a public knowledge and not a substitute for that creative work. (McIntyre, 2006:8-9)

It should be noted that the mixed-mode format in which this research is offered deliberately does not include audience surveys or questionnaires, as the stance that this research takes does not support their relevance to the study.

Phenomenological inquiry, original choreographic practice and practitioner-based enquiry are approaches used in this research which by their nature are incongruous with the typically scientific modes of acquiring data. Thomas Wilson, argues that,

Phenomenology is not a testing mode of research nor is it one that must be guided by theoretical models. Rather, one is urged to get as close as possible to what the participants in the behaviour of interest are experiencing. Phenomenology demands that we seek to discover the world as it is experienced by those involved in it. It is about the nature of human experience and the meaning that people attach to their experiences. (2002:11)

The mode of data collection that Wilson proposes instead of qualitative or quantitative methods is best illustrated by his model on the following page.

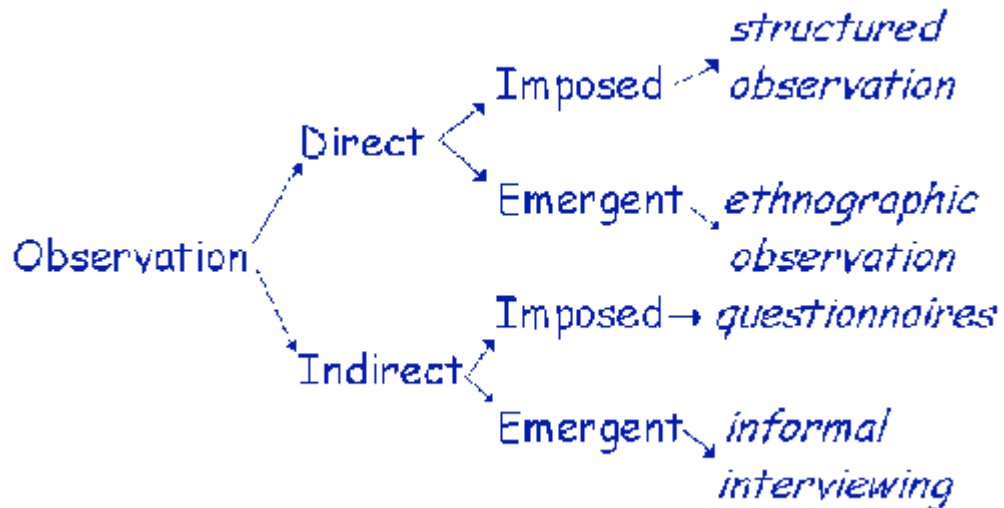


Figure 2: Wilson's model of research methods appropriate to phenomenological research

Wilson explains that in regards to phenomenological inquiry,

Observation is the fundamental method of data collection, and that this may be divided into direct observation by the researcher and 'indirect' observation where the researcher collects self-observations from respondents. Either of these modes may have structure imposed on the data collection by the researcher or s/he may allow structure to 'emerge' in the process of analysis. (2002:10)

McIntyre argues that,

Even those who value self-observations as a tool for empirical study disagree regarding when to obtain observational data. Some contend that if observations are obtained during the performance of a task, the very act of observing the performance changes it. (2006:8)

This doctoral project, following a hybrid approach to the research consisting of practice-based and practice-led research and utilising the methodologies of choreological studies, phenomenological intersubjectivity and choreographic practice, will produce outcomes which are mixed-mode in format. The data supplied that addresses analysis and critical reflection of choreographic work takes

the form of traditional matrices found in the methodology of choreological studies and this type of data is offered in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Yet, the methodologies of phenomenological intersubjectivity and choreographic practice, both of which produce more tacit knowledge, have aligned the presentation of their related findings with the views put forward by McIntyre and Wilson. The data related to phenomenological intersubjectivity has followed an observational track but only follows the emergent route (see Wilson's model). In other words, based on the fact that phenomenology is about the experience of the lived moment, imposed lines of data collection were dismissed. This decision was made because surveys and questionnaires which suggest pre-formed interpretations on choreographic work belong to a different type of research project, perhaps one that is located in a positivist realm and not a phenomenological one.

## Chapter 1 Philosophical Context: Intersubjectivity

In accordance with the hybrid form of the methodological processes undertaken for this project, Merleau-Ponty's theories concerning intersubjectivity are applied to the performance situation. These theories are used as a springboard from which to launch my ideas about intersubjectivity in the context of performance and in particular contemporary dance performance. In this respect, a series of states of consciousness has been proposed in the form of markers in order to identify a new synthesised account of intersubjectivities. This synthesised account of intersubjectivities, therefore, is based on and extends beyond Merleau-Ponty's theories on intersubjectivity.

Merleau-Ponty asserts that there can be two views of the body: the first, where I experience my body for me and the second, where my body is for others.

It is indeed not enough to say that the objective body belongs to the realm of 'for others', and my phenomenal body to that of 'for me', and we cannot refuse to pose the problem of their relations, since the 'for me' and the 'for others' co-exist in one and the same world, as is proved by my perception of an other who immediately brings me back to the condition of an object for him. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:106)

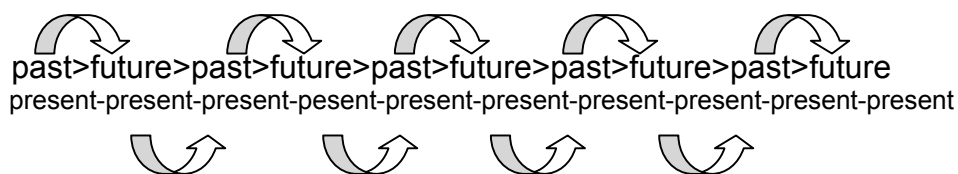
This statement of Merleau-Ponty's offers support to the idea that there are changing conditions (which are named and illustrated in the form of diagrams in the following section of this chapter) within the intersubjective experience and that these conditions are in a constant state of flux. These fluctuating conditions simultaneously uphold Merleau-Ponty's view that: the union of soul<sup>19</sup> and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object,

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<sup>19</sup> Merleau-Ponty uses the term 'soul' to illustrate his non-dualistic stance. He does not however, debate his use of the term nor does he refer to its religious connotations.

brought about by arbitrary decree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence (1962:88-89).

The moment to moment shifting of conditions within the intersubjective experience is further endorsed by Merleau-Ponty's assertion of our lived consciousness of time.



*Figure 3: Original visual representation of my understanding of Merleau-Ponty's explanation of our lived consciousness of time. The diagram illustrates that our lived present is always stretched between the past that is slipping away and the future that is coming into being. What the diagram cannot depict is that according to Merleau-Ponty, these coincide (i.e. they are not happening in an order); they are gradual accumulations of retentions constantly expanding and enveloping one another (Brassier, 2004, March 16 [lecture]).*

Merleau-Ponty's theory of the lived consciousness of time sheds some light on the relationship between lived experience and reflection. In the act of reflecting back on past experience, an objectification of the experience has occurred.<sup>20</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty's views on the lived experience of time<sup>21</sup> all of our experiences overlap and simultaneously affect one another. It is because of the overlapping and concurrent nature of lived experience that this thesis proposes a synthesised account of intersubjectivities.

<sup>20</sup> See Bergson (2005 [1<sup>st</sup> printed 1908]: 9-16) *Matter and Memory* for theories on reflections back to virtual experiences. Although Bergson offers in-depth research about how our consciousness is not confined to actual experience, his notion of virtuality in relationship to the lived experience will not be discussed in this study. Similarly, Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theories on the imagination and imagined experiences will not be covered here. However both Bergson and Lacan contribute significantly to the study of reflection. See: Homer (2005:17-20) *Jacques Lacan*.

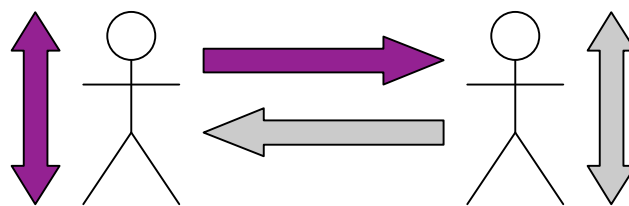
<sup>21</sup> See Merleau-Ponty (1962:420-433)

## 1.1 Phenomenological Intersubjectivity

This section serves to illustrate, in the form of diagrams, the changing conditions which shift moment to moment within our intersubjective experiences. Merleau-Ponty explains:

The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which find their unity when I either take up my past experiences in those of the present, or other people's in my own. For the first time the philosopher's thinking is sufficiently conscious not to anticipate itself and endow its own results with reified form in the world. The philosopher tries to conceive the world, others and himself and their interrelations. (1962:xx)

If intersubjectivity can be simply defined as: an experience which occurs when two or more people engage in perceiving one another whilst perceiving themselves; then the questions posed by this doctoral project require that the idea of phenomenological intersubjectivity and phenomenological intersubjectivity in the context of contemporary dance be unravelled.



*Figure 4: Visual representation of “phenomenological intersubjectivity -- our mutual corporeal experiencing” (Sanchez-Colberg, 1999, March 4 [lecture])*

Because the synthesised account of intersubjectivities being proposed in this thesis incorporates *degrees of intersubjectivity*, it is important to illustrate that if alterations are made to the make-up of the simplistic intersubjective model (*figure*



4) then the evidence supporting the notion of *degrees of*, or *layers to* intersubjectivity is revealed.

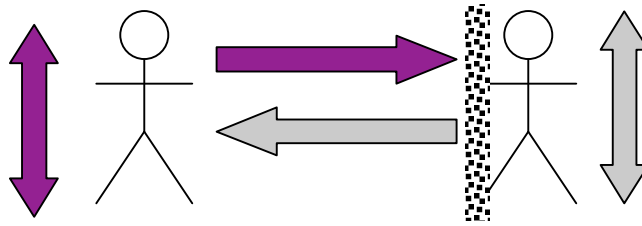
The original model (as seen on the previous page) illustrates one situation: each person perceives the other whilst perceiving themselves. This thesis takes the position that every encounter with another person is an intersubjective one. This chapter will both argue in support of this position and also show how different states of consciousness may heighten one's awareness of the experience of *degrees of* or *levels to* intersubjectivity.

This chapter also raises the possibility of a barrier<sup>22</sup> to the more saturated levels of intersubjectivity which could be put in place by one or both people. This barrier would potentially alter the way in which the other is perceived. The barrier to deeper levels of intersubjectivity or rather, a causal factor in the de-activation of intersubjectivities in the contemporary dance context, is identified in this study as performance persona<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> It is recognised that different types of hindrances to the intersubjective experience (although they are not named barriers as such) are proposed by Merleau-Ponty. See Merleau-Ponty; e.g. his discussion of patients with neural damage and their way of relating to the world. However, it is the notion of performance persona (which lies outside of Merleau-Ponty's theories) that is proposed in this study as relevant to the research questions and an extension to his theoretical position.

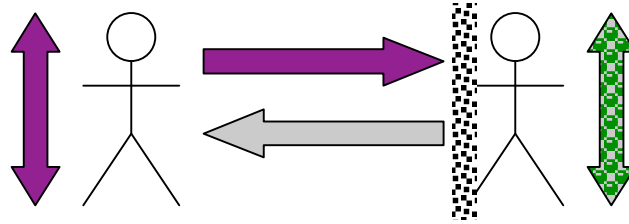
<sup>23</sup> Performance persona is described in depth in Chapter 2. It is also recognised that there may be numerous barriers to the deeper levels of intersubjectivity. However, this study posits the barrier of performance persona because of its relevance to Contemporary Dance technical training.



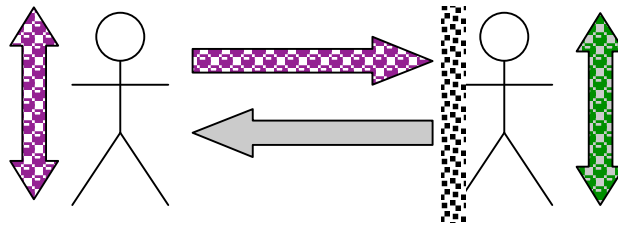
*Figure 5: Original visual representation of intersubjectivity with the inclusion of a barrier: The barrier (illustrated by the black and white patterned strip to the left of the person on the right) is represented as something which is semi-permeable and therefore has not been made solid in colour. This is to show that although something has been placed in the path of intersubjectivity, perception of self and other still occurs; it is not completely blocked as the term barrier may imply.*

Because one component of this intersubjective equation has been altered (i.e. a barrier has been inserted), ramifications for the other components arise. A barrier put in place by one person will be perceived by the other, thus changing the nature of the mutual experiencing which occurs in the case of intersubjectivity. Merleau-Ponty (1964:31) said, “I do not see how anyone could posit the other without the self; it is an impossibility for my experience.” The balance of this mutual sense of perceiving will be disturbed by the presence of a barrier and may result in a breakdown of the structure, with the result that deeper levels of intersubjectivity may not occur.<sup>24</sup> This proposition will be illustrated first through the use of diagrams (figures 6-8) and then contextualised in terms of Merleau-Ponty’s theories.

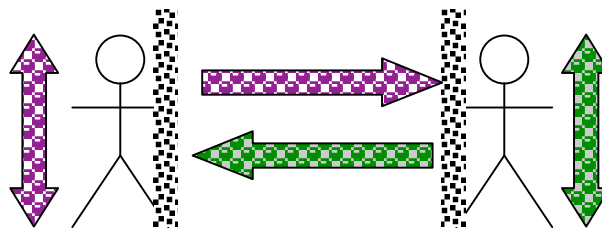
<sup>24</sup> The identification of the proposed deeper layers are discussed later in this chapter.



*Figure 6: Original visual representation showing how a change (denoted by patterning in the arrow on the right referring to self-perception) in one person's self-perception could trigger the formation of a barrier.*



*Figure 7: Original visual representation showing how the barrier, once perceived by the other person, affects both the way they perceive the other and the way they perceive themselves.*



*Figure 8: Original visual representation showing how an alteration in perception may result in the formation of a double-barrier thereby changing the way each person perceives self and other.*

These proposed structural changes come about firstly because, according to Merleau-Ponty, we reflect back on our experiences and make a judgement about them. Additionally, our perception of ourselves is influenced by our perception of

others. It is important to note that these shifts and alterations within the intersubjective experience are in a constant state of flux and it is only in the act of reflecting back on the experience and making a judgement about it that it is possible to ascertain at what level or to what degree an intersubjective experience has occurred. However, reflection does not constitute an accurate account of the experience because it is always tainted by perception of self. Merleau-Ponty says, "...the unreflected [*irréfléchi*] comes into existence for us only through reflection" (1964:30) and describes perception itself as paradoxical, insofar as things can exist only upon the condition that there is someone there to perceive them (ibid: 16). As the findings of this research unfold, it will become evident how the layers, or degrees of intersubjectivity, are informed by the act of reflection.

The reflective element as described by Merleau-Ponty in his account of phenomenological intersubjectivity is what allows for a deepening of knowledge of oneself through another.<sup>25</sup> Merleau-Ponty's basis for this is that his philosophy is first and foremost a philosophy of embodiment. He locates his philosophy within the premise that the body and mind are not separate.

When René Descartes discussed the *cogito*<sup>26</sup> in 1641, his discussion was situated within a dualist perspective, supporting the view that the mind and body were

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<sup>25</sup> Nelson (see page 25) would articulate this sense of knowledge as 'embodied knowledge', knowledge which is gained through phenomenological experience.

<sup>26</sup> The term *cogito, ergo sum* ~ 'I think, therefore I am' was introduced by René Descartes (1596-1650) to articulate the philosophical principle that establishes "the existence of a being from the fact of its thinking or awareness" (Pearsall, (Ed). 2001:277). Descartes arrived at this principle through the method of systematic doubt. In using this method he "determined that he would believe nothing which he did not see quite clearly and distinctly to be true. Whatever he could bring himself to doubt, he would doubt, until he saw reason for not doubting it. By applying this method he gradually

separate things. Merleau-Ponty challenged this view and reconstituted Descartes' idea of *cogito* into one which acknowledged that we are not absolute consciousness but rather, consciousness embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:371). Merleau-Ponty understood our interactions with others to be intersubjective interactions because of our mutual experiencing of our lived body. Merleau-Ponty states that this lived body is one which is both psychological and physiological (1962:87-89) and emphasises that these two things are not separate.

The lived body experiences through a synthesis of both object-body and subject-body. The objectification of one's own body occurs when the body is perceived from the outside and can be objectified via the act of touching or looking, for example. The subjectification of one's body is the identification of one's body as the subject who is experiencing. Merleau-Ponty says, "I cannot understand the function of the living body except by enacting it myself..." (1962:75); because the lived body contains this sense of self-recognition, it can be concluded that the 'lived body', by which Merleau-Ponty means a body which is interfaced with the world through embodied flesh, is more than an object. This fact of embodiment makes us incarnate subjects, capable of more than being a vehicle for subjectivity.

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became convinced that the only existence of which he could be *quite* certain was his own. If he doubted, he must exist; if he had any experiences whatever, he must exist" (Russell, 1912:7-8).

## 1.2 Intersubjectivities and contemporary dance

The first section of this chapter offered a conceptual framework in which to discuss intersubjectivities based upon the theoretical knowledge offered by Merleau-Ponty. This second section will provide critical reflection on the idea of intersubjectivities by locating the desire for human connection within the lineage of authenticity in contemporary dance. A definition of the engagement with performance work in an authentic way was offered by Dwight Conquergood as the process in dynamic performance of undergoing “a shift from mimesis to kinesis” (1989:83). For the purposes of this study authenticity is defined as “the moments in which the performer offers a state of being-in-the-moment as themselves in place of a character” (Nunes Tucker, A. and Price, A. 2009, 26 June [key-note conference presentation]). This working definition has been articulated out of the idea in existentialist philosophy whereby “If a person is inauthentic...then in a sense that person is not really who they are. Their real self is masked from themselves and others by the compromise of role, speech and gesture” (Priest, 1998:41-42). Words like ‘naturalistic’ and ‘real’ would be misleading to use in this context because they connote larger movements in philosophical and scientific debate.<sup>27</sup> The term ‘authenticity’ therefore, defined in the manner used for this study, permits a discussion of the individual as dancing human being by focusing the debate on the issue of performance persona.<sup>28</sup> This study proposes that performance persona is developed by performers out of a desire to represent something other than

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<sup>27</sup> Husserl provides a summary of the phenomenological account of his ideas on ‘reality’ and ‘nature’ in his text *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book*. See pages 121-150.

<sup>28</sup> Performance persona is discussed in detail in chapter 2, section 1.1.

themselves; and that desire may take the form of a technical virtuoso, portrayal of a character, symbol or otherwise external object. In light of the focus on performance persona therefore, authenticity is a term which articulates an alternative way of being to that of theatrical representation.

The final section of this chapter will therefore offer a new synthesised account of intersubjectivities which best serves this study and will highlight the juncture between the knowledge offered by the conceptual framework and the knowledge emerging from critical reflection as presented in the first two sections of the chapter.

### **1.2.1 The Double-Helix in the History of Contemporary Dance**

The concept of mind-body is evidenced in texts as old as the Upanishads (ancient yogic texts written 800-400 B.C.); and the term 'the thinking body' (Todd 1937), now integrated into the vocabulary of the dance world, has been used by movement practitioners since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. So this non-dualist approach concerning the indivisibility of body and mind in relationship to intersubjectivities as upheld by Merleau-Ponty and also contained within dance, comes from an old strand of reference that aims to examine the amalgamation of being. Through my own life experiences and through my experience of dance, I know that my body and mind do not operate as two separate entities, but rather as one ultimate unity. Dancing is not just a physical act; it emerges from the whole being.

Intersubjectivity is a fact that precedes both mind-body unity and the symbiosis of theory and practice. If theory is allowed to take precedence over practice, in the case where scientific theory is true and our daily practice is not true, then we run into contradictions within our own experiences of life. If the cogito is viewed from the standpoint of the lived and living body, what we perceive to be 'I' does not exist solipsistically;<sup>29</sup> but rather, I and others are inextricably linked. Dangers of solipsism will always creep in if theory is permitted to take precedence over practice, but it is not my aim to resolve here the issue of solipsism. I can argue for the possibility of shared experience<sup>27</sup> but the account of intersubjectivities proposed in this doctoral project extends beyond just shared experience.

The medium of dance inherently contains objectivity and subjectivity. "Objectivity is the directing of our attention towards the world of external objects, while subjectivity is the directing of our attention inwards upon our own processes and reactions" (Juahn, 2003:353). In the lineage of Contemporary Dance the value system has shifted between a greater appreciation for objectivity over subjectivity and vice versa. These shifting of value systems could be illustrated by that of a double helix.

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<sup>29</sup> Solipsism can be defined simply as: "The theory that nothing really exists but me and my mental states" (Bullock & Trombley (Eds). 1977:815).

<sup>30</sup> Shared experience and its proposed relationship to intersubjectivity within the context of contemporary dance is addressed in the next section (1.3) of this chapter.





*Figure 9: Double helix structure*<sup>31</sup>

This double helix consists of two separate but interdependent value systems within the art form. The first strand of this double helix values authenticity; the other, technical precision and they find their definitions in relation to one another. To remind the reader, the term authenticity is used in this study to articulate a way of being alternative to theatrical representation.

The introduction to this thesis claimed that Contemporary Dance had lost its immediacy and in my view has become remote from audiences. The double helix diagram aims to show in visual terms how, in order for immediacy to have been lost, it must have existed at one time. The concern for authenticity and revealing the dancer as an individual alternates with a desire for an aesthetic based upon technical virtuosity and precision. For example, this is evident in the iconoclastic approach that Isadora Duncan took towards individualism with her concentration on the body's centre as a source of energy. More recently, the rise of

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<sup>31</sup> This DNA (double helix) metaphor has also been used to analyse two interweaving strands of dance aesthetics as seen in Fraleigh & Hanstein (1999:76)

Contemporary Dance companies like CandoCo and Stop Gap, intermingling able and disabled dancers, has ruptured the orthodox expectations surrounding the stereotypical dancer's body. So the helix spirals with the two strands of authenticity and technical precision in a relationship of coexistence. Further, it would be fair to suggest that the desire for the activation of intersubjectivities within contemporary dance expressed in this doctoral project is just another twist in the helix. Merleau-Ponty, in his explanation of our lived consciousness of time (in which he follows Heidegger) shows how our lived present is always stretched between the past that is slipping away and the future that is coming into being (1962:420-424). We only live our present, which is becoming our future, in light of our past. In other words, if there were no pre-established aesthetic ideals for technique, there would have not been the impetus to research the subject of this thesis.

I contend that funding for Contemporary Dance in England<sup>32</sup> (Arts Council funding) has gone back to valuing technical choreographers working to uphold theatrical representation and spectacle. . This dedication to technical skill implies that the dancer is objectified, viewed from the outside by the audience for judgement of technical ability or for the purpose of being reviewed against aesthetic ideals which inhabit the realms of theatrical representation, mimesis and symbolism. Just as the

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<sup>32</sup> Mark Morris Dance Group was awarded £267,031 and Michael Clark was awarded £199,991 from the Arts Council for the year 2005/2006. These were two of the largest grants given for touring works in the UK. In the same year, Jonathan Burrows was refused funding to research and develop a new work. This decision caused a public outcry and petitions were circulated to contest the Arts Council's decision. In the end, the Arts Council revoked their initial decision and awarded Burrows £4,914. See: [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/gfta\\_awards2005-6.php](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/gfta_awards2005-6.php)  
More recent funding figures from the Arts Council show that the technically virtuosic Rambert Dance Company is to be awarded £6,531,108 over the years 2008-2011 and issue driven company DV8 is promised £1,308,183 for the same time period. See: [www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding)

audience could be held responsible for the objectification of the performer in much of European Contemporary Dance performance, the performer and/or the choreographer may be guilty of artistic solipsism, concerning themselves with only themselves, and ignoring the audience's' experiences.

### **1.2.2 The Thought-Movement Circuit**

Merleau-Ponty stresses that these separations: subjectivity and objectivity, mind and body, cannot exist except as abstract concepts. What Merleau-Ponty advocates is our lived experience of our relations to others, as we inhabit our world as unified beings: body, mind and soul (1962:88-89). It should be clarified that this unification does not manifest as some sort of metaphysical power which makes a performer's thoughts visible as they move but rather, that one can see that the performers are in a process of thought.<sup>33</sup>

In dancing, thought and movement become linked with one another; this turns dancing into the expression of a kind of thinking in which mind and body are no longer opposed but instead seem to coincide; where it is the body that thinks [...] dance is an instance of thinking taking place through the body (Ritsema in Bloois 2004:121).

Jan Ritsema, theatre director and performer,<sup>34</sup> recognises both the performer's intention to move and the fact that movement is inevitably influenced by thought

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<sup>33</sup> The phenomenological definition of thought is a complex issue that will not be unpacked in this study. However, in the context for which it is used here, it is useful to note that one facet of Merleau-Ponty's central theories on thought is that thought is "rooted in the historical event" (Moran, 2000:427). Although, 'rooted in the historical event', it is important to remind the reader that this awareness of the past, according to Merleau-Ponty, is also constituted within our lived consciousness of time (see page 31). Also see Merleau-Ponty (1962:410-433) and (1964:46-59).

<sup>34</sup> In 2001 Ritsema collaborated with Jonathan Burrows to make *Weak Dance Strong Questions*.

and vice versa.<sup>35</sup> This looping of movement affecting thought effecting movement can be seen as a circuit of lived consciousness working in conjunction with Merleau-Ponty's view that every moment is enveloped in every other moment. This thought-movement circuit running concurrently within each of us, is revealed in Merleau-Ponty's description of lived consciousness:

...my present draws into itself time past and time to come, it possesses them only in intention, and even if, for example, the consciousness of my past which I now have seems to me to cover exactly the past as it was, the past which I claim to recapture is not the real past, but my past as I now see it, perhaps after altering it. Similarly in the future I may have a mistaken idea about the present which I now experience. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 69-70)

The dynamic flux of this thought-movement circuit that exists within Merleau-Ponty's account of lived consciousness of time relates to contemporary dance through the triadic relationship of maker, performer and audience.

### **1.2.3 The Triadic Perspective**

As the idea of the thought-movement circuit is examined more closely within the context of the triadic relationship of maker, performer and audience within the contemporary dance event, a question is raised: Are certain thoughts and/or movements more effective than others for activating intersubjectivities? To address this question it is useful to focus first on the performer. Although the role of the performer will be discussed at length in the next chapter, it is necessary at this

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<sup>35</sup> Evidence of this is provided in the DVD documentation of my solo dance improvisation which comprises section 2.4 of Chapter 2.

stage to introduce the states of *intention* and *attention* and to discuss their relationship to the thought-movement circuit.

Intention, although a vast subject of philosophical inquiry, will be used here to articulate the directing of bodily will, an experience that is grounded in corporeality. British Contemporary Dance choreographer and performer Jonathan Burrows talks about directing his intention towards the subjectivity of his audience as a whole:

When you arrive on the stage you have to gauge very quickly which kind of night it's going to be. You have to really listen to that as you're performing... You have to say, All right, that's where you want to be; you're having as good an experience as the people who came to it. (Burrows in Hunt, 1993:55)

I propose that what Burrows says he must *listen* to when performing, is the ebb and flow of the intersubjectivities between himself as maker/performer and his audience. If, in the contemporary dance event the performer objectifies the audience, thereby separating herself from them, then she is not able to *listen* to the intersubjectivities at play in the moment. As illustrated in the first section of this chapter, a change in one person's (for example the performer's) self-perception may trigger the formation of a barrier which has a consequential effect across the other aspects of this intersubjective relationship. This self-perception or rather, heightened 'self-consciousness' makes the performer feel vulnerable. 'Self-consciousness' in this study follows Flanagan who proposes that: "All subjective experience is self-conscious in that there is something it is like for the subject to have that experience. This involves a sense that the experience is the subject's experience, that it happens to her [...]"(1992:194). This definition supports my view

that self-consciousness is a divided state of separation between subject and object.

The vulnerability arising from the feeling of self-consciousness is defended by the implementation of a barrier which I will argue manifests as a performance persona. Methods to weaken and/or dissolve this barrier of persona as explained in Chapter 2 are recognised and highlighted in the choreographic works of Burrows, Takenouchi and Woodhouse in Chapter 3, are critically scrutinised in the context of original choreographic works *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005) and *Living La Pedrera* (2006) in Chapter 4 and then presented in their developed form in my work *Grappling* (2008/2009) in Chapter 5.

How the performer can utilise their intention and attention to activate intersubjectivities will be unpacked in the next chapter but a brief consideration of the notion of attention here confirms its importance to the performance situation, especially with regard to the thought-movement circuit.

It is attention that selects the relevant bits of information from the potential millions of bits available. It takes attention to retrieve the appropriate references from memory, to evaluate the event, and then to choose the right thing to do. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:33)

Attention<sup>36</sup> shifts uniquely for each performer. If a performer can focus their attention (i.e. *listen* as Burrows describes it) to the intersubjective flux of genuine

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<sup>36</sup> Jung (1964:58-66) examined these shifts in attention and identified them as four psychic functions: thought, feeling, sensation and intuition and claimed that each individual holds a preference for one of the four functions at any given time.

emotions<sup>37</sup> then they will simultaneously need to maintain a commitment to revealing their own psychological and physiological self moment to moment. Although this shares the similar expressionistic trait of highlighting psychological involvement in the dance event, it differs greatly from expressionistic dance in that it does not rely on the power of symbolism or characterisation to access empathy<sup>38</sup> from the audience. It only looks to what is present in the moment of the lived-experience itself. Ritsema (in Bloois, 2004:141) provides a personal example:

I dance in a truthful way in the sense that I create a certain degree of freedom by listening very closely to everything that, at a given moment, is right according to me...this 'true' dancing...is not an expression of personal emotions...it has nothing to do with showing a certain emotional state.

This involves a level of openness and an attitude toward performance which the performer needs to cultivate if they are interested in activating deeper levels of intersubjectivities. Since the post-modern era, Contemporary Dance has emphasised complex choreographic strategies aimed at exposing the performer truthfully. By contrast, early works in this era, notably by Judson Dance Theater artists pursued this search for authenticity by reducing the role of the dancing body to the performance of pedestrian movements such as walking, or repetitive sequences of everyday behavioural gestures that could be performed by the untrained performer. "Monk, as well as Anna Halprin, Steve Paxton, and Yvonne Rainer, often worked with untrained dancers who performed task-oriented or

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<sup>37</sup> Emotion in this context should not be confused with emotion manufactured out of expressionistic dance. Paxton (in Rosenberg, 1996) gives an example of emotion in expressionistic dance, in saying: "Emotion in Limon and Graham is hugely artificial." The desire to attend to 'genuine emotion' in this case does not concern itself with attempting to define 'real' or 'genuine' emotions; rather, the mention of emotion here serves to introduce the issue of presence in performance (an area which will be addressed more thoroughly in Chapter 3). Goldberg (1991:5) gives an example of Trisha Brown's work, "Brown in the accumulations replaced emotional expression with an object like, neutral performing attitude."

<sup>38</sup> The concepts of empathy and kinaesthetic empathy are discussed later in this section.

simple motor movements in which purposeful repetition played a prominent role” (Morgan, 2002:124). The search to expose the performer truthfully continues (in a manner that I will argue is artificial) and recent Contemporary Dance companies have attempted through the use of nudity or near nudity in their works in aid of this truthful search.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps it is obvious to state that the revealing of the human body in this way is no closer to revealing the person than presenting a dancer costumed in a tutu.

Intersubjectivities in the contemporary dance context go further in the notion of exposure, to reveal the truth of the moment.

The truth of the moment is another name for what is actually happening between the two people onstage. That interchange is always unplanned, is always taking place, is always fascinating, and it is to the end of concealing that interchange that most acting training is directed.  
(Mamet, 1997:20)

Possibly, this statement, when it was made in 1997 by theatre director David Mamet, evidenced a shift in a trend across the performing arts which privileged human presence in the performance event giving it a higher value than that of technical training. Although in his statement Mamet privileges the inter-relationship between performers, “the truth of the moment” affects all those in the triadic relationship. Merleau-Ponty says,

I discover by reflection not only my presence to myself, but also the possibility of an ‘outside spectator’...I discover within myself a kind of internal weakness which exposes me to the gaze of others as a man among men or at least a consciousness among consciousnesses. (1962:xii)

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<sup>39</sup> See Xavier Le Roy’s *Self Unfinished* (1998) and La Ribot’s *Still Distinguished* (2000).



The state of mind Merleau-Ponty describes can be revealed in performance where the performer embraces their internal weakness under the gaze of the audience. If this is allowed to take place, the human presence of the performer is fostered which makes way for deeper levels of intersubjectivities to be activated by way of a diminishing performance persona.

#### **1.2.4 Why Semiotics Does Not Serve this Study**

As the performer's role in activating intersubjectivities across the triadic perspective becomes more clear it is necessary here to turn to the role of the audience in activating intersubjectivities. Traditionally the role of the audience of the Contemporary Dance performance has been to interpret. This comes alongside an unspoken demand that has been placed on audiences to 'get it' successfully; to get the story, to be sufficiently dazzled by the performer's extraordinary technique, or to walk away having correctly interpreted the choreographer's intention. Intention (as previously mentioned) has to do with the bodily will of the performer; a conscious, decision-making process. Interpretation looks to nonverbal communication theories embedded in the field of choreological studies, a methodology employed to assist in this doctoral research.<sup>40</sup> Semiotics has its place in choreological studies and is generally viewed as existing as a counterpart to phenomenology although this research does not support this view. Semiotics can be viewed as reliant on linguistic models in its aim to identify meaning of a symbolic nature arising from movement. Interpretation of dance movement in this

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<sup>40</sup> See Argyle, (1987:23-55) and North, (1972:12-21).

sense runs parallel to the idea of movement as a sign system, being encoded and decoded. "Throughout the active intention of all participants, impression can be given and can be received" (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002:16). This encoding and decoding is what occurs in the interpretation process of Contemporary Dance performance from the perspective of semiotics. Aston and Savona, authors of *Theatre as a Sign System* (1991:99) state that, "Everything which is presented to the spectator within the theatrical frame is a sign...[and] reading signs is the way in which we set about making sense of the world." They give the example of a man wearing a suit and carrying an umbrella as someone who is read as being a city gent. However, what Aston and Savona fail to acknowledge is that the emotional, energetic lived body is also read. They do broach the topic of reading movement but only insofar as it involves the decoding of nonverbal bodily cues. The act of decoding bodily cues returns to uphold the same processes found in semiotics and does not elucidate sufficiently the mutual experiencing of another human being. States, (1985:8) makes the claim,

If we think of semiotics and phenomenology as modes of seeing, we might say that they constitute a kind of binocular vision: one eye enables us to see the world phenomenally; the other eye enables us to see it significantly.

Leading researchers in the field of choreological studies, Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg have carried out extensive research into this idea of binocular vision of phenomenology and semiotics that States proposes. In fact, it is stated as an aim of choreological studies in their 2002 text *Dance and the Performative* to view dance as both semiotic and phenomenal (103-112).

I am not denying contemporary dance as a form of communication which can in turn be read for meaning, but for the purposes of this study my focus is on the experiential aspect of intersubjectivity in dance practice and from this standpoint intersubjectivity cannot be decoded. The approach of decoding movement semiotically is incongruent with the idea of intersubjectivity because intersubjectivity cannot be a sign for something else. It is a lived experience to be viewed on a standalone basis as itself and nothing else. It is because of this stance that semiotics will not be thoroughly addressed in this research, as it does not wholly serve the study. In the case of intersubjectivity, audiences have to give meaning to their own lived experience of the dance event rather than receive it. To clarify, my concentration is on the choreographic methods of contemporary dance which involves maker and performer. The audience will feel what they feel and I cannot control that outcome. However, I can work with performers to strive to activate moments of intersubjectivity and I have been exploring the effect on performance that arises according to whether the performer believes that intersubjective relations have occurred.

In investigating intersubjectivity within the context of contemporary dance, certain deviations from Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity are suggested. On the whole, Merleau-Ponty's views remain intact, but because the contemporary dance event comprises a triadic relationship and because speaking about dance requires a use of language that supports embodied knowledge there are other components

to intersubjective experience that will now be raised and discussed in order to offer a new synthesised account of intersubjectivities for the contemporary dance event.

### **1.3 A New Synthesised Account of Intersubjectivities for the contemporary dance Event**

This section will first identify *what* is synthesised in the proposed new account of intersubjectivities in this research. Second, it will explain what is new about the proposed synthesised account of intersubjectivities. Finally, it will discuss why this new account of intersubjectivities is an experience which does not operate in a bipolar fashion but rather, is experienced in degrees. Merleau-Ponty (1962) has identified an intersubjective experience which is:

- 1) An embodied experience that involves the mutual perception of another person (1962:xii and 346-365);
- 2) The perception of the other is possible because of our body-mind unity (1962:87);
- 3) This perception of the other person occurs within the lived consciousness of time (1962:419-433 and 1964:49-59);
- 4) Perceiving another involves the act of reflecting back onto the self but also seeing oneself reflected in another. This double-act of reflection is in a constant state of flux (1962:52-63);
- 5) This state of flux comes about because of both the shifting experience of the lived consciousness of time and because of the intersect between subject and object when we perceive another (1962:346-365).

Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity in his unfinished work *Prose of the World*, published after his death in 1969 and again in 1973 states,

Myself and the other are like *two nearly* concentric circles which can be distinguished only by a slight and mysterious slippage...The mystery of the other is nothing but the mystery of myself...the experience of the other is always that of a replica of myself, of a response to myself. It is because I am a totality that I am capable of giving birth to another and seeing myself limited by him. (1973:134-135)

Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity which is metaphorically equated to *two nearly* concentric circles is not quite adequate for speaking about the intersubjectivities in a contemporary dance event. This is because, unlike Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity which aims to speak about interactions between people in the world (i.e. in everyday life situations), the contemporary dance event traditionally sits outside of everyday life situations and is framed by rules and behaviours which are governed by the history of performance.<sup>41</sup>

This thesis makes a distinction between the terms performance and performative which is in line with the distinction articulated in the field of Choreological Studies. This is because the choreographic works made for this doctoral project steer away from the technical aesthetic upheld in traditional Contemporary Dance performance and move toward a contemporary dance event which places human connection at the forefront. Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg provide a concise distinction.

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<sup>41</sup> The codes and behaviours governed by the history of performance is a vast subject which finds much overlap with the area of semiotics (See Aston & Savona, 1991 and Foster, 1986) the breadth of which exceeds the parameters of this study. A discussion of the rules and codes of behaviour is further illustrated in the context of the manifestation of persona given in Chapter 2 but in general the codes referred to here are those associated with traditional theatre (i.e. performances which take place in a proscenium arch theatre space whereby the performers and audience are separated and the behaviour of the audience is dictated by the orthodox decorum that has come to be the widely accepted behaviour in these spaces).

What distinguishes a performative event from a performing event is the level of and nature of the engagement of the artists with the spectators and in response, the engagement of the spectators with them and with the work. (2002:4)

Performance implies the presence of a product and this product is tied to an aesthetic based on certain behavioural codes (Rimmer & Sanchez-Colberg, 1999, March 18 [lecture]) that operate in orthodox theatre going. Even performance situations which aim to rupture these codes still maintain other conventions so that the audience can glean that they are in a performance situation.<sup>42</sup> So, in addressing a synthesised account of intersubjectivities within the contemporary dance event it is both necessary and important to maintain some aspect of the performative frame.<sup>43</sup>

A mainstream Contemporary Dance performance is made up of a series of deliberately executed physical movements for the purpose of demonstrating certain technical or artistic skills to an audience (Nagatomo, 2006, January 8 [lecture]). Jon McKenzie compares our Western societal obsession with “good” performance (in terms of productivity) to performance as an artistic discipline (2001). As a performer, I am often asked, “How did the performance go?” In answering this, I usually find myself talking about my relationship with either the co-performers or with the audience. What I never find myself doing is talking about the performance’s successes or failures in terms of my execution of technique.

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<sup>42</sup> Chapter 4 explains how an attempt to rupture too many codes which support the performative contemporary dance event resulted in a deactivating of intersubjectivities. This is explained within a discussion of my own original choreographic work *Living La Pedrera* (2006).

<sup>43</sup> Reasons for articulating the ‘performative’ frame here as opposed to the ‘performance’ frame will be further clarified in Chapters 4 and 5.

Whether or not I accidentally fall out of an off-balance turn has become increasingly unimportant to me. As a result of this research, what has become important to me is how I react in the moment of falling. A feeling of failure would wash over me if I dealt with falling by pretending I had not fallen. Alternatively, a successful handling of the fall would be *not* to attempt to hide my effort to re-establish balance. So, although I reflect critically on my performances in terms of success and failure, I attempt not to judge them according to the demonstration of technical skills.

“Performance is an action that aspires to an ultimate articulation” (Maguire, M. in Delgado, M. and Svich, C. 2002:204). If performance implies a product linked to a display of technical accomplishment, conversely “performative events deliberately address their spectators, aim to and do arouse a response so that engagement and transaction take place” (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002:1).

Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg go on to argue that,

Performative events are ones in which 'actors' and 'spectators' engage in an exchange of some sort. While 'performing' refers to the implementing, presenting and accomplishing aspects of an act of theatre, performative refers to "an expression that serves to effect a transaction" between the parties (Merriam-Webster 1993). Performative events range from works of dance theatre to a speaker haranguing a crowd, to a silent anti-war demonstration, to a digital interactive installation, et al. (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002:1).

The term performative has far reaching connotations in both the fields of theatre and philosophy and it is pointed out that,

[...] the term has hardly come to mean ‘the same thing’ for each. Indeed, the stretch between theatrical and deconstructive meanings of ‘performative’ seems to span the polarities of, at either extreme, the *extroversion* of the actor, the *introversion* of the signifier [...] the opposition between theatricality and absorption seems custom-made for this paradox about ‘performativity’: in its deconstructive sense, performative signals absorption; in the vicinity of the stage, however, the performative is the theatrical. (Parker, A. and Sedgwick, E. 1995:2)

Much of the current literature surrounding performativity (Parker and Sedgwick 1995, Gade and Jerslev 2005) is fuelled by the theories of John Langshaw Austin and Jacques Derrida<sup>44</sup> and has been treated by Judith Butler.<sup>45</sup> The term performativity in the Butlerian sense has come to represent the reiteration of gendered behaviour and identity, thus the conventions that prevail in respect of society’s views about, and practice of gender can be described as performative. However, the way that performativity is used in this study is to highlight the importance of the human interaction between maker, performer and audience. Jill Dolan speaks to this human connection in performativity that is crucial to the idea of activating intersubjectivities in the contemporary dance event.

Through practicing identity in performance, and by creating variable structures of feeling, a different kind of fluency might be learned, one that begins to offer a fleeting glimpse of humankind united around common difference. (2005:88)

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<sup>44</sup> See Austin (1975) *How to do Things with Words*, Butler (1997) *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* and Derrida and Bennington (1999) *Jacques Derrida*.

<sup>45</sup> For example, Judith Butler’s concept of gender performativity explains how “subjects are formed in and by language” (Loizidou, 2007:35). “The performative method that Butler develops enables us to see how our naming, whether as women, foreigners, idiots, etc., is produced. This explicates that we are products of both a past that precedes us and a cultural context in which we find ourselves. To be named a woman, for example, means that there is a historical understanding of who is a woman, but to become one, to re-appropriate that naming or to resist the historical way in which that naming is uttered, produces us as subjects of a contemporary culture” (ibid:41).



Dolan goes on to exhort performers to “use their bodies, their imagination, their souls, their gifts to assail the gaps between self and other, to make an intersubjective community of connection and hope” (ibid). Albeit idealistic, Dolan’s words illuminate this study’s validation of human connection and immediacy; her words also mirror Merleau-Ponty’s thoughts on the value of human relationships (1962:452-456). Furthermore, it is the aspect of human engagement between the members of the triadic perspective that this study takes up under the notion of performativity. Performativity suggests a dual directionality; something is passed from me to you and from you to me. This exchange parallels the construct of the very basic level of intersubjectivity which is always present between two or more subjects. Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg (2002:4) allude to the fact that there is also something of a layered structure to the experience of a performative event, that the “level of and nature of the engagement of the artists with the spectators” and vice versa has an effect on our ability to shift our attention (as performers or audience) intersubjectively (ibid: 126-127). This is not to propose that all performative events exhibit deeper levels of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivities are present but the deeper levels which involve kinaesthetic empathy and openness to shared experience are perhaps not activated. The following two sections explain how both kinaesthetic empathy and openness to shared experience support the intersubjective experience relevant to contemporary dance choreographic practice.

### 1.3.1 Attending to Kinaesthetic Empathy

A dance teacher describes her relationship to her students:

I observe them, and I put myself inside their skin. I devote myself completely to listening to them, and it's as if I enter inside their bodies. The two bodies become one. I put myself into their way of doing things, and I feel their internal state when they move (Fortin in Shapiro (Ed.) 1998:59).

Although not explicitly identified as an experience of kinaesthetic empathy, the account given above contains clear elements of the concept of kinaesthetic empathy as it sits within the lineage of phenomenological thought. Historically, in the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), “Intersubjectivity employed a conception of *empathy* with others, [through which] I am able to read into another’s actions, as an expression of inner states analogous to my own” (Moran, 2000:175). Empathy<sup>46</sup> although it constitutes one aspect of intersubjectivity cannot serve as the only characteristic of deeper levels of intersubjectivities. In the field of psychology, empathy constitutes a strong inter-relationship between emotion and action (Gallese, 2003:524). Empathy is also a concern of contemporary dance practice today and this term ‘kinaesthetic empathy’<sup>47</sup> often carries with it an emotional element. Kinaesthetic empathy is described by Moore (1988:53) as “physical

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<sup>46</sup> See Moran (2000:175-176). Moran’s text provides succinct information about Edith Stein, a pupil of Husserl. Stein’s PhD thesis entitled *On the Problem of Empathy* (1916) is mentioned in order to explain that in the experience of empathy, one cannot truly know the other. Stein provides the following examples: “I see someone blush and know she feels ashamed of herself; a friend tells me of the loss of his brother and I become aware of his pain” (Moran, 2000:176). Stein claims: “I can live in the other’s experience in an intuitive manner but I don’t undergo that experience myself in an original fashion” (ibid).

<sup>47</sup> A term used in Dance Movement Therapy to describe a skill that can be honed by the dance movement therapist as a means of developing a trusting relationship with the client/patient. See Hervey (2000:18) and Levy (Ed.) (1995:87). In earlier dance literature, the dance critic John Martin speaks about *kinaesthetic sympathy* (1935:13) in order to describe the relationship between the performer’s intention and the audience’s perception of that intention. See Martin (1935:13) and Maletic (1987:159).

identification with the movement one observes being executed.” Because kinaesthetic empathy may also be coupled with emotional response and because of the non-dual relationship between mind and body, kinaesthetic empathy strikes us on a visceral level and does not occur in the absence of intersubjectivity.<sup>48</sup> It could be concluded therefore that occurrences of kinaesthetic empathy unfold because of the understanding of one’s own being in relationship to the being of another. Merleau-Ponty’s account of intersubjectivity supports this possibility (refer to Section 1.3).

I experienced kinaesthetic empathy at a recent performance by Stop Gap, an independent Contemporary Dance company consisting of four dancers. One dancer is in a wheelchair. In the performance, the dancer in the wheelchair lifts her own body up out of the chair through the strength in her arms. In the moment of seeing her do this, I felt my own arms tense, my chest constrict and my breathing was suspended. This was an intersubjective moment where I simultaneously experienced kinaesthetic empathy. This experience did not unfold just because I am a dancer but was a result of intercorporeality. Additionally, the intersubjective experience was had not because of the semiotic content in the work but because of a human exchange in perception.

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<sup>48</sup> Max Van Manen identifies a mode of knowing called ‘Practice as Pathic Knowledge’ which he explains thus: “The term ‘pathic’ derives from pathos, meaning suffering, and also passion and disease or the quality that arouses pity or sorrow. In a larger life context, the pathic refers to the general mood, sensibility and felt sense of being in the world. The pathically tuned body perceives the world in a feeling or emotive modality of being [...] there are several modalities of pathic understanding; situated, relational, embodied and enactive” (2002:3).

Another example is evident in Wim Vandekybus' work *Roseland* (1990) which illustrates mutual intercorporeal experiencing. In this particular work the power of perception is revealed through transference of sensorial textures. In the performance of *Roseland*, there is a shirt that has been frozen into a block of ice. After the ice has melted away (over the duration of the dance event), one of the performers puts on the freezing shirt. The reaction of the performer when the freezing shirt comes into contact with his bare skin is seen through his facial expression, which is un-acted (Sanchez-Colberg, 1999, March 11 [lecture]). This reaction is not a sign for something else; it is real and elicits a response from the audience that has potential to be one of kinaesthetic empathy.

The idea of kinaesthetic empathy progresses my proposal of a new synthesised account of intersubjectivities by showing that the possibility of kinaesthetic empathy is supported in theory by Merleau-Ponty's account of embodied mutual perception and is further supported by recent research in the area of neural science.<sup>49</sup> To use terminology from Nelson's model as articulated in the introduction of this thesis, to include kinaesthetic empathy as an aspect of a new synthesised account of intersubjectivities synthesises three types of knowledge: theoretical/cognitive knowledge, tacit/embodied knowledge and explicit knowledge coming from critical

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<sup>49</sup> Neural scientist Daniel Glaser carried out research in 2003 involving members of the Royal Ballet which addresses the idea of 'mirror neurons'. His research showed that dancers who watch movement have the same neurons firing in their brain as when they perform movement. See Glaser, D. and Friston, K. (2003). Since this research in 2003 the dance community in the UK has collaborated with experts from the area of neural science and has begun the pursuit of a multidisciplinary project involving four UK universities and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council from 2008-2011. The project will explore "how spectators respond to and empathize with dance movements" and will directly draw upon the idea of kinaesthetic empathy. See [www.watchingdance.org](http://www.watchingdance.org)

reflection upon experiences where kinaesthetic empathy was experienced first hand. Kinaesthetic empathy is proposed here as the first of two constituents to make up a new synthesised account of intersubjectivities which is more adequately suited to contemporary dance. The remaining constituent is openness to shared experience.

### **1.3.2 Openness to Shared Experience**

In the context of a performative dance event intersubjectivities take place within a shared experience, requiring that both you and I share time and share space.

Professor of Philosophy Renaud Barbaras states, “There is no becoming-self except as becoming-other, no conquest of identity except as openness to others, but in such a way that alterity always maintains itself at the heart of this openness” (1991:255). This statement of Barbaras’ suggests that behind intersubjective experience there is intent, intent to engage in the state of openness towards the other.

‘Openness’ to shared experience constitutes a willingness to engage with another as well as the aim to cultivate attention toward the other. Like any other skill that that is to be mastered, crafting of that skill must be facilitated” (Nunes Tucker, A. and Price, A. In McLean and Kelly, R. 2010:249).

Contemporary Dance performances which place demands on the performer to give their attention to becoming something other than themselves is a skill at odds with the intention to be in a state of openness that Barbaras speaks of. Therefore, I use the term ‘openness’ to describe a state of willingness that must be present in both I and other. Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg make reference to this openness

to shared experience when they make the distinction between choreographic work which is performative and choreographic work which is performed. They believe that the difference hinges on “the level and nature of the engagement of the artists with the spectators and in response, the engagement of the spectators with them and with the work” (2002:4). To remind the reader, the result of their distinction is that choreographic work which is performative has a deeper level of engagement occurring between the artists and the spectators. Deep engagement between the members of the triadic relationship (maker, performer and audience) within shared experience I propose has the potential to cultivate the sensation of communion with another. Merleau-Ponty asserts that a desire for connection with others is a part of our embodied human condition. He says, “Man is but a network of relationships, and these alone matter to him” (1962:456).

If we open our perception to the lived moment of the experience of another person, irrespective of a lack of scientific proof that our mutual experience of one another is a shared perception, a deeper level of intersubjectivity will unfold. Nelson (2003:3) makes the point that in the phenomenological legacy from Husserl and Heidegger through Merleau-Ponty and beyond, the researcher takes account of “whatever appears in the manner in which it appears...as it manifests itself to the experiencer” (Moran in Nelson, 2000:4). In accordance with Nelson, throughout the process of addressing the research question in this study, the experience of the experiencer is taken as an equally valid mode of knowledge. “Practice should be

accepted as methodological process of research inquiry and a mode of dissemination of research in its own right” (Nelson and Andrews, 2003:3).

Despite my strong advocacy for the validity of the experienter and for the phenomenological experience, it is not my claim that this shared experience can be set-up in a contrived manner but rather, that this shared experience is made possible through cultivation of sharp attention to the moment<sup>50</sup> by both people perceiving and being perceived. This shared experience is the second of two constituents offered in a new synthesised account of intersubjectivities suited to contemporary dance. Examples of what this may look like in contemporary dance practice are provided in the critical reflection of the original choreographic work *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005) in Chapter 3, Section 3.6.

### **1.3.3 An Introduction to *No-thought / No-mind***

My proposed account of synthesised intersubjectivities has deliberately not included the possibility of an experience where self and other merge. However, in the course of my research, and in an attempt to discover what deeper levels of intersubjectivities may look like, the possibility of a unified state with another person kept recurring and brought into relief a very important divide in terms of both approaches to contemporary dance performance and the idea of intersubjectivity. It is relevant to discuss this unified state here in order to forewarn

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<sup>50</sup> This idea of bringing a sharp attention to being-in-the-moment is concept widely found in Eastern philosophies. Most notably, it could find parallel meaning with the Buddhist concept of *mindfulness*. “Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity and acceptance of present-moment reality” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994:4).

the reader that the idea of a completely saturated experience of intersubjectivity finds partial resonance with the aims of this thesis in that such a state aids in the dissolution of Contemporary Dance performance persona yet, is problematic because a complete merging of self and other would mean that there were no subjectivities and therefore no intersubjectivities.

The theories which suggest a unified state with another characterised by one's own subjectivity as a precursor to a complete merging with another are primarily based in Eastern philosophies.<sup>51</sup> The following text in this section provides descriptions from both Eastern and Western sources which have identified a state of consciousness where the experience of separation between self and other, or between subject and object is annulled.

“There is no subject which sees anything as an object, and, accordingly, there is no object which stand *vis-à-vis* the subject” (Moore & Morris, 1968:176). Ancient yogic texts have named this experience *samadhi*.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi uses his term *flow* to name a similar experience and recognises that the parallels between *samadhi* and *flow* are “extremely strong” (1990:105). Csikszentmihalyi describes the state of *flow* as:

[...] an optimal experience [...] where people become so involved in what they are doing that the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic;

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<sup>51</sup> See Yuasa (1993) and Moore (1968). Certain strands of yoga philosophy also advocate this: see Siva-Sūtra (dated 825 C.E.(A.D.))

<sup>52</sup> *Samadhi* is derived from three Sanskrit words: “*sam* (together) + *â* (completely) + *dhâ* (to hold; thus ‘to hold together completely’...[*samadhi* is] complete identity or absorption in one object (thought)” (Hari Dass, 1981:10). The term *samadhi* is thoroughly analysed in the ancient yogic text: *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali* (dated 200 C.E. (A.D.))



they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing. (ibid: 53)

Other names given to these states of absolute merging and loss of self-consciousness<sup>53</sup> are identified in other texts<sup>54</sup> as states of *no-mind* or *no-thought*. The state of *no-mind* is a deep-seated concept in Eastern philosophy.<sup>55</sup> An account of *no-mind* is summarised by Eastern philosopher Yasuo Yuasa:

[no-mind] is a state of body-mind oneness where the movement of mind and body become indistinguishable. It is a state of self-forgetfulness, in which consciousness of oneself as the subject of bodily movement disappears and becomes the movement itself that is dancing. (Yuasa, 1993:27)

Takenouchi, an artist whose choreographic work is later examined in this study, purports to dance in this state and speaks about removing “the wall of consciousness that perceives the individual ‘I’ dancing” ([not dated]). Additionally, theatre and dance practitioners Ruth Zaporah and Ellen Webb,<sup>56</sup> give respective accounts of performing in this state of *no-mind* or *no-thought*.

That state of nought was restful, calm. I relaxed into the action itself, losing all sense of self, of Ruth, of me. (Zaporah in Freedman & Moon (Eds.), 1997:24)

As a mature dancer [...] my experience of self becomes less fixed [...] I feel that I don't create the dance: the dance dances me. (Webb in Cooper Albright & Gere, 2003:242-243).

The idea of *no-mind* or *no-thought* in performance suggests the possibility of dissolving subjectivity in order to reach a saturated experience by which the performer and audience become one.

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<sup>53</sup> The area of self-consciousness is in itself a vast area of study: see Hume (2000:40-44) and Heidegger on Hegel's theories of self-consciousness (1994:124-155).

<sup>54</sup> See Zaporah (1997) and Webb in Cooper Albright & Gere (2003)

<sup>55</sup> See Tymieniecka (1984)

<sup>56</sup> Both Webb and Zaporah are advocates for psychophysical training methods. Psychophysical training methods used to foster this state of *no-mind* are discussed in Chapter 3.

When an artist performs in the state of “no-mind” [...] these experiences are indicative of non-performance, in which a performer and an audience become one harmonious whole (Nagatomo, 2006 January 8 [lecture]).

Further investigation into the experiences which these practitioners describe would exceed the parameters of this research as they allude to realms of theology and the huge area of Eastern Philosophy. This research does not set out to prove that these states of *samadhi*, *flow*, *no-mind* and *no-thought* exist but rather, that if they do exist, the conditions of operation which they propose sit in contradiction to the nature of intersubjectivity. The proposed synthesised account of intersubjectivities includes kinaesthetic empathy and a type of attention which is sharply focused moment by moment but to dissolve subjectivities would nullify the feedback loop of information gained through the perception of self and other.

This chapter has focused on how the experience of intersubjectivity is experienced in degrees, or has a multi-layered construct. The proposed multi-layered construct illustrates how this research does not operate with significantly different senses of the notion of intersubjectivities. Rather, it proposes a synthesised account of intersubjectivities which may or may not include incidents of kinaesthetic empathy and may or may not include heightened attention to each and every moment; yet, the intersubjective experiences which do include kinaesthetic empathy and heightened attention to the moment are deemed by this study to offer a deeper level of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity exists. It is the dynamic interplay that unfolds in the meeting of two or more subjectivities. In the context of contemporary dance where the triadic relationship is present, kinaesthetic empathy offers its

potential as does the honing of attention by all participants in the triadic relationship; the synthesis of these therefore brings about a deeper experience which is more than the basic layer of intersubjectivity involving (according to Merleau-Ponty) perception.

This synthesised account of intersubjectivities needs development and it is the next chapter which lays down four training methods for the performer which aim to facilitate an activation of intersubjectivities across the triadic relationship. In addition to offering means of activating intersubjectivities the following chapter also debates how Contemporary Dance technical training has served to cultivate behaviour in the performer which deactivates intersubjectivities. This behaviour has been identified as the adoption of a performance persona. It is the next chapter therefore which begins to address the research question: Could experiments in persona versus person in dance practice lead to a strategy to activate (or deactivate) intersubjectivities across the triadic relationship in the contemporary dance event?

## **Chapter 2 Practical Processes Toward Activating Intersubjectivities**

The second premise under which the dialogue for this research unfolds is my claim that European Contemporary Dance has lost its immediacy and has distanced itself from audiences. Max Van Manen, a specialist in phenomenological pedagogy, suggests a useful parallel between intuition and immediacy which helps to verify the notion of shared experience as a deeper level of intersubjectivity outlined in the previous chapter. He says,

Intuitive action is marked by a certain im-mediacy...intuitive practice is pathic in the sense that it allows one to grasp the situation from the other's point of view...it is experiential understanding; the understanding of the other's experience (2002:6)

This chapter will identify first, why I propose that the loss of immediacy is a problem and second, why and how Contemporary Dance training methods to be at least partially responsible for this. This chapter argues that the value system upheld in Contemporary Dance technical training favours persona over person and that persona acts as a barrier to the deeper levels of intersubjectivity. To bolster this standpoint, the latter part of this chapter looks to the synthesised account of intersubjectivities as I have explored it in the context of my contemporary dance choreographic practice and offers practical experiments aimed at underlining the importance of person over persona in this practice. It is proposed then in this chapter, but not fully explicated until Chapters 3 and 4, that these practical experiments may lead towards a strategy for activating intersubjectivities within the contemporary dance event. .

The intersubjective experience *moves*; it is in a state of flux. It is not fixed like the outcome in traditional performance. Therefore, the practical performative processes that are identified in the following sections of this chapter are offered as pathways towards focusing the attention of the performer in order to develop a way of being that reveals humanness, encourages openness and restricts the adoption of performance persona.

## 2.1 Performance Personas

From the perspective of activating intersubjectivities within the dance event I claim that there is a problem with Contemporary Dance technical training which in turn causes problems with Contemporary Dance performance. This is because the primary focus of technical training strengthens the dualist perspective that body and mind are separate and are to be valued separately.

At the beginner's stage, whether in a theatrical performance, dance or sport, the student tries to move his or her body first by thinking, as it were, through the head. In other words, the student intellectually understands and calculates the teacher's instruction, according to which he or she then tries to control the body. Nevertheless, the body does not move as one's mind wishes. Here, mind and body are lived *dualistically* (Yuasa, 1993:26).

Because the procedures in Contemporary Dance technical training work initially to separate mind and body, performance personas are allowed to build up. This point is unpacked in the discussion which follows. First, the discussion will uncover what influence the existing technical ideals within Contemporary Dance have on the personas<sup>57</sup> that Contemporary Dancers adopt. Second, the discussion will illustrate

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<sup>57</sup> "The Latin word 'persona' (meaning "mask") was used to translate the Greek word for "dramatic character" or "role" (Lyons in Garner, 1994:120)

a distinction between technique and training. Finally, by isolating the definition and characteristics of persona as applied directly to performance, questions will be raised which relate to a wider concern, namely the problematic relationship between performance and the activation of intersubjectivities which is addressed in Chapter 4.

### **2.1.1 Development of Performance Personas**

Technique is currently taught to Contemporary Dancers in a number of core disciplines including: ballet, Cunningham, Graham, Humphrey, Limón and release.<sup>58</sup> Each of these contains an aesthetic ideal which the dancer strives to achieve and, moreover, if, in performance the sole aim of the dancer is to reach these aesthetic technical ideals then this may undermine the activation of deeper levels of intersubjectivities.

To self-objectify the body in order to reach the aim of technical achievement means that the Contemporary Dancer may build a barrier which protects their psyche from stresses that arise both from a fear of failure but more profoundly, from a deliberate negation of a human connection found in deeper levels of intersubjectivity. It is important to reiterate here that the proposed synthesised account of intersubjectivities involve the synchronisation of both subjectification and objectification. When reaching for the aim of technical achievement one must be self-objective, always conscious of the appearance and form of the body in relation to the aesthetic ideal. This is problematic since one cannot wholly objectify one's body because there is always the subjective perception of ownership over 'my body'. The dancer in this situation will be forced, as a result of superficially ignoring

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<sup>58</sup> Gradually this is changing in UK universities offering degrees in Dance to include urban, hybrid forms of technique including street dance, hip-hop, break dance and body popping and locking. See: [www.uel.ac.uk](http://www.uel.ac.uk)

mind-body unity, brought about by the incessant striving towards the aesthetic ideal, to begin also to alter their subjective perception.

Rather than simply splitting the body from the mind, there is an active obsession with the body as an objective, mechanical entity. As a result we are often numbed to the awareness of internal body messages and the power of our connected selves. (Green, J. 1999:82)

In my view, this metamorphosis of being initiates a coping mechanism within the achievement based model and develops in the form of persona.

Yet, if all hard core technical training is guilty of being the instigating factor in the production of performance persona which serves as a barrier to intersubjectivities, then why is codified technique valued and taught so rigorously to Contemporary Dancers? The founding members of Judson Church may have asked a similar question. To reference the double-helix structure introduced in Chapter 1, through which we see the Contemporary Dance trajectory of development alternating between the technical and the authentic, there can be seen a sub-pattern which emerges within the strand of the authentic. Banes points out this sub-pattern:

The late eighties and nineties saw a re-emergence of interest in improvisation, but diverging in both motivations and meanings from those of the earlier generation. If many dancers in the sixties saw situation-response composition as a way of accessing the 'authentic' self, postmodern culture in the eighties and nineties declared that there is no singular, authentic self, but only a fragmented multiplicity of shifting identities. (Banes in Cooper Albright & Gere, 2003:81)

Improvisational work within Contemporary Dance (and contemporary dance) is not the only area in which the "authentic self" sub-pattern has arisen. It can also be seen in set choreographic works by artists such as Bill T. Jones, for example, in his

work *Still/Here* (1994).<sup>59</sup> Dance movement therapy uses the related term, 'authentic movement' where dance is used "as a source for self-knowledge and human development" (Fraleigh in Fraleigh & Hanstein (Eds.) 1999:12). Deeper levels of intersubjectivities involve a felt connection between individuals which is an important phenomenon to highlight within the dance event because it values a fundamental human exchange that is perhaps key to the future development of Contemporary Dance as a more immediate form.

"The motivation behind each [movement vocabulary], its value system and purpose, engenders choices" (Preston-Dunlop, 1998:80). I am not advocating that all dance vocabulary is problematic but that the value systems and purposes underlying Contemporary Dance techniques that emphasise *only* physical achievement are a barrier to the activation of intersubjectivities. The problem with Contemporary Dance technical training from the standpoint of this study, does not lie within technique superficially, it lies within the achievement-based value system embedded within it, resulting in the manifestations of performance persona due to the negation of mind-body unity. To turn this on its head, all technique is not to blame. In fact, dancers who are successfully skilled in technique or a particular technical style are said to have 'embodied' that technique. If this turn of phrase is used in the dance world to also take on the implications of the term as it is used phenomenologically (i.e. that the body and mind are not separate) then a technique

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<sup>59</sup> See Lepecki (2004:57)



which is embodied by a dancer is by definition no longer operating in the subjective – objective realm of separateness.

### **2.1.2 Technique and Training**

If the view is taken that Contemporary Dance technical training enhances performance persona in order to achieve the ideal of the ‘Noble Dancer’, then the problem with Contemporary Dance technical training is self-perpetuating. This is seen in ballet where for example, the technical training is deliberately honed to support the ‘Noble Dancer’ performance persona. I propose that within the genre of Contemporary Dance there are shared behaviours upheld within the construct of the performance personas. An example of this shared behaviour in the case of Contemporary Dancers has been articulated by Jonathan Burrows as the “cool body” (22 July 2004 [workshop]). To dance with a ‘cool body’ adopts a performance persona of confident nonchalance. Banes similarly mentions a description of a “cool stance” where there is an “apparent lack of expressiveness...a sign of repression” (1994:239). It is the shared behavioural codes such as the cool body or the evident ego inflation that move hand in hand with performance persona that the promotion of human presence aims to overcome. The difference between technique and training therefore hinges upon the preference that each places on either objective or subjective thought and in some cases, on human connection.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Exemplar choreographic works which value human connection by Jonathan Burrows, Atsushi Takenouchi and Angela Woodhouse are reviewed in Chapter 3.

Training, for the purposes of this research, refers to learning that takes place within a framework where an aesthetic ideal is not at the forefront of importance, but rather that self-reflection is fostered and deeper layers of intersubjectivities become possible. Forms of training with which today's dancers may choose to supplement their learning include the following methods (this list is not exhaustive): 1) somatic practices (including the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais, Pilates, yoga); 2) martial arts (Aikido, Qigong, Tai Chi); 3) psychophysical training methods<sup>61</sup> (Action Theatre<sup>62</sup>, Kalaripayattu<sup>63</sup>, and the Suzuki Method<sup>64</sup> -- although these psychophysical training methods are more commonly used by theatre practitioners); 4) movement and contact improvisation; 5) Skinner Releasing Technique; 6) Authentic Movement and 7) Dance Movement Therapy. The benefit of these training methods is that they share the common goal of working to focus the attention of the practitioner in order to uphold the mind-body non-duality. Sylvie Fortin says, "Our different processes of integration of somatics and dance is characterised by a common challenge, which is to counterbalance the dualism that pervades our Western society" (2003:9). To reject persona-based performance

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<sup>61</sup> The term *psychophysical* training finds its origin with Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999), see Hodge (2000:198-200). "Grotowski argued that actors trained to display virtuosity or technical skill [would] almost always lack any line of living impulses [...] In Grotowski's terminology, impulse refers to a seed of a living action born inside the actor's body which extends itself outward to the periphery, making itself visible as physical action" (Hodge, 2000:199).

<sup>62</sup> Action Theatre is psychophysical training method in improvisation that integrates movement and vocal work founded by Ruth Zaporah. See Zaporah (1995).

<sup>63</sup> A martial art form from South India appropriated in the UK as a psychophysical training method. See Zarrilli (2000).

<sup>64</sup> "The concern of the Suzuki method is with restoring the wholeness of the human body to the theatrical context and uncovering the actor's innate expressive abilities. A rigorous physical discipline drawn from such diverse influences as ballet, traditional Japanese and Greek theater and martial arts, the training seeks to heighten the actor's emotional and physical power and commitment to each moment on the stage" (See Allain 2002).

and its implied dualism takes a shift in intent. In order to activate intersubjectivities in the dance event all members of the triadic relationship may need to shift their intent to engage in a state of openness towards the other. The idea of openness to shared experience discussed in Chapter 1 requires some bravery on the parts of all members of the triadic relationship. Merleau-Ponty attributes the fear involved in finding this openness to our self-consciousness brought about by a mutual objectification between self and other (1962:360-361).

Animals and young children are fascinating to observe because they move without self-consciousness. “The perception of other people and the intersubjective world is problematical only for adults. The child lives in a world which he unhesitatingly believes accessible all around him” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:355). The following sections of this chapter offer practical experiments in finding ways to open the performer in aid of fostering a way of being that resists persona. This immediacy of being in the dance event lived by the performer may thereby allow the audience to feel more open by way of reflecting upon themselves through the other. This idea of reflection upon the self through another is a characteristic of the synthesised account of intersubjectivities proposed in this research.

### **2.1.3 Body Knowledges and The Habit Body**

The discussion will now turn to practical training as it proposes to provide the performer with ways of diminishing (or at least bringing awareness to) self-

consciousness with a view to promoting embodiment and activating intersubjectivities.

Knowledge is a world-picture built up, partly through the instrumentality of other people in the world in intersubjectivity...the other socializes and intersubjectivizes perception because of the fact of embodiment. (Bullock and Trombley (Eds.) 1977:620)

Modern science evidences that we have 'body knowledges',<sup>65</sup> that our muscles hold memories that emerge from repetition of motion. Trisha Brown recounts a profound experience in which this occurred whilst performing her work *Accumulation with Talking plus Watermotor* (1979). The choreographic structure of the work allowed her to speak through a spontaneous stream of consciousness whilst dancing. During one moment in the performance, Brown said, "My father died in between the making of this move and this move" (Brown in Burt, 2006:147). In a later discussion, Brown revealed, "I was amazed that my body had stored this memory in the movement pattern [...] I became silent and composed myself. I was devastated that I had said that" (ibid).

It is not my opinion that body knowledge comes about from a regimen of repetition that is automatic in its nature but rather, that the knowledge of the trained body is manifested in its ability to alter, navigate and negotiate dancing in a way that is responsive to shifting conditions of the lived moment without reference to cerebral or intellectual processes. Without elaborating on the scientific explanation for this and to describe it simply, muscle memory relates to the neural signal that is sent

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<sup>65</sup> It is the fault of language that there is an implied duality between mind and body by the use of the phrase 'body knowledge'. By no means am I advocating that this is the case.

from the brain to our muscles to enable action.<sup>66</sup> Merleau-Ponty refers to this bodily knowledge as movement which resides in one's 'habit body' (1964). When a movement becomes habitual (for example, the movement involved in tying one's shoe) then the mind is free to think, speak, sing or perform other tasks whilst the body is in the process of carrying out the habitual movement. In order for a movement to become habitual, it needs to have been repeated. When we first learned to tie our shoes, it was a highly concentrated task. It demanded a certain degree of motor control, a certain amount of precision in timing. Once tying a shoe became a habitual movement (i.e. we no longer focused on how the sensory-motor system was operating) our mind could occupy itself with other thoughts. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty's habit body finds relevance in dance training in that for example, a professional ballerina will in daily life carry herself like a ballerina. The stylistic technique of ballet has been so deeply embodied over time that the way of her whole posture is habitually balletic. Merleau-Ponty says, "The phenomenon of habit is just what prompts us to revise our notion of 'understand' and our notion of the body" (1962:144). In my practical choreographic research I have looked at the habit body in the context of experiments in movement repetition as a possible means of cultivating immediacy in the embodiment of contemporary dance. This will be discussed in Section 2.5 of this chapter.

A discussion about the habit body of the trained dancer raises questions about the untrained body. Are performance personas something that even the untrained

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<sup>66</sup> See Fitt, (1988) *Dance Kinesiology* and see Glaser (2003).

dancer will adopt? It is not technique that alone creates performance persona. It is perhaps as Merleau-Ponty proposes, that adults have a strong sense of self-consciousness unlike the animals or young children that face no problems in encountering others in an intersubjective world. If training highlights for the individual a recognition of self-consciousness in order to engage in a struggle with it, then I propose this as a further step towards activating intersubjectivities in contemporary dance.

Yet, to suggest that all members of the triadic relationship engage in a struggle to reveal themselves undoubtedly raises complex philosophical questions concerning the identity of self. It is possible that this act of revealing results in a manifestation of yet another guise, a persona of, attempting to show my real self. If this is possible, then when does one ever not operate under the assumption of a persona? If, as self-conscious beings, persona is adopted in any situation, when is the real self ever revealed? Philosophers have debated this question and I cannot attempt to unravel it here. Assuming then, that it is *not* possible, through an intentional act of will to strip away persona completely, then the aesthetic produced by training, although it may be capable of overcoming performance persona, nevertheless ultimately supports a persona. The important distinction is that the persona supported through this study's promotion of training over technique upholds the quality of human presence in contemporary dance performance. It is because of this that the choreography created for a dance event which does not

support performance persona is best made specifically for the performers and for the purpose of bringing to the fore the human presence.

One contention of this thesis is that the promotion of human presence could make an important contribution to the immediacy of contemporary dance. A more accurate description of this process may involve highlighting practical methods and their relative efficacy to revealing intersubjectivities through a foregrounding of human presence within contemporary dance choreography. Suzanne Jaeger dance writer and Professor of Philosophy writes on the concept of human presence in performance. She turns to Merleau-Ponty to inform her arguments about the recognition of presence in performance and although she uses the term 'stage presence' (which I find an unfortunate term as it carries connotations of theatricality) to discuss what I am calling 'human presence', her discussions are clearly in line with describing an experience that takes place in, and aims to adjust to, the lived moment. Jaeger writes:

Stage presence can be defined as an active configuring and reconfiguring of one's intentional grasp in response to an environment. It is to be aware of the uniqueness of a particular audience and of certain features of a theatrical event rather than performing a perfect repetition of a familiar and well-rehearsed pattern of behavior. It is reported by performers as a feeling of being fully alive to the audience and other performers...it is sometimes described as a kind of "flow", as a vulnerability or risk in the immediacy of live performance. (2009:122-123)

The practical methods undertaken to draw out human presence in the dance event are detailed in the following sections of this chapter. The sections order the practical methods by their perceived levels of success in activating

intersubjectivities in the context of contemporary dance choreographic processes. These levels of success were determined through critical reflection on both the original choreographic works made for this doctoral project and the practical process-based studies carried out along the duration of this research. Sections 2.2 and 2.3 on *reaction* and *readiness* were deemed to be the most successful whereas Sections 2.5 and 2.6 on *repetition* and *replication* were less successful. Section 2.4 is DVD documentation of my Solo Dance Improvisation presented at Chisenhale Dance Space in London 2004 which provides examples of *reaction* and *readiness* used in practice.

## **2.2 Reaction**

*Stand, sit or lie down anywhere*

*Listen to the sounds around you*

*Hone your attention to one sound*

*Identify this sound's quality, tempo, texture...*

*Allow your body to start to move*

*Even if this movement is imperceptible to the outside eye*

*Let this last as long as you like, then  
shift your attention to a different sound*



*Reaction*<sup>67</sup> has to do with the phenomenological experiencing of the strands of the dance medium.<sup>68</sup> performer, movement, space, sound, within the triadic relationship of maker, performer and audience. *Reaction* is about the attention of those within the triadic relationship staying open to the present moment. *Reaction* allows for a choice to be made in the lived moment. As Jan Ritsema says, “I dance in a truthful way [...] listening very closely to everything that, at a given moment, is right according to me [...]” (Ritsema in Bloois, 2004:141). Ritsema’s reference to listening (Jonathan Burrows uses the same expression) is relevant to the idea of *reaction* as it highlights the possibility of finding and/or choosing stimuli happening in the moment in which to react. I have found movement improvisation useful in dealing with the idea of *reaction* in terms of movement. A written account of how I have used one improvisation idea to inform the concept of *reaction* is described later in this section, under the sub-heading: *Dancing to the Sound of Another*.

The word ‘reaction’ is not without connotations. In physics, it appears in Newton’s third law of motion, “every action has an equal opposite reaction” (Henderson, 1996-2004). In chemistry, it relates to the change or transformation of substances. In medicine, if you have an adverse reaction to something it usually implies suffering or physical trauma as a result of the body rejecting a substance that has been ingested or inhaled. However, in the context of contemporary dance, I have explored *reaction* in relation to choreographic practice in terms of a pre-reflective phenomenon, not involving a moment of decision at all, but as an act that is both

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<sup>67</sup> An original term given to name the practical process described in this section.

<sup>68</sup> See Preston-Dunlop (1998) for further information on the Strands of the Dance Medium.

simultaneously mental and physical which is experienced by the performer in response to internal or external stimuli.<sup>69</sup> However, the stimuli may or may not be consciously recognised by the performer. In other words, *reaction* is not premeditated. For example, a sound is not heard and then the performer thinks, “Ah, that sounds like a train, I will now move in a rhythm that fits the train sound.” *Reaction* in this sense corresponds to impulse, opposed to cognition; and relates directly to the performer’s sensory-motor circuit.

The sensori-motor circuit is a term used by Merleau-Ponty to describe a mode of experiencing, connecting the body to thing-events in the external world (1962:86).

The sensori-motor circuit includes our five senses through which we respond to external stimuli but it also encompasses proprioception. Although Merleau-Ponty does not explicitly use the term proprioception he does allude to the fact that proprioception and our external sense perception work hand in hand.

Proprioception is defined by Shaun Gallagher thus: “Proprioception is what Merleau-Ponty would call a pre-reflective awareness that allows the body to remain experientially transparent to the agent who is acting” (2001:158). Merleau-Ponty provides the grounds for Gallagher’s assertions when he writes: “External perception and the perception of one’s own body vary in conjunction because they are two facets of one and the same act” (1962:205).

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<sup>69</sup> The use of the terms ‘internal’ and ‘external’ were used in ‘Studies with Annie’ (2007) and in the original choreographic work *Grappling* (2008/2009) to comment upon the location of the performer’s attention within the dance event. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

In light of a working sensory-motor circuit, *reaction* addresses how we experience sensory stimuli from the world and how we respond physically to these stimuli through bodily knowledge. However, it is not akin to primal instinct, as when we instinctively pull our hand away from something hot. In the context of the contemporary dance event, this bodily knowledge refers to the knowledge of the trained performer's body. The reference to the trained performer's body made here does not refer to the performer's body that has been saturated in codified dance techniques. Instead, it refers to the performer that has been trained in non-performance oriented movement forms which cultivate an ability to alter, navigate and negotiate dancing in a way that is responsive to shifting conditions of the lived moment without reference to cerebral or intellectual processes.

Matteo Fargion is an example of a performer who has a trained body gained through his collaborative work with choreographer Jonathan Burrows. Yet, he has not had any technical dance training. In an interview Burrows said,

Working with someone who doesn't have dance training [...] enriches my vision, partly because I had reached a point where I felt I'd exhausted my capacity for investigating highly technical dance. Working with untrained people has reawakened my love of movement. (2008:1)

The description which follows depicts Fargion's response to shifting conditions of the lived moment within a dance event.

*Fargion waited.*

*The choreography required that he stand in stillness.*

*The audience noticed the fly circling Fargion's head long before he did and we could barely contain ourselves when it landed on his sweat-filled brow.*

*Fargion froze.*

*He refused to break out of his performance persona but I could see him grappling with the idea of improvising a series of 'shoo fly' movements.*

*Burrows danced on, oblivious to the theatrical unfolding of Fargion vs. fly.*

*When Fargion's choreographic cue finally came he began to bat his arms around wildly*

*(A wonderful coincidence? I suspect it was his intersubjective awareness and attention that allowed this to unfold in the vein of the choreographed movement).*

*The battle with the fly was on.*

*The audience laughed outloud and were satisfied.*

-- Observations from the live performance: *The Quiet Dance* performed by Jonathan Burrows & Matteo Fargion on 14 October 2005, The Robin Howard Theatre, London

This example illustrates a two-fold reaction from Fargion. Although the choreography required that he wait in stillness, the qualitative intensity of the stillness with which Fargion waited increased in reaction to the fly landing on his head. This reaction was entirely unpremeditated. Yet, we as an audience recognised Fargion freezing in reaction to the fly. The moment Fargion finally had choreographic permission to react to the fly informed both Fargion's intention behind the otherwise abstract arm gestures and our interpretation of the movement.

*Whilst I was balanced on one leg and covered in feathers,  
a security guard walked in, flicked on the house lights and said, "What's going on in here?!"  
I tried to stay focused but it was too late  
the audience had already seen me break out of my performance persona,  
waver on my standing leg and shift my eyes to the door where he was standing.  
After the performance I had several people tell me  
their favourite moment in the performance was watching me react to that interruption.*



*Figure 10: Dismantle Map (2004/2005) performed by Matt Davis & April Nunes*

American playwright and director David Mamet notes:

Time on stage moves too quickly; and the moment, if one has time to consider it, is long gone by the time the considerations begin...by the time you feel something, the audience has already seen it. It happened and you might as well have acted on it. (If you didn't, the audience saw not "nothing," but you, the actor, denying something). (1997:32)

What technical Contemporary Dance training does not have built into its construct is permission to react. I have seen performers dance on in silence as their pre-recorded music goes technically awry or carry on dancing with one breast exposed as the strap on their costume falls apart. The audience, as in the case of Matteo's fly, loses all interest in the dance and wants to see how the individual will react to the situation unfolding in the moment. There are choreographers who subvert these situations and intentionally build them into their choreographic ideas. Sasha Waltz is one example. *Körper* (2000) had the theatrical set crashing to the floor whilst the dancers kept performing. Arguably, by the time I saw this work in 2003 the dancers were so accustomed to the choreographed crashing of the set that their nonchalant reaction to it remained tightly within the parameters of performance persona. With the ability to adapt as human beings, a huge wall crashing to the floor time and time again will start to lose its shock value. Parry agrees, "In its keenness to shock, *Körper* succeeds only in being tiresomely predictable" (15 June 2003 [review article]). The predictability of the wall falling was seen in the performers' reaction to it, or rather, in their non-reaction to it.

Upholding *reaction* in the sense that I am promoting it here means, that firstly, the performer must feel that they have permission to react and permission to improvise

even within the confines of strictly set choreography. In the case of mainstream Contemporary Dance choreography,

[...]if a dancer falls down or makes a mistake, she gets up and continues as if nothing happened. By choosing to perform without a set plan, however, we allow something unexpected to intrude: a movement, an interaction, a random choice about space or speed that occurs in response to the present moment. This element of unpredictability changes everything. For the better. (Webb in Cooper Albright & Gere, 2003:241)

However, if the primary concern of the performer is to give the audience an aesthetically pleasing technical performance, then this clearly affects their ability to sense what is going on around them in the moment. Jonathan Burrows, who danced for the Royal Ballet for thirteen years, identifies his experience of performance persona where technical precision was also the focus, “I have within me still that kind of visceral experience of performing all those ballets which are about giving, giving, giving to the audience...” (Burrows in Perazzo, 2005:4). If the whole drive of the performance is to maintain a performance persona and to exude technical excellence then the deeper levels of intersubjectivity are lost.

### **2.2.1 *Dancing to the Sound of Another* and Liminality**

In a series of workshops carried out in 2005/2006,<sup>70</sup> I had participants begin repeating a movement over and over that involved the whole body and which would increase the heart rate. After five minutes of repetitive motion I asked them to be still, listen and feel their hearts beating inside their bodies. I asked them to

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<sup>70</sup> These workshops were carried out with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year single honour dance degree students at Roehampton University London.

shift their weight on the spot moving to the sound of their heartbeats and then finally to move off-balance allowing the beats to carry them through space.

However, once the participants started moving they found it difficult to hear and feel their heartbeats with the same intensity as when they were still. This was both because their movement created sound and because the beat of their hearts had subsided back into normal dancing rhythms. The movement they created in these moments was I suspected, in reaction to something else; it produced something that appeared closer to the predetermined movement located in the habit body.

This movement exploration continued until each participant was asked to work with a partner. I asked them if they could feel the heartbeat of their partner (either through touching their partner on the upper chest or wrist). If they could not feel the heartbeat I asked them if they could hear their partner's breath. The task was constructed to encourage movement in reaction to the sound of their partner's vital functions (i.e. their breath or heartbeat). I gave the verbal prompt that their partner was creating a sound score to which they could dance. Because both people were listening intently to one another and both were creating sound and movement simultaneously, the potential for a deeper level of intersubjectivity which included razor sharp attention to the moment opened up.

Most participants said they experienced a sense of not knowing who was moving to whose sound, as the boundaries between the maker and doer were blurred.



Nearly every participant said that the exercise was difficult. I suspected that what made it difficult was the experience of existing in a realm of not knowing where the students' experience of normal rules and conventions governing a Contemporary Dance workshop were no longer applicable to the task at hand. They had entered a liminal state of neither here nor there, an in-between state that carried with it extraordinary potential.

The anthropologist Victor Turner has discussed the liminal state. The liminal phase is a state of non-identity in which the characteristics of the past are dropped and the future characteristics are not yet assumed, this is a state of "betwixt and between" (1969:94-95). Since Turner's research, the anthropologist Colin Turnbull (1990) suggests that Turner's definition of social or communal experience of liminality also exists within the individual's daily experience of the world. He highlights moments of experience when an intuitive, or subjective knowledge clarifies the experience and often has the power to override the more objectively established responses to a situation or problem. Such moments are often described as going out on a limb or having a hunch and are characterised by individuals refusing to follow the rational or accepted route. Rather, individuals choose to work on a more instinctive level which they just feel is the right course of action.

Liminality is a subjective experience of the external world [...] it is integrative of all experience; in the liminal state disorder is ordered, doubts and problems removed, the right course of action is made clear with a rightness that is both structural and moral since the inevitable discrepancies between belief and practice in the external world are among the many problems ordered and removed in the liminal state. (Turnbull, 1990; 80)

In the dance event, when makers, performers and/or audiences experience this state of liminality then *reaction* to the lived moment is fostered. A situation unfolding in reality makes its way into the contemporary dance event whereby processes of making may be exposed, the relationships between audience and performers may be exposed and a mutual experiencing, based in a shared experience of the liminal helps to activate intersubjectivities. If our thoughts, actions and perceptions are tied up with the thoughts, actions and perceptions of others then the powerful, uncomfortable state of the liminal is formed and re-formed according to our mutual corporeal experiencing of each other and of ourselves. Such is true of the deeper levels of intersubjectivity where the thoughts, actions and perceptions of one are continuously existing and evolving for the thoughts, actions and perceptions of the other. The practical process of *reaction* may have the ability therefore to point in the direction of liminality thereby serving to activate deeper levels of intersubjectivity. This makes *reaction* a key component of a possible contemporary dance training fit for the purpose of activating intersubjectivities in performance.

### **2.3 Readiness**

*Stand shoulder to shoulder with someone*

*in complete stillness and without touching*

*Keep your eyes looking straight ahead*

*In a moment you will both move at exactly the same time*

*The time between stillness and movement, pregnant with potential  
is what the state of readiness feels like*

*Readiness* is about working with energy as opposed to technique.

Readiness is a description of both a physical and mental state. It is a state of alertness, likened to that of a cat preparing to pounce. There is an intensifying of mental focus and an opening of sensory awareness. Although the body may be still, it is charged with energy. This sense of engaged presence fosters immediacy by way of harnessing absolute commitment to each moment such that gaps in attention are diminished. Readiness demands cultivating a heightened attention<sup>71</sup> in order to feel the 'right'<sup>72</sup> moments for movement initiation. (Nunes Tucker, A., Price, A., and Diedrich, A. in Johns, C. 2010:191)

*Readiness* is achieved through a harnessing and directing of energy in the body and both the disciplines of dance and theatre have within them practical training mechanisms that advance a performer's work with their energy. For example, Tadashi Suzuki, founder of the Suzuki Method (a psychophysical training method predominately used by actors mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) highlights a key concept in his training called 'animal energy'.<sup>73</sup>

The audience perceives this [animal energy] as an altered mood, a precise external focus and a physical intensity [...] the performer is exposed and vulnerable on stage in this highly charged state. Encouraging animalistic sensitivity shifts the performance away from being an aesthetic entertainment and towards a transgressive interactive event. (Allain, 2002:5)

Like Suzuki's animal energy, it is important to highlight that this state of *readiness* encompasses both openness to shared experience and heightened attention to the

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<sup>71</sup> See Csikszentmihalyi (1990)

<sup>72</sup> See Ritsema (in Bloois, 2004) on 'listening' to the 'right' moments to move.

<sup>73</sup> See Allain (2002:4-5)

moment. As a result, the state of readiness feels vulnerable, uncertain and is authentic.

Fran Barbe, Lecturer in Performance Studies and freelance choreographer draws upon the Suzuki Method in her work. Having worked with her personally in the capacity of a performer between 2002-2004, I have practised this idea of *readiness* as one of a group of twelve dancers,<sup>74</sup> all of us working within the parameters of choreographically set movement. Using stillness more than movement, we (as a group) became attuned to the moment when movement needed to be initiated. If we felt a lapse in the attention of the group we ceased movement and waited in stillness until the next impulse to move emerged. Working with stillness to this degree enabled us to become hypersensitive to any small movements that may have been a signal from another dancer indicating that they were ready to move. These small movements were not deliberate pre-meditated movement cues; instead they arose from the heightened state of attention in which we were working. The overall aesthetic of Barbe's practical work was electric and vibrant with the tension of each dancer's being. Because we all knew what the expected outcome of the choreographic task was (i.e. to move in unison) the challenge to notice the intention behind moving was met with precision and conviction. This state of *readiness* was also used in my Solo Dance Improvisation at Chisenhale Dance Space London (2004) which comprises the next section of this chapter.

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<sup>74</sup> In rehearsals for *Palpitation* (2003) choreographed by Fran Barbe.

The task outlined below: Discovery of Form<sup>75</sup> reveals a poignant thread in my choreographic process: the use of stillness. It also highlights my methodological process: the hybrid form of practice as research, practice-based research and practice-led research in terms of working with theory and practice.<sup>76</sup>

### **2.3.1 Discovery of Form**

The Discovery of Form task began as I asked participants to find a physical form (posture) that they could hold in stillness for up to five minutes. The physical form was to be a reaction to what they felt encapsulated their personality at that given moment. Participants were asked to consider nonverbal communication cues and to make precise choices as to how they would be physically manifested.

Emilyn Claid speaks about the internal language of a dancer who has to sustain a moment of stillness in performance; her words are interesting to examine in respect to the first task in the Discovery of Form workshop. She says,

To physically perform the task I am committed to the discursive layering of an intensive, verbal but unspoken internal dialogue. This is a multi-layered thought process about the actions and sensations of every single movement of muscle, sinew and bone in my body; about metaphorical subtexts; about other performers, space, time and about relations with the spectators. If the ongoing immediate, vibrant, intelligent verbalisation that is happening at any moment of practising standing still could be recorded, the texts would be deafening and ceaseless. Yet, standing still appears as a moment of silence. (Claid, 2002:9).

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<sup>75</sup> This task was developed over three years (2003-2005) with students from Roehampton University London as well as in workshops given at conferences at Laban London (2003) and Leeds University, UK (2003) and in independent workshops I held in London for both dancers and non-dancers.

<sup>76</sup> See DVD for original choreographic works and refer to the Introduction for an explanation of the hybrid model of practice as research, practice-based research and practice-led research used in this doctoral project.

Arguably, if we are operating under a non-dualist perspective of body and mind, then thought cessation in the mind surely influences the stillness and movement of the body.<sup>77</sup> Claid's claim raises the following questions: How, from a phenomenological perspective, can the experience of standing still be perceived as a moment of silence, if the view is taken that thought and movement are integral? Training in this practical process of *readiness* thereby hones the attention of the performer and slows the chatter of thoughts. Unfocused attention may mean that "deafening" and "ceaseless" thoughts would be evident in the body manifesting perhaps as muscle tension, eye movement, fidgeting or shifting weight. Discovery of Form was specifically designed to provide insight into the ways that participants' thoughts, opinions, attitudes and beliefs about themselves could manifest physically.

Participants in these workshops also attempted to achieve a state of reaction to the moment, (which according to Merleau-Ponty is constantly slipping between our past and our future) in order to produce a physical form. An important discovery that emerged from these Discovery of Form workshops was that the attempt to hold a form in stillness was not successful and this was supported by my own personal experience of the exercise - holding a form in stillness was impossible. Gleaning this tacit knowledge for myself facilitated critical reflection on the Discovery of Form task and influenced the making processes used in both the Solo

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<sup>77</sup> See Gallagher (2005)

Improvisation shown in the following section and in the original choreographic work *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005).

The Solo Dance Improvisation which forms the next section of this chapter shows musician Sylvia Hallet and myself engaged in a mutual improvisation of sound and movement. Both practical processes of *reaction* and *readiness* are utilised deliberately by me in an attempt to stay in the immediacy of each passing moment. At times this is successful, at others I become self-conscious and my old Contemporary Dance technical training which emphasises aesthetically pleasing shapes and my desire for technical excellence takes over. This improvisation was a milestone in my research however, as it paved the way for making the work *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005) which explored the processes of *reaction* and *readiness* and worked them into the context of set choreography. *Dismantle Map* is shown in the following chapter.

**2.4 View DVD 1 – Solo Dance Improvisation  
Chisenhale Dance Space, London, 2004**



*Figure 11: Video still image of untitled solo dance (2004)*



## 2.5 *Repetition*

*Repeat a gesture made with one or both of your hands*<sup>78</sup>

*Watch your hand(s) and experience your shifts in consciousness*

*Does the movement change and/or evolve?*

*Over time do you give meaning or meanings to the movement?*

*Do emotions arise for you when you do this?*

Repetition of movement used in dance is nothing new. Members of the Judson Dance Theater used it; renowned choreographers of today use it (notably Richard Alton, Pina Bausch, Jonathan Burrows and Rosemary Butcher amongst many others).<sup>79</sup> Sanford Meisner uses repetition to train actors.<sup>80</sup> My reasons for pursuing *repetition* as a practical strategy to activate intersubjectivities within the dance event were two-fold. The first reason for pursuing *repetition* led me down a path which has not proven to assist in the activation of intersubjectivities proposed within this study. Following a line of thinking where I drew up a connection between Merleau-Ponty's idea of the habit body and the ability to become so engaged in a repetitive movement pattern that my mind was free to follow any other trains of thought, I created a section of my choreographic work *Living La Pedrera* (2006) to demonstrate this idea. Merleau-Ponty's idea of the habit body is that the body

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<sup>78</sup> This works best if you set out to do this for a certain amount of time and try to stick to it, challenging yourself to continue moving beyond the moment that you feel ready to stop.

<sup>79</sup> See Banes (1980:70) and Bremser (1999)

<sup>80</sup> See Meisner, 1987. "In the repetition exercises, Meisner found an exercise that refined impulse." (Bernardin, 2006, January 6-8 [workshop]).

develops movements that happen without the need for highly focused attention. For example, the movement tasks of driving a car, typing on a keyboard or tying a shoe are habitual. He says:

[...] by becoming involved in the world through stable organs and pre-established circuits man can acquire the mental and practical space which will theoretically free him from his environment and allow him to see it. (Merleau-Ponty 1962:87)

For approximately the first 15 minutes of the work I stood in the main courtyard of the Antoni Gaudi building La Pedrera in Barcelona and repeated the movement of looking up. My aim was to develop this movement of looking up into one that was habitual. By doing this, I intended to lose a sense of self-consciousness and to gain a sense of mental freedom as a result of my body being occupied in a pattern of repetition. Unfortunately I achieved neither.



*Figure 12: Photograph of repetitive movement pattern looking up in the courtyard during the first performance of Living La Pedrera (2006)*

I had tried to go against one of the very premises upon which my research was built, namely that the mind and body are not separate. The absolute connectedness of body and mind stared me right in the face for a painful fifteen

minutes.<sup>81</sup> My busy mind was unfocused and I refused to give my attention to the moment. Instead, I worried about how I was being perceived. This failure in working with repetition opened up a new avenue of pursuit and with further practical experiments I found mileage in the potential that the idea of movement repetition had to offer. The work *Grappling* (2008/2009) used movement repetition alongside a spontaneous verbal commentary from the performer which aimed to reveal her level of performance persona.<sup>82</sup>

### **2.5.1 Intention and Attention**

The second reason for pursuing repetition as a practical strategy to activate intersubjectivities was to use it as a means of revealing the thought-movement inter-relationship within the performer. This would foreground the human presence of the performer in aid of cultivating deeper levels of intersubjectivities. In order to do this, I initially experimented with ways of better understanding the relationship between inner intention and external form. This area of experimentation led me to carry out research into how intention and attention work in conjunction with one another.

In my experience of dancing, intention and attention are overlapping experiences. Intention denotes an act which is will-based<sup>83</sup> where there is a motive to produce

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<sup>81</sup> See Appendix DVD for the first 15 minutes of *Living La Pedrera* (2006)

<sup>82</sup> See *Grappling* (2008/2009) Section 5.4 on DVD

<sup>83</sup> This definition of intention is borrowed from the area of choreological studies (is introduced in Chapter 1) and highlights that intention is a corporeal experience. Whereas the concept of intentionality used in schools of philosophical thought (primarily phenomenology) explain it metaphorically in terms of the way our experience can be coloured.

an action. Baddeley (1995, p. xiii), a psychologist interested in exploring levels of attention, defines attention as “concentration on a particular source of stimulation”.<sup>84</sup> It is within the overlapping nature of intention and attention where a link between the two is revealed. If the two were unrelated, how could I intend toward something without also giving it my attention? During the experience of dancing, something takes my attention and I intend towards it, or I direct my intention towards something whilst giving it my attention; yet these are not hard and fast positions. As Baddeley highlights, states of divided attention come into play; and my state of attention as I experimented with repetitive movement sequences in the case of *Living La Pedrera* (2006) and later in *Studies with Annie* (2007) and *Grappling* (2008/2009) gave no exception to Baddeley’s suggestion that attention shifts.

I believe it is the workings of these shifts in attention that has an influence on how we interpret what we experience. An example of this is evident in the video recording of English stand-up comedian Eddie Izzard’s show *Glorious* (1997). In this show, Izzard circles his hands one around the other, imitating the movement of running his hands under the tap. A few moments later he repeats the movement and tells his audience, “I’m not using the taps, I’m letting a mouse run over my hands!” (Richardson, 1997). We see both scenarios, even though the movement has not fundamentally changed. I say “fundamentally”, because the movement, although consisting of the same vocabulary alters in the way it is performed as a

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<sup>84</sup> Attention shifts uniquely for everyone. Carl Jung (1964, pp. 58-66) examined these shifts in attention and identified them as four psychic functions: thought, feeling, sensation and intuition, and claimed that each individual holds a preference for one of the four functions at any given time.

direct result of the placement of Izzard's attention. Therefore, Izzard's intention works in tandem with his vocalised descriptions.

Similarly, Trisha Brown, a founding member of the experimental dance group Judson Dance Theater, said, that although she tried to make the movement the same each time she performed her work *Accumulation* (1971) she realised that the actions performed were never the same. "Sometimes I go a bit faster, sometimes I slow down, and those changes I don't consciously make. It happens" (Brown in Burt, 1974, p. 21). But why does this happen?

I propose that attention and repetition of movement must work like a feedback loop, each influencing the other. However, the movement of the human body can also reveal the inner intentions of the individual and according to some people, such as modern dance pioneer Martha Graham, movement does not lie.<sup>85</sup> "I refuse to admit that the dance has limitations that prevent its acceptance and understanding...the reality of dance is its truth to our inner life" (Graham in Brown, 1979, p. 52). Movement analyst Eden Davies (2001, p. 14) speaks similarly: "The inner attitude of the person moving would give movement its dynamism." It is worth noting that although both Graham and Davies lend support to the non-dualist stance of mind and body, a controversy is revealed when the example of dishonest dialogue accompanies movement. If one's attention was evidence of "truth to our

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<sup>85</sup> Michael Argyle, in his book *The Psychology of Interpersonal Behaviour* (1987) argues how one can learn how to move in such a way that will communicate a message contrary to what one is actually feeling. In essence, he makes a case for how movement *can* lie.

inner life” as Graham stated, then how might it be possible to monitor shifts in attention? I looked to repetition of movement as one option for experimentation.

### **2.5.2 Variations in Movement**

So how do the inner shifts of attention (or what may be traditionally perceived as actions of the mind) manifest in the movements of the human body? Even though repetition of movement was a practical method of pursuit in my research it became evident that repeated movement proved impossible. Movement repeated without change could arguably only be mechanistic since human movement alters continually as a result of our body-mind construct. According to Deane Juhan (2003. p. 390), a body-worker who promotes the functionally integrated body-mind, it is our corporeality, which dictates our interface with decision-making processes. The body is the immediate precinct in which the early formative stages of perceptions unfold, so the current experiences of our bodies influence in decisive ways many of the qualities of the world that is finally deposited into conscious awareness.

The execution of repeated movement over time reveals variations in the movement vocabulary and in the case of set movement material, shifts in attention have to manifest within the framework of the movement vocabulary already in place. Conversely, an improvised phrase of movement reveals more dramatic shifts in attention as a result of decision-making processes to purposely change the movement vocabulary. It was this discovery of the different potential offered by

both set and improvised movement material which facilitated the choreographic decision to structure the final piece of original choreographic work for this doctoral project to include both improvised and set material.<sup>86</sup>

## **2.6 Replication**

*Replication* is distinct from *repetition* in that it is centred around the use of nonverbal communication. The practical method of *replication* in this study denotes an experience where the non-verbal communication cues of another (the audience for example) are physically adopted intentionally or unintentionally (by the performer for example). *Replication*, like *repetition*, has the tendency to provoke an analysis within the practical processes that reinforces the division between the internal and external.<sup>87</sup> Adams states,

Intersubjectivity isn't behavioural coordination...the mutual awareness of bodily intentionality is a kind of intersubjectivity, even though it occurs mostly below, or outside the range of normal self-consciousness. (2005:14)

A selection of nonverbal communication cues that are located within this practical method of *replication* are briefly outlined on the following pages. The cues: posture, gesture, proxemics, facial expression, gaze and breath<sup>88</sup> are identified to remind the reader that the social interactions that utilise these cues create a forum for our shared experience. Each nonverbal cue selected for explanation in this section has

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<sup>86</sup> This will be further explained in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.

<sup>87</sup> Foster (1986:67) addresses the idea of replication and like Fraleigh (1987) claims to deal with the phenomenological experience of dance. They both look to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty for support but their interpretation of his work takes a different path than my use of his views. This is because both Foster and Fraleigh address the performer in a way which strengthens the perception of performer as a theatrical representation, thereby supporting the idea of performance persona.

<sup>88</sup> See Argyle (1987) for thorough explanation of these nonverbal cues.



served as a useful area of practical investigation related to the idea of openness to shared experience as described in Chapter 1 as a constituent of a synthesised account of intersubjectivities.

Choreological studies addresses the area of nonverbal communication and it is within these parameters that nonverbal communication has been explored practically.

Choreological studies includes non-verbal communication studies in so far as they give insight into the triadic perspective of making, performing and appreciating dance (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 1999, July 17).

Using the choreological studies perspective of nonverbal communication cues as a springboard for the exploration of a practical exploration into *replication*, the sections which follow discuss the value of these nonverbal cues as they have served (in the context of this research project) to open up one's attention towards another in order to facilitate shared experience.

A synopsis of the nonverbal cues mentioned in the area of choreological studies: posture, gesture, proxemics, facial expression, gaze and breath are provided on the following pages alongside explanations for how they have been used in this research.

### **2.6.1 Posture and Gesture**

Posture and gesture are written about jointly in this section to highlight their link as nonverbal cues. When posture and gesture are integrated into one movement it is

believed to be a more truthful expression of movement (Preston-Dunlop, 1998, November 18).<sup>89</sup> The integration of posture and gesture or ‘posture gesture mergers’ (PGMs) appear to be inborn aspects of personality that hardly vary after physical maturity (Lamb and Watson, 1979). Posture, gesture and PGMs are nonverbal cues that are relevant to the idea of Merleau-Ponty’s habit body. PGMs are modes of expression that show “[...] the unique pattern of an individual’s way of moving.[It is] the behaviour which a person will exhibit as a way of expressing his personality” (Lamb and Watson in Preston-Dunlop, 1995:112). PGMs bring insight into the psychological and physical information that we can glean about someone by the way he/she holds his/her body up against gravity.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, observing another’s posture, gesture and/or PGMs, may provide information about that person’s muscle memory and their body knowledges. It may also display the effects of repetitive physical motions, mental and physical habits, and traumas to the body mind complex (i.e. whole being).

For example, a man who thinks he is too tall may develop permanent slouching. Likewise, a woman self-conscious about her breasts may roll her shoulders forward and develop chronic back pain. (Nunes, 2003:46)

“Our posture reflects our value, our personal history and our culture” (Fortin, 2003, July 19). The unintentional replication of another’s PGMs can reveal a shared sentiment. In social situations for example, a position of agreement with another may result in PGMs being inadvertently mimicked.

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<sup>89</sup> See Lamb and Watson (1979)

<sup>90</sup> See Davies (2001)

The motivation for using *replication* of posture and/or gesture was that through the act of having their own bodily information replicated it was anticipated that the audience may feel a deeper connection to the performer and vice versa. In *Living La Pedrera* this attempt was unsuccessful. This was primarily because the idea to replicate was fashioned in a contrived manner. Audience members were asked to replicate each other and not having laid down any preparatory work before this for them to feel comfortable to do this, none did. The practical investigations of *replication* were pursued in a more informal way through my Studies with Annie a year later and were again dismissed as the act to replicate the nonverbal cues of another always felt contrived and inauthentic. I decided at the end of 2007 that the idea of *replication* would not be incorporated in *Grappling* (2008/2009), the final piece of practical work made for this study.

### **2.6.2 Proxemics**

The area of proxemics addresses how we place ourselves spatially in relation to others and our environment. Jenni Harrigan says, “Proxemics is the study of our perception and structuring of interpersonal and environmental space” (2005:137). Harrigan’s explanation of proxemics works well in conjunction with this study because it gives importance to the lived experience of space unlike Aston and Savona who define proxemics from a semiotic standpoint in saying that proxemics is the study of “the codes governing the use of space” (1991:111). Aston and Savona’s definition places a priority on reading as opposed to experiencing the space. Proxemics is used in this research as a tool to open the members of the

triadic relationship into a shared experience of the dance event. Choreographer Felix Ruckert created a work called *Ring* (1999) in which performers touched, whispered to and hugged individual audience members for the duration of the work.

Ring is an intriguing experience between participating audience members sitting on a circle of chairs, and the equivalent number of performers/dancers who interact verbally and by gestures with them. A third circle of passive spectators surrounds them. (Ruckert, [not dated]).

In this work, Ruckert took proxemics to an intimate level. Ruckert trained and danced with Pina Bausch and his history in tanztheatre, not unlike others working in the same genre, often stimulates the pushing of the proxemic boundaries between performer and audience.

In Pina Bausch's *1980* the performers invade the spectators' space and require them to respond, to speak to the dancers, drink tea with them, so begging the question: are the spectators now part of the work? (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002:15-16)

Although much of tanztheatre has the capacity to manipulate nonverbal cues which results in a successful level of engagement between performer and audience, it does so through theatrical devices. Therefore, my research does not engage with tanztheatre because tanztheatre is more concerned with theatricality than immediate human connection. This is the rationale for examining the work of choreographers: Jonathan Burrows, Atsushi Takenouchi and Angela Woodhouse as their work addresses intersubjectivity but not through theatricality. All three of these artists also work outside of the tanztheatre genre.

### **2.6.3 Facial Expression**

If the integration of mind and body is accepted then the wide range of facial expressions that exist for us as human beings can be incorporated into those expressions available to performers. The face normally worn<sup>91</sup> by Contemporary Dance performers appears to inhibit their capacity for full expression.

The blank face was not just a Cunningham Company phenomenon. Nikolais actually had used it as a mask and was very proactive with the blank face. In Cunningham's Company it was not so conscious -- it was just blank. It wasn't a mask it was just an empty face as we danced along trying not to add anything to the movement ... that neutrality left some people in the company emotionally in a void. (Paxton in Rosenberg, 1996)

It should be noted that the neutral, controlled face described above is still present in some aspects of Contemporary Dance and acts as reinforcement to the performance persona. If the performer is working towards the cultivation of human presence then their facial expression is only a further extension of the thought-movement inter-relationship, reflective of the performer's engagement with their own process of being in each moment.

### **2.6.4 Gaze**

Gaze is an incredibly strong nonverbal cue. How we look at another person and how intention is used to direct our gaze creates relationships with others of varying emotional content. For example, we do not need to see the eyes of someone to know that we are being watched. Sartre (1958:259-261) gives the example of someone absorbed in unselfconsciously looking through a keyhole, who is then

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<sup>91</sup> The word 'worn' has been used here to illustrate that the facial expression of the Contemporary Dance performer often appears as a protective mask. See also the references to 'cool body' and 'cool stance' under Technique and Training in Section 3.1 of this chapter.

transformed or “suddenly affected in their being” when they hear footsteps in the hallway behind them. Sartre calls this experience a transformation of *being for oneself* into *being for the other* and claims that others are revealed to us not in a cognitive, intellectual sense but through our own transformation of being. Barbaras states,

If the other refers to my consciousness, the other concerns my consciousness in its *very being*; my consciousness must discover the other in itself as a dimension of its being prior to knowledge. (1991:128)

The way in which gaze has been used practically in this research will be outlined in Chapters 3 and 5 which highlight the choreographic works *Dismantle Map* (2004) and *Grappling* (2008/2009).

### **2.6.5 Breath**

Breath is our life force and is influenced through both internal and external stimuli. It is changed by external circumstances (for example physical exertion) and also has the capacity to reflect emotional states. For example, anxiety and fear are characterised by shallow quick breathing. Breath has a direct impact on our whole being. I used breath as a direct focus for my attention in the courtyard section in the first performance of *Living La Pedrera* (2006)<sup>92</sup> and I used a yogic breathing technique called Bhramari to create a high pitched sound on both the inhale and exhale in the beginning of the choreographic work *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005). In both instances, the breath had a direct influence on my execution of the movement.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> See Appendix DVD documentation of *Living La Pedrera* (2006)

<sup>93</sup> The breath work used in both choreographic works will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.2 and in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.

This chapter has addressed my claim that mainstream European Contemporary Dance has lost its immediacy and distanced itself from audiences and why and how Contemporary Dance training methods are perceived to be responsible. It has also looked at practical experiments in persona versus person in dance practice and introduced the methods of *reaction*, *readiness*, *repetition* and *replication*. Further, it has begun to unravel how these practices and how practices which involve training over technique may lead to a strategy to activate (or de-activate) intersubjectivities in performance.

The next chapter looks critically at the work of dance artists: Atsushi Takenouchi, Angela Woodhouse and Jonathan Burrows for the purpose of demonstrating reflective acquaintance with these dance practitioners who are addressing intersubjectivity in their work as well as to show how the work of these artists forms a place from where my own work departs. The latter part of the next chapter then examines *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005), the first of three works created for this doctoral project; and positions itself to begin to answer the research question: Could experiments in persona versus person in dance practice lead towards a strategy to activate (or de-activate) intersubjectivities across the triadic relationship in the contemporary dance event?

### Chapter 3 Glimpses of Intersubjectivities in Performance

This chapter looks to the methodology of choreological studies in order to provide a vocabulary with which to discuss the choreographic work of artists Atsushi Takenouchi, Angela Woodhouse and Jonathan Burrows. The purpose of this chapter is to shed further light on the research question: Could experiments in persona versus person in dance practice lead towards a strategy to activate (or deactivate) intersubjectivities across the triadic relationship in the contemporary dance event? The chapter aims to do this in two ways.

First, this chapter highlights the ways in which these three selected artists have used intersubjectivities in their work to create a human connection between the members of the triadic relationship. This will be done through a discussion which reveals how these artists have utilised the practical methods (*reaction*, *readiness*, *repetition* and *replication*) introduced in the previous chapter and further, how they have manipulated the strands of the dance medium (space, sound, performer and movement)<sup>94</sup> in order to foster intersubjectivities in their choreographic work. To remind the reader, the three artists selected for this doctoral project were chosen at a time (in 2001) when intersubjectivities in performance were, what I perceived at that time, to be a rare occurrence. However, over the course of this research I now recognise that there is an increase in dance makers who are making statements in their choreographies about the value of human presence, connection and immediacy. For example, choreographer Rosemary Lee in interview about her

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<sup>94</sup> These are the four strands of the dance medium identified in the field of choreological studies (Preston-Dunlop, 1998). There may be more strands but I am using choreological studies as a methodology for analysis and critical reflection. Therefore, they are utilised for this means.



work *The Suchness of Heni and Eddie* (2002) describes how her choreographic process for this particular piece began from the desire to work “*in and from the present moment*” (2002:2) and she aimed to devise tasks for her dancers which would assist her in “finding out who they are...to find movement that seems to come from their core – that is not a superimposed structure of movement” (ibid: 4). However, the work of Takenouchi, Woodhouse and Burrows<sup>95</sup> is still highly relevant to the study of activating intersubjectivities in contemporary dance choreography. Although the choreographic works under discussion in this chapter are no longer these artists’ most recent works, the values and glimpses into intersubjectivities present in the choreographic products mentioned shed light on the strategies undertaken by these artists to reveal person over persona.

The second way this chapter aims to further address the research question is through the introduction of the first of the choreographic works created for this doctoral project. *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005) is described in this chapter in terms of its choreographic structure and intent using the methodology of choreological studies. In Section 3.5 of this chapter, it is suggested that the reader view the DVD of the work before reading the critical reflection that follows in Section 3.6.

It is important to point out that for each dance work mentioned in this chapter there exists a pre-established intersubjective relationship between performers. The

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<sup>95</sup> The work of DV8, although relevant to the topic of the thesis on the basis of its value for authenticity, was excluded in the research due to its highly narrative content and semiotic streams. It would have been off-topic to run analyses of DV8’s work for the purposes of this study as DV8’s work so heavily foregrounds theatricality thereby supporting the development of performance persona.

reason for highlighting this is to make the preliminary suggestion that pre-established relationships between members of the triadic relationship may facilitate deeper levels of intersubjectivities in the dance event. In the case of Atsushi Takenouchi, it is his romantic partner Hiroko Komiya with whom he performs; in the case of Woodhouse's *Court* (2003-2006) it is romantic partners Marcia Pook and Karl Sullivan who perform. In Burrows' work, *The Quiet Dance* (2005), Jonathan Burrows and his close friend Matteo Fargion are co-performers. Even in my original work, *Dismantle Map* (2004-2005), the performance emerged out of the friendship between Matt Davis and myself. It is important to state that these pre-established intersubjective relationships also maintain their existence outside of the performative frame. The effect that this has on the activating or de-activating of intersubjectivities within the triadic relationship of a dance event will be scrutinised in Chapter 4.

### **3.1 Atsushi Takenouchi**

Atsushi Takenouchi works within a hybrid form of contemporary dance and butoh dance. Before embarking upon a discussion of Takenouchi's work specifically it is of value to provide some background on traditional butoh dance and the way in which butoh dance uses image.

In traditional butoh dance,<sup>96</sup> the dancer begins with an image. Kazuo Ohno, one of the founding fathers of butoh, taught the practice of becoming a 'dead body'. From

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<sup>96</sup> Traditional butoh dance refers to the work of Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno who, in the late 1950s through the 1970s "played an essential role in the formation of the Butoh aesthetic - to create

this state of a 'dead body' or from the attempt of holding the image of becoming a dead body he believed that the dancer could then readily receive or embody any emotion, desire or image. However, it is my view that the process of "emptying the body" (Liao, 1998) is still a process which supports performance persona because one can never *really* become a dead body or an empty body. This study's concern for human presence in performance is not synonymous with the idea of relinquishing one's being for the sake of representing dead or empty, as such a representation would follow along the problematic lines which involve the dissolution of subjectivity as articulated in the description of the states of *samadhi*, *no-mind* and *no-thought* outlined in Chapter 1.

In the way that Takenouchi approaches image work, the dancer holds the image in their mind and the body follows. This is plausible because of the cyclical nature of the thought-movement circuit. For example, focusing on the image of a dead body may initiate the action of falling to the ground. The lived physical experience of lying on the ground thereby strengthens the image of a dead body. Repetition of image (mentally) breeds repetition of form (physically) and vice versa.<sup>97</sup> However, Takenouchi does not attempt to embody an image for the goal of aesthetic value as working with image holding this aim only resorts back to an achievement based model of technical execution. Rather, Takenouchi works to hone his attention to the moment in order to bring immediacy to his work. Takenouchi's approach to

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a specifically Japanese dance form that would transcend the constraints of both Western modern dance and traditional Japanese dance" (Klein, 1988:1).

<sup>97</sup> The distinction here in language between 'mental' and 'physical' does not imply that I uphold a dualistic stance.

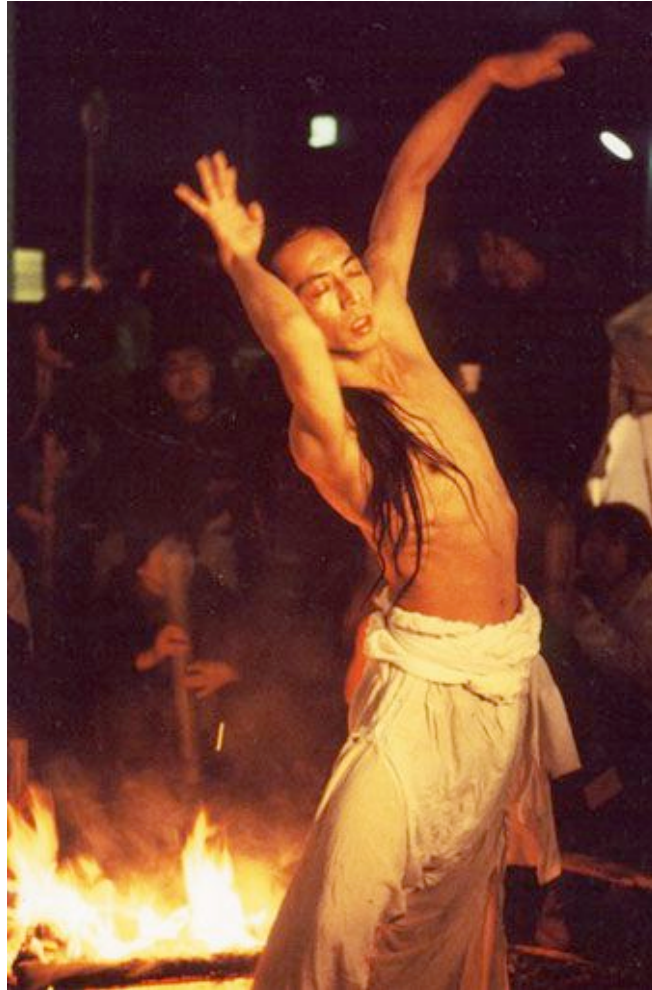
image differs from the orthodox butoh dance method in this way, as many butoh practitioners are deeply concerned with the body's external form.<sup>98</sup>

Takenouchi's dances are often wholly improvisational and usually site-specific. He makes his dances in the moment in response to his environment, often in an outdoor setting. His solo improvisational work *Jinen* (1996-1999) is "based on [his] impressions of the moment, formulated from the people around him, the space, the air, the climate and energetic mood of the surroundings and spirit of the moment" (Takenouchi, [not dated]).

The photograph on the following page shows Takenouchi in performance of *Jinen*.

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<sup>98</sup> See Viala & Masson-Sekine (1988)



*Figure 13: Takenouchi in Jinen (1996-1999)*

This photograph reveals Takenouchi involved in a simultaneous internal and external *replication* of fire. Takenouchi takes the practical method of *replication* beyond nonverbal communication and into image work. The internal *replication* of both fire and wind are scenarios used frequently by him in his teachings (Takenouchi, 6-18 August 2003 and 19-22 May 2005 [workshops]). “Feel wind” he will say, and by this he means both to create external movement based on an imagined feeling of wind moving inside the body as well as to move physically in response to how wind affects the outside of the body. Takenouchi’s workshops are

usually held outdoors so one has the real, physical experience of feeling the wind against the body.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to Takenouchi's work with *replication* in regards to image, his work also provides information about a practical link between *reaction* and *readiness*. He uses the state of *readiness* as a preparation for *reaction* and works in this state frequently. This is evidenced in his "charged body".<sup>100</sup> Poised like an animal, he alternates between states of *readiness* and *reaction* in a split second. In the live work I have seen, Takenouchi makes very rapid shifts between *reaction* (for example, to a sound, to an audience or to his environment) and *readiness*. *Readiness* in Takenouchi's work and in the work of many butoh practitioners is often characterised by stillness.

One of Takenouchi's works, an untitled solo performed just outside Berlin, Germany (6 August 2003) revealed his preference for human presence over performance persona.

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<sup>99</sup> Helen Poynor, Miranda Tufnell and Chris Crickmay work in a similar vein with the use of image and environment. See Tufnell & Crickmay (2003).

<sup>100</sup> Butoh-based dance theatre artist Fran Barbe (January-September 2003 and 27-30 July 2004 [workshops]) describes the physicality of a still performer in a state of readiness as having a "charged body", actively still and vibrant with a sense of contained energy (Refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.3).

*Beginning seated amongst the small audience in an intimate loft studio theatre,  
Takenouchi, dressed in nothing more than a loincloth, starts repeatedly saying, "No";  
(not in a dramatic sense but in a matter of fact voice).  
He rises out of his seat and walks toward a window, opens it and begins to urinate out of it.  
In the silence, the audience can hear the urine as it hits the ground outside several floors below.*

The manner in which he does this carries little sense of self-consciousness. There is no air of embarrassment and nothing that communicates that he is trying to be anything other than himself. His state, from my perspective as audience in that moment, creates an experience similar to watching an animal urinate. No shame is felt in watching and no shame is felt in doing. The lived experience unfolds with no added theatricality and this makes me feel more comfortable in my own humanness.

In that moment, Takenouchi moved without self-consciousness; like the child to which Merleau-Ponty refers, the intersubjective world and the perception of others posed him no problem (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:355). In my discussions with Takenouchi (21 and 22 May 2005 [interviews]) and through working with him in a choreographic context (6-18 August 2003, 19-22 May 2005, 6-9 November 2008 [workshops]), he clearly expresses that the aim of his work is to live in the moment, not to become absorbed in a character or persona.

The nexial connections<sup>101</sup> between the strands of the dance medium in his works reveal his value of immediacy. His partner Hiroko Komiya improvises a unique sound score for most of his works. Seated on a blanket in the performance space, Komiya arranges her instruments in front of her which consists of a selection of brass bowls, bells, stones, sticks and rattles. Takenouchi's work, because of its improvisational structure and especially because of the nexial connections between sound and movement and space and performer, possesses a sense of freedom that is felt in the lived dance event across the triadic relationship.

**General Nexial Connections seen in Atsushi Takenouchi's work:**

<b>Perf/Movt</b>	<b>Perf/Sound</b>	<b>Perf/Space</b>	<b>Movt/Sound</b>	<b>Movt/Space</b>	<b>Snd/Space</b>
<i>Replication (image-led)</i>	Live improvised music	Improvised pathways in space (image-led)	Live improvised music	Improvised pathways in space (image-led)	Live improvised music
<i>reaction (to sound, environment, another person)</i>	Sounds present in environment	proxemics	Sounds present in environment	proxemics	Improvised vocal work by Takenouchi
<i>Readiness (in the form of stillness)</i>	Improvised vocal work by Takenouchi		Improvised vocal work by Takenouchi	<i>Replication (image-led)</i>	Silence
	Intersubjective relationship between Takenouchi and Komiya		Silence	<i>Readiness</i>	
			<i>Reaction</i>	<i>Reaction</i>	
			Intersubjective relationship		

<sup>101</sup> 'Nexial connection' is a term used in choreological studies and introduced by Preston-Dunlop (See 2000:159-204) to articulate how the strands of the dance medium (i.e. sound, space, performer and movement) intercept and are integrated. Nexial connections refer the web of connections between the strands of the dance medium.



Although the two particular strands of sound and movement are identified using choreological studies to be interrelated through a nexial connection, in this case of Takenouchi's work, nexial connections are also formed as a result of the intersubjective relationship between Takenouchi (who is making the movement) and Komiya (who is making the sound). The sound-movement connection is therefore in flux because their intersubjective relationship is in flux from moment to moment throughout the dance event.

Takenouchi, like Ruth Zaporah and Ellen Webb (mentioned in Chapter 1) talks about performing in a state of *no-mind*. He says that his aim is to “join together with all the life that is already dancing [...] accepting all the environment and conditions around us [...] to remove the wall of consciousness that perceives the individual ‘I’ dancing” (Takenouchi, [not dated]). With this statement he proposes the possibility of performing without self-consciousness.<sup>102</sup> Although this thesis cannot support through research the state of *no-mind*, it can conclude that the performance work of Atsushi Takenouchi values human presence and connection and does provide glimpses of intersubjectivities.

### **3.2 Angela Woodhouse**

Angela Woodhouse's work, *Court* (2003), a duet originally performed by Marcia Pook and her partner Karl Sullivan, was conceived through collaboration with installation artist, Caroline Broadhead. The installation performance space, a

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<sup>102</sup> The possibility of performance without self-consciousness is introduced by Japanese philosopher Yasuo Yuasa who examines Eastern mind-body theory (see Yuasa, 1993 and Nagatomo, 1992).

labyrinth of sheer white cloth, provided a free roaming performance space for an audience of no more than three people. Unlike Takenouchi's choreographic structure which finds its base in improvisation, Woodhouse meticulously sets movement, even to the detailed level of her performer's eyes (Pook, 21 August 2006 [interview]). The movement in this work is executed by the performers at a deliberately slow pace and is primarily gestural. Two factors provide opportunity for deeper levels of intersubjective moments to unfold between audience members. These are: first, intention and second, the nonverbal communication cue of proxemics.



*Figure 14: Pook & Sullivan in Court (2003-2006)*

One audience member wrote to Woodhouse with the following post-show comment: “Curling fingers – do I have an influence? My breathing altering slowly...so peaceful, powerful, still. Skin – hair – nails- toes – can I touch?” (Anonymous audience member, 23 July 2003).

Neither proxemics nor the performers’ intent are governed by this work’s strictly set structure. The choreographic concept overrides the highly defined movement vocabulary and allows for potential physical contact between individual audience members and performers as well as between performer and performer. The first encounter in the work *Court* between audience and performer occurs at a personal distance. This fluctuates according to the intentions of the audience member and/or the performer; so although the moment of inevitable encounter itself is fixed, the proxemic distance between audience and performer is flexible. The possibility for deeper levels of intersubjectivities is strengthened within the arena of interpersonal space. One audience member commented after the work, “I have to rethink my whole notion of ‘space’ – physical, intimate, emotional...” (Anonymous audience member, 14 November 2004).

In an interview with Pook, she discussed her shifts in both attention and intention whilst performing *Court*.

There is a set intention behind the movement but you have to be sympathetic to changes in life and respond [...] that might change your feeling of how you get there because of what’s taken place [...] for me, the work is all about the people who are coming into it. (21 August 2006 [interview])

Pook gives examples of how her own intention and attention shifted according to the people that she encountered as audience members. A young man who was made to come to the performance by his girlfriend looked shy and uneasy. To help him feel more comfortable, Pook deviated from the set choreography and gave him a relaxed, informal glance before proceeding with the set gestural movement (ibid). Another audience member made the comment that he/she felt that the performers were “simply responding with my presence [which] felt like a privilege and [made] me feel special as an audience member” (Anonymous audience member, 26 June 2003). In another performance of *Court*, after a movement sequence which left Pook lying on the ground, a man came and positioned himself over her, standing on her hair as it sprawled out around her on the floor. Allowing herself to react in the moment, she released gentle laughter in response to her own perception of her predicament (21 August 2006 [interview]).



*Figure 15: Pook & Sullivan in performance of Court (2003-2006)*

The way in which Pook and Sullivan work with presence is similar to that of Jonathan Burrows. There is an ease with which they perform and also highly focused attention; which is to carry out set movement material without error. There is room for *reaction* but only insofar as the set choreographic structure will allow.

**Strands of the Dance Medium for *Court* (2004):**

<b>Performers</b>	<b>Movement</b>	<b>Sound</b>	<b>Space</b>
Marcia Pook	Posture (set)	Silence	Spatial pathways (contained by installation)
Karl Sullivan	Gesture (set)	Whispers of audience	Proxemics (flexible)
Gender	Gaze (set and improvised)	Footsteps of audience / performers	White cloth structures
Physique	Facial Expression (set and improvised)	Breath	
Age	Proxemics (set and improvised)	Sounds present in environment	
Height	<i>Reaction</i> (to each other and to audience )		
Romantic relationship			
Working relationship			

**Nexial Connections between the Strands in *Court* (2004):**

<b>Perf/Movt</b>	<b>Perf/Sound</b>	<b>Perf/Space</b>	<b>Movt/Sound</b>	<b>Movt/Space</b>	<b>Snd/Space</b>
Posture and Gesture (set)	Breath	Spatial pathways (contained by installation)	Footsteps of performers	Spatial pathways (contained by installation)	Breath
Gaze, facial expression and proxemics (set and Improvised)	Footsteps of performers	Proxemics (set and improvised)		Proxemics (set and improvised)	Footsteps of audience / performers
<i>Reaction</i> (to each other and to audience)				<i>Reaction</i> (to each other and to audience)	Silence
Spatial pathways (contained by installation)					Whispers of audience
					Sounds naturally present in environment

### 3.3 Jonathan Burrows

Jonathan Burrows' repertoire of choreographic works is extensive. His most recent: *Cheap Lecture* (2009), *Speaking Dance* (2006), *The Quiet Dance* (2005) and *Both Sitting Duet* (2002) feature his friend and composer Matteo Fargion as co-performer. Burrows believes that in the case of performing with a close friend, with whom there is a long-held, established relationship, it is important to "keep the reins on it, otherwise there is no room for the audience" (22 February 2006 [informal lecture]). This is because for Burrows, the relationships between the performers, and between the performers and the audience, are equally important. All four of his latest works have been duets made for the two friends and demonstrate an intersubjective relationship between them in which we, as the audience are invited to participate. The dance critic Ann Williams experienced the established relationship between Burrows and Fargion, saying, "[...] for me at least, *The Quiet Dance* spoke of Burrows' and Fargions' friendship, trust and interdependence[...]" (19 October 2005 [review]). The intersubjective relationship between them is evident because of the way that Burrows and Fargion work with gaze. The quality of the gazes exchanged between Burrows and Fargion reveals human presence. Unpresuming, open glances at one another at frequent intervals during the performance demonstrate the sense of "listening" that Burrows talks about.<sup>103</sup> The dance critic Donald Hutera describes their presence thus:

Burrows and Fargion go about their business in a state of mutually relaxed concentration. Their deadpan lack of arrogance is disarming. Also, boring us is hardly their intention [...] We may not know the rules, yet nothing is hidden from us. (19 October 2005 [review])

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<sup>103</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.2 on *Reaction*



Hutera, like myself felt included as a participant,

I felt they knew that I was there and, projecting into the situation, that my presence was welcome or appreciated. They were doing this not just for them, but for me too, for the entire audience. Without being overt or over-ingratiating about it, I was a welcome observer. (Hutera, 17 September 2006 [email discussion])

This sense of inclusion is what Burrows intended:

[...] although the piece has a certain intimacy, as all the pieces that I make have – it shouldn't exclude other people. So something that's too personal doesn't open a door for an audience to come in. I suppose I would say that we were trying to look at something personal enough that it would still have a door open for somebody else watching from the outside. (Burrows in Perazzo, 2005:3)

The movement in Burrows' choreography is set but has the appearance of being flexible. Burrows says, “[...] sometimes a movement in its first raw version can look wonderful, but then when the dancer becomes more familiar with it, it can get smoothed down and begin to disappear” (Burrows in Butterworth, 1996:3). I suspect that the “freshness” with which Burrows and Fargion execute their rehearsed and refined movement material is due to their intention and focused attention to each and every moment of performance. Burrows claims to have used images in *The Quiet Dance*, a fairly new choreographic practice for him (Burrows in Perazzo, 2005:2-3). Perhaps it is the shifting of attention between internal *replications* of images and the *repetition* of set movement sequences that assists in revealing the intersubjective relationship between Burrows and Fargion. Burrows says he is interested in “distracting the performer’s mind and body to the degree that something else happens” (22 February 2006 [informal lecture]). This “something else”, I assume could potentially be the revealing of intersubjectivities

which I have experienced as an audience member of Burrows' work. Burrows also reveals that he enjoys "watching people think" (22 February 2006 [informal lecture]) and it is evident that the thought-movement circuit is a powerful tool for Burrows in the processes of both making and performing (23 July 2004 [workshop]).



*Figure 16: Burrows and Fargion in The Quiet Dance (2005)*

**General Nexial Connections in found in Burrows' choreographic works with Matteo Fargion as co-performer:**

<b>Perf/Movt</b>	<b>Perf/Sound</b>	<b>Perf/Space</b>	<b>Movt/Sound</b>	<b>Movt/Space</b>	<b>Snd/Space</b>
Set choreography	Breath	Spatial pathways (dictated by set choreography)	Footsteps of performers	Spatial pathways (dictated by set choreography)	Breath
Gaze between performers (Improvised)	Footsteps of performers	<i>Both Sitting Duet</i> (2002) used chairs which restricted movement pathways	Paralinguistic aspects of speech linked to movement		Footsteps of performers
<i>Reaction</i> (seen in the nonverbal cue of gaze)	Paralinguistic aspects of speech		Minimal use of set text linked to movement		Silence
Physicality of performers (juxtaposition between Burrows and Fargion reveals trained dancer's body and non-trained body)	Minimal use of set text		Breath linked to movement		

The glimpses of intersubjectivities found in the works of Takenouchi, Woodhouse and Burrows has foregrounded their appreciation for human presence and connection. Revealing human presence is a concern addressed by each of them in varying ways. Takenouchi holds a strong intention to become one with his environment and therein challenges the existence of his own ego-consciousness.

Pook, performer and co-creator of Woodhouse's work, *Court*, has disclosed that her preparation for performance is to execute a series of Qigong exercises. This has become her sole training mechanism whilst she maintains her career as a professional performer. She claims that the psychophysical training method of Qigong allows her to enter into a state of openness, giving her an ability to react in the moment to others in the space (Pook, 21 August 2006 [interview]). Burrows engages himself in a complex web of problem-solving tasks which distract him from supporting a theatrical façade. The evidence of human presence found in all three artists' work is a result of focused attention. This link between attention and the synthesised account of intersubjectivities proposed in this thesis was explained theoretically in Chapter 1. Here in this chapter, the idea is offered again but this time as seen in the context of professional dance choreographic practice.

In my own choreographic work, glimpses of intersubjectivities which I have witnessed in the work of these artists has provoked me to further pursue stripping away my own performance persona. Despite these intentions, my work *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005) (to be viewed as part of this chapter) still reveals a fully intact performance persona. Before viewing *Dismantle Map*, the following section addresses my intentions behind the work and provides a rationale for its process-based choreographic structure.

### 3.4 Introduction to *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005)

The section that follows discusses the processes for the creation and performance of *Dismantle Map* from two angles: choreological studies and a personal written account of the performance of the work. Both angles are problematic if the purpose of using language to articulate a lived experience is viewed as representational. It is not my intention to analyse the dance event as a mode of representation.<sup>104</sup>

It is still common for those who express interest in the study of experience to confront an objection that runs something as follows: 'You cannot really study experience, because all experience is mediated by language – therefore one can only study language or discourse, i.e. representation.' I would argue that the polarization of language and experience is itself a function of a predominantly representationalist theory of language. One need conclude neither that language is 'about' nothing other than itself, nor that language wholly constitutes experience, nor that language refers to experience that can be known in no other way. One can instead argue that language gives access to a world of experience in so far as experience comes to, or is brought to, language. (Csordas, 1994:11)

The writing style of Preston-Dunlop in her book *Looking at Dances* (1998) does just this. In the following excerpt the experience of breath rhythm is given to us through her language:

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<sup>104</sup> Banes (1987:xxiii-xxiv) and Thomas (in Morris, 1996:63-87) both reference a trend to analyse dance as a form of representation which, according to Thomas began in the late 1980's. Csordas, in 1994, argues against this trend through his edited book which looks at phenomenology with regard to culture and self.

Inhale and exhale.  
Feel the rise and fall of breath.  
Feel the length of a breath.  
Feel the suspension at the peak of the inhale.  
Feel the release as the breath flows out,  
the push as the last breath is forced out  
and inhale again  
in a continuous cycle. (1998:105)

Going back over the above excerpt and reading the words aloud has a direct influence on one's breath in the moment. Language brought to us in this way has a double effect. It gives both "access to a world of experience" as Csordas describes, and also gives a lived corporeal experience in the moment of reading.

Problems with linguistic models of analysis have already been depicted in Chapter 1. In these final sections of this chapter I am concerned with showing how the lived experience of *Dismantle Map* was affected by the intersubjective moments embedded within them. *Dismantle Map* was structured at the poietic<sup>105</sup> level around a series of intentions to embody images. The images were set in a linear order, giving the work a temporal structure, but a temporal structure which was flexible because of the engineered ruptures in the choreographic process. These

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<sup>105</sup> The terms 'poietic', 'trace' and 'esthetic', found originally in the work of Jacques Nattiez (1990:10-16) are used to describe three phases of a work of art. The 'poietic' refers to the creation process and concept; the 'trace' is what is visible in the medium; and the 'esthetic' is what the viewer takes from the medium which is not necessarily present (Preston-Dunlop, 17 February 1999) and (Rubidge, 2000:13). These terms are traditionally used to carry out a semiotic analysis of choreographic works but in this case, the term 'poietic' is used simply to clarify that, embedded in the creation process of *Dismantle Map*, there are a series of variable factors which can be located within the strands of the dance medium which were given careful consideration throughout the processes of making. As previously stated in Chapter 1, a semiotic analysis is not relevant when speaking about intersubjectivities in the context of this study.

ruptures<sup>106</sup> manifested as interruptions in the linear organisational structure of my attention. This is best explained in comparison to the way attention is used in other Contemporary Dance works<sup>107</sup> where the performer moves in accordance with a temporal progression dictated by the order of dance steps or events in the work. In some cases this structure is bound by a narrative but even in circumstances of abstract Contemporary Dance where movement is choreographically set, performers still follow a visceral script. To embed these ruptures in my attention into the structure of the work was an original idea which I hoped would create a visible release of my performance persona, even if for a brief moment. The diagram on the following page shows the linear arrangement of the images which were embedded in *Dismantle Map* at the poietic level. The highlighted words in yellow show the engineered ruptures in attention. These were moments where I stopped the flow of images in order to give my attention fully to the moment, listening to the sound in the space and looking at the audience. These were also moments where I attempted to heighten my awareness in order to find stillness within the state of *readiness*, strip away bits of my performance persona and react to the present. These moments of ruptures in attention gave me complete freedom to improvise in the lived moment.

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<sup>106</sup> 'Rupture' is a term used by Preston-Dunlop to describe a process by which codes of convention are broken. She says (2002:21), "Dance is built on a network of codes, that is, agreed and observed ways of doing things 'right'." And specifies that these 'right' codes have to do with movement systems, behaviour and even manner of dress in the context of ballet.

<sup>107</sup> Dance improvisation and contact improvisation follow a different set of rules where the "success" of an improvisational performance "depends largely on the communication of its specific organizing principles to the intended audience" (Hayes in Cooper Albright & Gere, 2003:115). Further discussion on improvisation and communication is given in Chapter 5.

Improvisation, as I understand it, is an attentional practice: the more you attend to movement and memory and sensing and intention, the more you play (improvise) with all of the elements of what we call living --- and the more you come to understand that reality itself is based on the relationship between our attention and the world. You sense that your attention is both selecting and forming your experience in real time, but that what is being selected and formed is not completely of your choosing, because the world is improvising too; and that dance, your interaction with the world, forms you just as you form the world. (DeSpain in Cooper Albright & Gere, 2003:37)



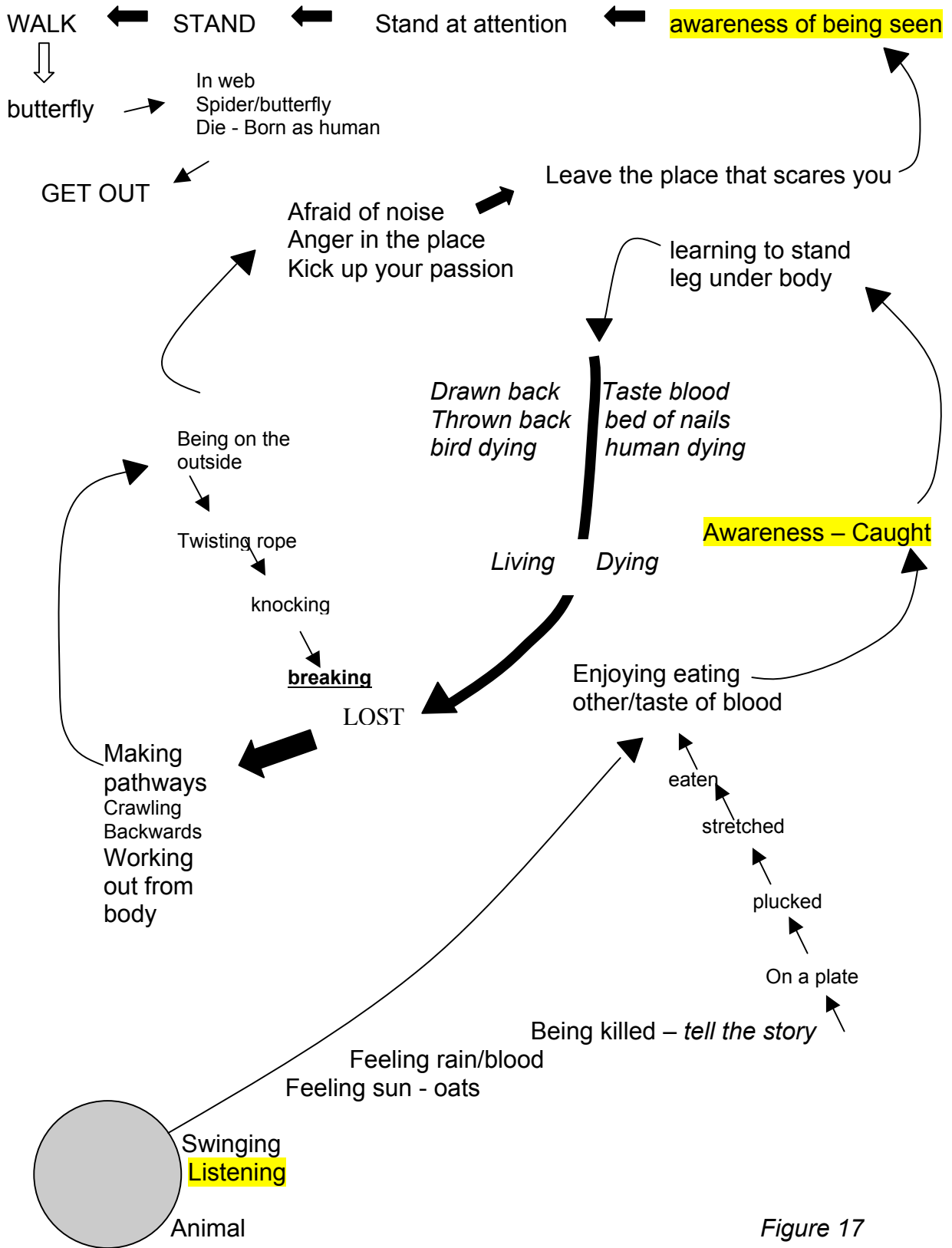


Figure 17

The poetic contents manifest as a series of variable factors that include: length of performance, movement material, costume,<sup>108</sup> space, light and sound. These are important to discuss in terms of articulating the links between the strands of the dance medium and the choreographic intention. Despite naming these components of the work as variable, they are still operating under some fixed constraints. Before addressing the relationship between the experience and expression of these variable factors and the intersubjectivities present in the work, I will identify the fixed constraints.

The two charts, located on the following pages, articulate the strands of the dance medium and their nexial connections in *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005). Although both *Dismantle Map* and *Living La Pedrera* (2006) encompass the articulation of the strands of the dance medium, it must be made clear that this has not been done for the purposes of undertaking an analysis which aims to unpick the formation of movement motifs. Instead, it has been done to articulate the strands that have been laid down to show that my personal artistic interest has to do with human presence in the contemporary dance event.

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<sup>108</sup> Street clothes as opposed to a 'costume' were worn for the performance of *Dismantle Map* at The Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre (see DVD 1). However, for all other performances of *Dismantle Map* which were held in more theatrical settings and/or dance studio spaces, 'costumes' were worn. Between 2004-2005 *Dismantle Map* was performed at The Theatre Academy in Helsinki, Finland; and in the UK at: The Trinity Arts Centre in Kent; The Jerwood Space, The Space at Clarence Mews, Roehampton and Middlesex Universities and The Chisenhale Dance Space.

### Fixed Constraints within The Strands:

Performers	Movement	Sound	Space
Matt Davis <sup>109</sup>	Images listed in <i>Figure 17</i>	Live Trumpet	Spatial pathways
April Nunes	Readiness	Sound of Bhramari <sup>110</sup>	Proxemics
Gender	Reaction	Silence	
Physique	Replication	Sound in performance spaces <sup>111</sup>	
Age			
Height			
Social relationship			

<sup>109</sup> I have listed our names to discern that our identity as individuals beyond gender, age and physique is of key importance to the work as a whole.

<sup>110</sup> Bhramari is a pranayama (breathing exercise) that was taught in the classical Ashtanga yoga tradition by Baba Hari Dass. The sound produced by this pranayama resembles the sound of a bee humming. It is performed in the following way: "Tilt the head forward, constrict the throat muscles, and make as high pitched sound as possible while inhaling through the nostrils. The sound is not from the vocal cords but from air passing through the constricted throat. After inhaling, hold the breath for three seconds; then exhale making the same sound. The exhalation should be slower than the inhalation and with a higher-pitched tone" (Hari Dass, 1981:24). In the performance of *Dismantle Map* I repeated this sound at the very start of the work whilst moving.

<sup>111</sup> I had no control over the sounds which inhabited the space during the performances of *Dismantle Map* (as we performed the work in many different spaces including: traditional proscenium arch theatres, studio spaces, on the bank of Regents Canal at Chisenhale Dance Space and in the Elephant & Castle Shopping Mall). However, it was my intention to open my attention to the sounds in each of the surrounding environments in order to initiate moments of *reaction*.

**Fixed Constraints and their Nexial Connections across The Strands:**

<b>Perf/Movt</b>	<b>Perf/Sound</b>	<b>Perf/Space</b>	<b>Movt/Sound</b>	<b>Movt/Space</b>	<b>Sound/Space</b>
Social relationship	Bhramari	Spatial pathways	Bhramari	Spatial pathways	Trumpet
Proxemics	Trumpet	Proxemics	Trumpet	Proxemics	Bhramari
Sound in environment	Silence	Readiness	Silence	Replication	
Readiness	Sound in environment		Sound in environment	Readiness	
Reaction	Replication		Replication	Reaction	
Replication			Readiness		
			Reaction		

The next section of this chapter asks that the reader view the DVD documented performance of *Dismantle Map* at the Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre in London. This documentation will demonstrate the key points that have been identified in the matrixes on the previous pages and in the text.

**3.5 View DVD 1 - *Dismantle Map***  
**Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre, London 2005**



*Figure 18: Video still image of Dismantle Map*

### 3.6 Critical Reflection: *Dismantle Map*

Rosemary Lee (1991:1) writes about the present. She says,

Pursuing the analogy of a time line, then the only place left is the present. You want to be able to ride the present, to be in the present; that means in the body, in the present time, in the present space.

Being in the present  
Equals being in a supple state  
Equals being connected to the outside  
Equals being connected to the inside  
Equals being present

Being present  
Equals being beautiful  
Equals embodying intent  
Equals being in the moment  
Equals presence

This striving for immediacy, being present was an aim for the moments of rupture within *Dismantle Map*. The performance lengths of *Dismantle Map* have ranged from 15 minutes to two hours so the present moments in which each image unfolds have been readily experimented with in terms of how much each image could be stretched or condensed.

The performance at Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre was characterised by some unique circumstances which separated it apart from the other performances of the same work. The Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre performance was presented as one of many dance works shown that day as part of a local dance festival. The space in which we performed had been pre-designated as the performance area when we arrived. We had never rehearsed in the space but my decision to keep the work as an improvised structure meant that rehearsal, in the

traditional sense of repeating movement over and over for the purpose of executing the movement correctly, was not relevant to my process of performing. If my aim was to show glimpses of my human presence whilst stripping away performance persona, then the fact that we could not rehearse in the space was no obstacle. In this particular performance at the shopping mall, my attention was very distracted and the DVD documentation of the performance evidences this by way of my strong performance persona. Upon reflection, my performance persona was confirmation that my training in Contemporary Dance technique has been sufficient to ensure that I offered a veneer of confidence and a “cool body” to my audience, if I felt under scrutiny which I most certainly did on the day.

The DVD documentation of this performance captured the engineered ruptures in my attention almost imperceptibly. I opened my gaze out to the audience only for brief moments. There was however one point in the work where my performance persona weakened enough to share a sustained mutual gaze with a child. This gaze was simple and open and was upon reflection, the strongest moment of human connection within the performance of this work.



*Figure 19: Video still image of Dismantle Map in performance  
Elephant & Castle Shopping Mall, London (August 2005)*

This rupture in my persona lasted only for a few seconds because as I walked closer and closer to the group of children and towards the one child with whom I had locked eyes, I started to become self-conscious and embarrassed. I felt my performance persona thicken and I pushed my movement into the next image.

Merleau-Ponty explains this feeling of embarrassment that occurs in experiences of being under the gaze of another:

The other's gaze transforms me into an object and denies me, I transform him into an object and deny him, it is asserted. In fact the other's gaze transforms me into an object, and mine him, only if both of us withdraw into the core of our thinking nature, if we both make ourselves into an inhuman gaze, if each of us feels his actions to be not taken up and understood, but



observed as if they were an insect's. This is what happens, for instance, when I fall under the gaze of a stranger. But even then, the objectification of each by the other's gaze is felt as unbearable only because it takes the place of possible communication. A dog's gaze directed towards me causes me no embarrassment. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:361)

What Merleau-Ponty articulates here is the case of what was occurring in this particular moment of the dance event. The child with whom I had locked eyes could not look upon me as an object, nor I her. After the performance she approached me and asked,

“What were the white things?”

“Feathers.” I said.

“How did you get them to turn into blood?” She asked then.

“Did you see blood?” I asked her in return.

“Yep.”

Figure 17 on page 137 shows how many of the images embedded in the poetic content of the work refer to blood. The exchange with this child operated in a synthesised account of intersubjectivities where we both entered into a shared experience of one image. I felt it in a lived moment of the dance event and I assume that she too had an experience that was substantial enough to prompt her to come and ask me questions about her interpretations of the images. Merleau-Ponty says that because of our understanding of our lived consciousness of time realisation of our intersubjectivities open up to us.

It is true that the other will never exist for us as we exist ourselves; he is always a lesser figure, and we never feel in him as we do in ourselves the thrust of temporalization. But two temporalities are not mutually exclusive as are two consciousnesses, because each one knows itself only by projecting itself into the present where they can interweave. As my living present opens upon a past which I nevertheless am no longer living through, and on a future which I do not yet live, and perhaps never shall, it can also open on to temporalities outside my living experience and acquire a social horizon,

with the result that my world is expanded to the dimensions of that collective history which my private existence takes up and carries forward. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:433)

This phenomenological present demands strong attention on behalf of the performer. This was explained in Chapter 1 where deeper levels of intersubjectivities were proposed. Focused attention plays a key role in the fostering of these deeper levels of intersubjectivities. I have experienced more often than not in my own practice of performance, how flippant attention and/or performance persona can de-activate intersubjectivities. It was in light of this realisation of my wavering attention and strong performance persona that I began to look more closely at the problematic relationship between the mode performance in which I was working and intersubjectivities.

The next chapter therefore approaches the research question concerning persona versus person from a different angle. It examines the subject in more detail by looking at the intentions and choreographic processes of the choreographic work *Living La Pedrera* (2006). *Living La Pedrera* was a radical attempt to break down my performance persona by challenging the conventional notion of performance. The next chapter introduces a mode of performance paradoxically called 'non-performance' which challenges the idea of the performance frame itself. A desire to achieve non-performance in performance became a strong avenue of pursuit in this doctoral project that began to develop after *Dismantle Map* and culminated in *Living La Pedrera*.

## **Chapter 4 The Problematic Relationship Between Performance and Intersubjectivities**

The critical reflections upon the choreographic works introduced in the last chapter revealed that the research question concerning a practical strategy to activate intersubjectivities in performance was still unanswered. Critical reflection upon my own choreographic work *Dismantle Map* showed the outcome of the performance to have only marginal success in terms of my aim to diminish performance persona and cultivate possibilities for kinaesthetic empathy and shared experience. The research uncovered in the last chapter illustrated potential areas which could deactivate deeper levels of intersubjectivities in performance. These two areas are: first, over familiarity amongst the members of the triadic relationship and second, the intentions of the maker which affect the communicative properties of the performance framing.

To address the first area identified, the intersubjectivities between the performers which were highlighted in the last chapter (i.e. the intimate relationships between Takenouchi and Komiya, Pook and Sullivan; and the friendships between Burrows and Fargion and in the case of my own work, between Matt Davis and myself) are relevant to the imminent discussion concerning the problematic relationship between performance and intersubjectivities. In dance events such as those covered in the previous chapter where a pre-established connection between members of the triadic relationship exists outside of the dance event, I propose that the depth of those intersubjectivities already in existence between the performers

can be felt by the audience. The choreographic works covered in the last chapter illustrate a one-sided view of the intersubjectivities across the triadic relationship. This inequality could result in performance which is in danger of becoming either inclusive or exclusive, where the performers sharing the already established intersubjective relationship are on the inside and those appreciating are on the outside. Burrows acknowledged this potential problem and thus gave a warning to keep the “reins on the relationship”.

Yi-fu Tuan, a human geographer, says, “Intimacy between persons does not require knowing the details of each other’s life; it glows in moments of true awareness and exchange” (1977:141). If the idea that you reveal yourself no matter what you do is accepted, then to suppress the relationship at hand is to revert back to persona-based performance. This statement, without further explanation is suggestive of a near contradiction. How can it be that one always reveals him/herself in performance yet, can suppress revealing themselves? In the context of the synthesised account of intersubjectivities that this research proposes, both are possible because of the multi-layered nature of intersubjectivity. However, further problems arise in the relationship between performance and intersubjectivity when the purpose of performance is questioned.

Questioning the purpose of performance prompts a discussion concerning the possible de-activation of intersubjectivities in the performance event. This second area addresses the intentions of the maker behind the communicative properties of

the performance framing. If the purpose of performance is to communicate, as

Mamet suggests:

The so-called Fourth Wall is a construction of someone afraid of the audience. Why should we strive to convince ourselves of the patently false? There is not a wall between the actor and the audience. Such would defeat the very purpose of the theatre, which is communication and communion. (Mamet, 1997:58)

Preston-Dunlop, in speaking about Contemporary Dance, makes a distinction:

Not all choreographers want to communicate. Some say they don't mind if they do or they don't. The problem with that is as soon as a performance is given, with an audience, the expectation of communication is set up. There is a message, the dance, even if denied. There are receivers, the spectators, even if ignored. There are senders, even if reluctant. Codes, aesthetic and theatrical, are set in motion, something will be given off by the event. Someone will receive it as a form of communication (2000:10-11).

The assumption can be made therefore, that even if the intention of the performer is not to communicate, the expectation of communication will still be set up as a result of the framing of the performance event. If a piece of work is framed as performance, it will be received as performance. In the traditional performance frame, in which much of mainstream Contemporary Dance is governed by today, codes and behaviours of convention uphold its purpose to contain spectacle. What if then, a piece of contemporary dance is framed as non-performance? Are the two concepts: framed and non-performance in fact contradictory? The following section will address this query but more importantly, the over-arching research question concerning a strategy for the activation of intersubjectivities will be examined in the context of the second piece of choreographic work made for this doctoral project:

*Living La Pedrera* (2006).

## 4.1 Non-Performance

The term non-performance only finds meaning in reference to the understanding of performance as they are mutually dependent terms. Non-performance, viewed in regard to performance product as an achievement-based model has negative connotations. In the context of the Western workplace for example, non-performance is grounds for dismissal. Non-performance is raised as an idea in this study because it finds resonance with the states of *samadhi*, *flow*, *no-mind* and *no-thought* which suggest the possibility of penetrating the barrier of self-consciousness mentioned in Chapter 1. Although these states were dismissed as areas for further pursuit because they were deemed to exceed the parameters of this project, the idea of non-performance still holds relevance to this study.

Shigenori Nagatomo Professor of Philosophy, speaks of non-performance:

When an artist performs in the state of 'no-mind'...these experiences are indicative of non-performance, in which a performer and an audience become one harmonious whole (Nagatomo, 2006 January 8 [lecture]).

At first glance, the idea of non-performance appears to resolve the dilemma of performance persona in performance as it suggests the possibility of penetrating the barrier of self-consciousness in order to reach a state which goes beyond the confines of intersubjectivities by which the members of the triadic relationship become one united entity. The experience of absolute merging, *samadhi*, *flow*, *no-mind* and *no-thought* promise an idealised situation which in fact directly threatens the idea of communication in the dance event. The introduction to this chapter

stated that communication is set up as a result of the framing of the performance event. Maguire makes it clear that,

[...] performance is any human action framed by a circumscribed space. Performance occurs when the meaning of an action is heightened by an awareness of its presence within a framed space: a stage, a bed, an altar, a witness stand (2002:204).

What then can a piece of work framed as non-performance communicate? Further, are the concepts of framed and non-performance contradictory? In the same way that Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg state that a performance event comes to be a performative event because of the codes and conventions that are broken in the framing (2002:4), to frame non-performance perhaps involves radical ruptures in the codes which constitute framing of either a performance or performative event. Perhaps the ultimate framing of non-performance is a non-frame. However, if there were no frame, what then would prevent any given situation as qualifying for the status of a non-performance.

Non-performance in its purest sense therefore is ordinary life; but the interests of this research lie with the dancing body and human presence, making way for an experience of interconnectedness with another within the context of a dance event. This research therefore demands a performative frame. Without it, the topic of intersubjectivity slips out into the domains of everyday experience and its relevance to the context of the dance event is lost.

Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity addresses the mundane experiences of everyday social life. He makes no reference to experiences which magnify the

intercorporeal relations between human beings which is exemplified in performance events where human behaviour is framed for spectatorship and in many cases rehearsed and re-rehearsed before its presentation to another. This is why the experience of the contemporary dance event needs a synthesised view of intersubjectivities where first, kinaesthetic empathy is recognised and valued as part of a deeper level of intersubjective relationship and second, where those members of the triadic relationship who have subscribed to an event sitting within a performative frame open themselves to shared experience through a highly focused state of attention.

The second choreographic work made for this doctoral project: *Living La Pedrera* (2006) will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter. *Living La Pedrera* was an experiment which attempted to dissolve the performance frame in order to resolve the performance persona problem. Intentions, merits and shortcomings of the work are discussed and the critical reflection will further illuminate why an attempt to utilise non-performance as a mode of performance failed. It was in fact the lessons learnt in the making and performing of *Living La Pedrera* which facilitated the conclusion that the contemporary dance event needs a performative frame in order for the proposed synthesised account of intersubjectivities to be activated.



#### 4.2 Intentions Behind *Living La Pedrera* (2006) and the Impact of Working with the Idea of Non-performance

Gripped by the ideal of non-performance I set out to make *Living La Pedrera*.

*Living La Pedrera* was a structured improvisation, shown twice in one day for the purpose of illustrating how the lived experience of an event is never repeated

identically based on Merleau-Ponty's theory of our lived consciousness of time.

The next section (Section 4.3) invites the reader to view the second of these two performances, returning thereafter to this text to read a critical reflection on the merits and shortcomings of the work.

As well as being a structured improvisation, *Living La Pedrera* was a site-specific work made for the Antoni Gaudi building La Pedrera in Barcelona, Spain and the lived experience of this building had a direct influence on the way I addressed the stands of the dance medium. Two years on from making the choreographic work, *Dismantle Map*, I decided to make some changes in the processes of making and performing *Living La Pedrera*. With the newfound intention of non-performance and motivated by the accounts of *samadhi*, *flow*, *no-mind* and *no-thought* documented by other performance artists, I decided to probe the choreographic structure of the work. I suspected that the structure may be a barrier to the task of embodying images which might not effectively activate deeper levels of intersubjectivities. It was because of this that I decided to make *Living La Pedrera* an even looser improvised structure than that of *Dismantle Map*. The loosening of structure I believed would provide me with an ability to react to events in the lived moment.

The structure was held together by a spatial pathway which led the audience on a promenade performance through three different spaces within the La Pedrera building. Each of these three spaces will be discussed separately in the text which follows, listing the strands of the dance medium and intentions in accordance with each space. The first space was the main courtyard, enclosed on all sides but open to the sky.

In this section my attention shifted rapidly between awareness of my sensory-motor circuit, the others in the space and an intention to find a state of non-performance through experimenting with the practical process of movement *repetition*. The movement made for the courtyard section was choreographically set. Simply, the movement involved a continuous, repetitive cycle of looking up. Minimalist in its aesthetic and not dissimilar in its external appearance from tasks set in pedestrian movement that post-modern dance artists such as those in Judson Church would have produced; the repeated movement that I executed had intentions which deviated from minimalist movement explorations alone. The decision to repeat the movement of looking up in the courtyard was influenced by my observations during research visits to the space where visitors to the site would walk into the courtyard and look up. I based the movement idea for this section on the practical processes of *replication* (of the visitor's movement to the space) and *repetition*.



*Figure 20: Video still image taken during one of my research visits to La Pedrera. This image shows visitors to the space involved in the experience of looking up with me.*

During the research process of the courtyard section, this moment, shown above in the still video image, documents simultaneous and unplanned shared movement behaviour. During many of my research visits to La Pedrera, I often would stand in the courtyard, watch people move into the space, look up and then move on. On every occasion that I worked in this space, with the exception of the day upon which this work was performed, the courtyard was a very busy space with people

moving about me on all sides.<sup>112</sup> It was for this reason that I chose to stand in the centre of the courtyard where I would be surrounded by other people and experience a wide range of proxemic encounters ranging from intimate to public distances.<sup>113</sup>

The two matrices below illustrate differences in the strands of the dance medium at work in *Living La Pedrera* between the morning and the evening performances. Because of the improvised structure of the work all of the strands listed in the charts are flexible except for those marked with an asterisk.

### Morning Performance – Courtyard

Performer	Movement	Space	Sound
Clothes	Repetition	Proxemics	Breath
Gender*	Reaction	Others in the space	Sounds in environment
Height*	Stillness	Temperature	
Age*		Light	
		Architecture*	

### Evening Performance – Courtyard

Performer	Movement	Space	Sound
Costume	Repetition	Proxemics	Sounds in environment
Gender*	Reaction	Others in the space	
Height*	Stillness	Temperature	
Age*	Shifting weight side to side	Light	
		Architecture*	

<sup>112</sup> View Appendix DVD 1, Section 2 ‘Courtyard Section of *Living La Pedrera* in rehearsal’.

<sup>113</sup> See Hall (1990) for descriptions of cultural and social implications of proxemics (also mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.2)

The second space in the choreographic structure of the work was the rooftop of La Pedrera, a vast space, with an undulating surface and surreal structures biting into the skyline.



*Figure 21: Photograph of the roof section of the second performance of Living La Pedrera*

This section was an experiment into the mode of performative non-performance where I spoke spontaneously to members of my audience. My intention behind this section of the work was to establish a connection between performer and audience whereby each audience member could roam the vast space of the rooftop (as could I) whilst remaining connected to each other through the sound of my voice and breath. This was made possible by providing each member of the audience

with a headset upon their arrival into the courtyard. The headsets were a part of normality at La Pedrera as every visitor to the building was offered a headset in order to listen to a pre-recorded guided tour as they walked throughout the building. The headsets given to my audience therefore looked nothing out of the ordinary and they served as a way to connect them through shared experience. Instead of listening to a pre-recorded tour guide, they listened to my voice speaking spontaneous thoughts. Because of the vastness of the space of the rooftop and the nature of our connectedness through sound, the audience could only listen and not reply. I worked from both a set series of topics that I wanted to speak about and interspersed these topics with my spontaneous streams of consciousness about them. Below is a bullet- pointed list of the topics used for this purpose.

- *How do we relate to, perceive other people and ourselves – look at all the intersubjectivities that the rooftop allows...*
- *Who do you see? Someone in their house, someone who you know?*
- *Touch and experience the space, the undulating surface as you walk, the textures of your surroundings...*
- *Look over the edge...*
- *Sit down and be still for a moment. Notice how the headset gives you freedom ...*
- *Look for someone you recognise, make eye contact with them, observe the way they are standing or sitting. Replicate it.*
- *Observe your breath...*

In the first performance of *Living La Pedrera*, there was an organisational breakdown and the headsets were not available. Incidentally, I was left with no other option but to attempt to communicate my intentions for this section to my audience by giving an impromptu explanation of the ideas listed (on the previous page) whilst the audience gathered around me as though members of a guided tour. In addition, the suggestion given to the audience to use *replication* in regard to replicating the nonverbal cues of another person unfolded in a contrived way. This rooftop section of the first performance unfortunately therefore, bore no resemblance to my intentions for this section of the work. The strands listed in the charts are flexible except for those marked with an asterisk.

### Morning Performance – Rooftop

Performer	Movement	Space	Sound
Clothes	NVC	Proxemics	Speech
Gender*	Behavioural	Undulating surface*	Sounds in environment
Height*		Panoramic view of city*	
Age*		Height*	
		Others in the space	
		Temperature	
		Light	
		Architecture*	

## Evening Performance – Rooftop

Performer	Movement	Space	Sound
Costume	NVC	Proxemics	Speech
Gender*	Behavioural	Undulating surface*	Sound through headset
Height*		Panoramic view of city*	
Age*		Height*	
		Others in the space	
		Temperature	
		Light	
		Architecture*	

The third space was once a living area in La Pedrera, now recently converted into an education room, complete with a printed carpet of a map of La Pedrera and the surrounding area and a two-foot high plastic model structure of the building itself. In my previous visits to the room the model had not yet existed so much to my surprise, on the morning of the first performance my improvisation in this space adapted to accommodate this model. After the failure of headsets, I looked upon this event as yet another challenge.

Improvisation presses us to extend into, expand beyond, extricate ourselves from that which was known. It encourages us or even forces us to be “taken by surprise.” Yet we could never accomplish this encounter with the unknown without engaging the known. (Foster in Cooper Albright & Gere, 2003:4)





*Figure 22: A photograph from the second performance of Living La Pedrera in the room with the model structure*

The movement improvisation that took place in this third space was a familiar process. My intention in this section was to improvise movement, shifting my attention from my sensory-motor circuit to others in the space whilst simultaneously attempting to keep reins on my performance persona. I had the realisation that performing in a state of trying not to perform was perhaps yet another performance persona in itself.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, when my attention shifted to perceiving that I was performing I stopped the flow of movement, attempted to describe my

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<sup>114</sup> This realisation was rigorously explored in the final original choreographic work *Grappling* (2008/209)

emotional state to the audience in words and then waited in stillness until I felt I could start moving from a more honest place of human presence.

### Morning Performance – Room

Performer	Movement	Space	Sound
Clothes	Stillness	Proxemics	Breath
Gender*		Others in the space	Speech
Height*		Model structure	Sounds in environment
Age*		Carpet map*	
		Windows	
		Temperature	
		Light	
		Architecture*	

### Evening Performance – Room

Performer	Movement	Space	Sound
Costume	Stillness	Proxemics	Breath
Gender*		Others in the space	Speech
Height*		Model structure	Sounds in environment
Age*		Carpet map*	
		Windows*	
		Temperature	
		Light	
		Architectural style*	

**4.3 View DVD 1 - *Living La Pedrera*, La Pedrera, Barcelona, 2006**



*Figure 23: Video still from Living La Pedrera (2006)*

#### **4.4 Critical Reflection: *Living La Pedrera* (2006)**

The three choreographic works created for this doctoral project: *Dismantle Map* (2004/2005), *Living La Pedrera* (2006) and *Grappling* (2008/2009) were captured on video for documentation purposes only and therefore no editing has been done of any kind. The documentation of these works serves several purposes: to provide a choreological exploration of the works, to highlight the significance of embodiment within the works and to serve as a reference vehicle for the concerns of human presence versus persona.

*Living La Pedrera* was an experiment set out to test the degree to which I could strip away my own performance persona by working with the practical processes of *reaction*, *readiness*, *repetition* and *replication* whilst holding the ideal of non-performance. I made attempts at non-performance by challenging myself to reveal all my processes in the performance of this work, *Living La Pedrera* unravelled as a failure in doing this because of the performance frame I had placed around it. In short, *Living La Pedrera* was a conflicted work. I was determined to reveal my inner struggles, emotions and the impact that the flexible variables present in a site-specific environment bring to the act of performing. This attempt was made according to the intention that the work might be perceived as a non-performance.

Because perception is an active process of attending, analysts need to familiarise themselves with the style and working methods of the artists they are studying in order to be in a position to give themselves instructions on what to look for (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 1999, July 17).

Although the original context for this quotation finds itself within choreological methods of dance analysis the same is true for the audience. Unless the audience knows what to look for, their perception of a work may be ill-informed. *Living La Pedrera* was a conflicted work for this reason. I set it up in a performance frame yet attempted non-performance by exposing all the processes. One audience member recalled,

It was hard to take away the fact that I knew things were going wrong [...] headsets were missing, the public wasn't allowed into the [final] space. April seemed too much on our level, giving too much focus to us and not enough to the embodiment of her own movement. (Butler, 2007, May 10 [email discussion]).

Although at the basic level there were intersubjective relations, the deeper levels of intersubjectivities were de-activated because my attention was unfocused. As Chapter 1 asserts, the proposed synthesised account of intersubjectivities proposes that intersubjectivity is an experience comprising degrees of engagement.

Despite my desire to activate deeper levels of intersubjectivities in *Living La Pedrera*, my disengagement with my own movement and my rapidly shifting attention caused this possibility to fade. My main errors were two-fold. Firstly, I had framed the work as a performance and secondly, I relied too heavily on the practical methods of *reaction*, *readiness*, *repetition* and *replication* which I assumed would activate deeper levels of intersubjectivities. However, I discovered that each of these processes needed an absolute focused attention and intention behind their execution. To remind the reader, if as Moore says, kinaesthetic

empathy is, a “physical identification with the movement one observes being executed” (1988:53) then how could I come to expect that my audience would experience deeper levels of intersubjectivities if my attention was outside my own movement?

On the day of the performances there were hardly any visitors to the space and I stood alone in the centre of the courtyard.<sup>115</sup> The courtyard now framed me, in a theatrical way and my audience stood back away from me, not daring to enter the performance space. This is where a network of problems conflicted with my aims in practice. The longer I stayed in the centre of the courtyard, the stronger the separation between myself and the audience became; the more the expectation of performance was heightened, the more the strength of my performance persona grew. The fact that there were so few visitors to the space caught me off guard and instead of opening my attention to the possibility of a real reaction to this circumstance, I retreated into my performance persona, so much so that the deeper levels of intersubjectivities I had hoped to achieve were de-activated. The shortcomings of *Living La Pedrera* illuminated how the framing of performance in an orthodox sense is incompatible with efforts towards non-performance but it also revealed that the contemporary dance event needs a performative frame in order for the proposed synthesised account of intersubjectivities to be activated.

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<sup>115</sup> View Appendix DVD 1, Section 1 ‘Courtyard Section of morning performance of *Living La Pedrera*’.

The critical reflection on *Living La Pedrera* also provided a clear illustration of the proposition that it is the performance of the dancer (manifest as persona, perhaps due to technical training) that has undermined the deeper levels of intersubjectivities in past Contemporary Dance. This hypothesis was tested in *Studies with Annie* (2007)<sup>116</sup> and the final work made for this doctoral project: *Grappling* (2008/2009) where I removed myself from the roles of both maker and performer.

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<sup>116</sup> See DVD 1 Appendix, Sections 3 and 4.

## Chapter 5 Toward Performative Non-Performance

This chapter discusses further experiments in persona versus person in dance practice that have worked towards a strategy to activate the deeper levels of intersubjectivities in the contemporary dance event. The research offered in this chapter develops the findings articulated in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 triangulated the mixed modes of theoretical knowledge, phenomenological experience and critical reflection<sup>117</sup> in order to establish that, although a remarkable concept, the idea of non-performance is not suited to this study because it annuls the possibility for intersubjectivities by its very nature. Instead, what contemporary dance with a value for human presence and deeper levels of intersubjectivities requires is a framing which is *not* based in traditional, orthodox performance but is rather a type of framing that facilitates an engagement between members of the triadic relationship. This proposed alternative framing locates itself within performativity as opposed to performance and will be pursued as the framing mode for the final original piece of choreographic work created for this study.

Chapter 4 concluded by raising a hypothesis that questioned whether it was the performance of the technically trained dancer, manifest as persona, that deactivated deeper levels of intersubjectivities in the dance event. The practice-led<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Refer to Nelson's model on page 25 of the Introduction.

<sup>118</sup> To remind the reader, this doctoral project operates in a hybrid mode of research which incorporates 'practice as research', 'practice-based research' and 'practice-led research'. The nature of the research carried out with Annie Lok in 2007 fits more accurately into the category of 'practice-led research' where the "primary focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice" (Candy, 2006:1-3). This practice-led mode is appropriate because 'Studies with Annie' directly informed the last piece of original choreographic work presented for this doctoral project: *Grappling*.



research undertaken in *Studies with Annie* (2007) presented in this chapter describes how further experiments in revealing person over persona have been honed to address this hypothesis in reference to the research question by addressing four areas. First, the dance practice presented in this chapter aims to bring attention to the thought-movement circuit through an improvised choreographic structure. Second, it looks to foster liminal moments<sup>119</sup> that give way to the laying bare of practical processes which is subsequently a characteristic of non-performance. Third, it looks to manipulate aspects of the performance frame (aspects that were identified through critical reflection on *Living La Pedrera* as de-activators to deeper levels of intersubjectivities) in order to construct a performative frame that is capable of managing elements of non-performance. Finally, it looks toward a more focused use of the practical processes of *reaction*, *readiness*, *repetition* and *replication* aimed at stripping performance persona from the dancing body.

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<sup>119</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1 where liminality is discussed.

## 5.1 Studies with Annie (2007): Intentions and Reflections



*Figure 24: Video still from Studies with Annie (2007)*

This section of the chapter discusses the content of six months of practical choreographic research undertaken with performer Annie Lok. This pivotal research period has been named for the purposes of this project *Studies with Annie* and many of the discoveries made whilst working with Annie were later developed and embedded in the work *Grappling* (2008/2009). The movement studies undertaken with Lok in 2007 continued to approach the practical processes of *reaction*, *readiness*, *repetition* and *replication* and the way that Lok worked with

these processes had a deliberately different intent to the way that they were addressed in *Living La Pedrera*.

*Living La Pedrera* displayed these practical processes in rote execution through a demonstrative mode. The processes were shown in a very pragmatic way and this dogmatic delivery deactivated deeper levels of intersubjectivities across the triadic relationships. The use of the same practical processes undertaken in Studies with Annie were much more flexible as Lok's intention in working with them centred around her choosing and/or finding each of the processes spontaneously during movement improvisations. Often we would invite friends or students to be observers for our research in order to test the performative quality of the work across the triadic relationship. The following tasks were well attuned to the improvisational nature of the studies as they were able to facilitate Lok's ability to find the practical processes.<sup>120</sup> Work with the practical process of *replication* was a substantial shortcoming found in *Living La Pedrera* and therefore the focus shifted to *replication*, *repetition* and *readiness* in Studies with Annie and also in *Grappling*.

Task 1: *Replication* of physical information that Lok derived from observers in the room;

Task 2: Image work. Images Lok often used were: animals, characterisations, recreational activities and sport;

Task 3: Lok's verbal use the word "image" to comment upon her experience of being in the midst of physically embodying an image;

Task 4: Lok's verbal use the words "internal" and "external" to comment upon where she perceived her movement stimuli come from. 'Internal' denoted a physical sensation coming from inside her body (such as the sensation that

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<sup>120</sup> Please refer to DVD 1 Appendix, Sections 3 and 4 for practical documentation of 'Studies with Annie' as it shows some of these tasks in practice.

comes from the hip moving in its socket for example) and 'external' had to do with visual, auditory or textural stimuli located outside her body. These bipolar terms were selected as opposed to some sort of gradient marking system as Lok felt that using only two terms to choose between gave her more freedom in moving;

Task 5: Whilst Lok improvised, I also spoke the words: internal, external and image to comment upon my perception of Lok's experience;

Task 6: Lok and I would engage in spontaneous dialogue during her improvisations;

Task 7: Lok embedded spontaneous moments of writing within her movement improvisations as a reflective tool to comment upon the processes in which she was engaged;

Task 8: Lok used movement *repetition* as a way to deepen her engagement with an internal or external stimulus.

Our focused work on these tasks and the improvised structure that contained them served to further develop practical experiments in person over persona. Studies with Annie also addressed the following four areas (as listed previously in the first section of this chapter): 1) the thought-movement circuit, 2) facilitation of liminal moments, 3) manipulation of the performance frame and 4) focused use of the practical processes utilised to strip away performance persona.

The thought-movement circuit was exposed as Lok spoke the words: internal, external and image whilst performing. Articulating these words aloud served to both focus her attention on stimuli for movement and also to inform the audience of her moment-by-moment perceptions during her improvisations. The attention Lok gave to her moment-by-moment experience served to harness an immediacy within the performative frame.

Chris Johns, a specialist in Reflective Practice says,

The idea of paying attention to self within the unfolding moment defines reflection-within-the-moment; the exquisite paying attention to the way the self is thinking, feeling and responding within the particular moment, and those factors that are influencing the way self is thinking, feeling and responding. Such self-awareness moves reflection away from techniques to apply to a way of being (2004:2).

This way of being or being in the moment, was evidenced through Lok's work with *repetition*.<sup>121</sup> The execution of repeated movement over time revealed variations in Lok's movement vocabulary. Yet as we discovered, precisely repeated movement sequences proved impossible. Movement repeated without change could arguably only be mechanistic since human movement alters continually as a result of our thought-movement circuit. According to Deane Juhan, a body-worker who promotes the functionally integrated body-mind, says it is our corporeality which dictates our interface with decision-making processes.

The body is the immediate precinct in which the early formative stages of perceptions unfold, so our current experiences of our bodies influence in decisive ways many of the qualities of the world that is finally deposited into conscious awareness. (2003:390)

Therefore, of the practical research tasks that Lok and I worked with, it was the improvised structure, the *repetition* of movement and the opportunity to articulate verbally (both through spontaneous dialogue and through the use of the words: internal, external, image) that revealed the thought-movement circuit in an immediate way.

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<sup>121</sup> View DVD 1, Appendix Section 3 for practical documentary evidence of this.

Moments of liminality were exposed when Lok lost the thread in her improvisations. In these moments she would often just sit or stand, as authentically as possible and simply observe the space and those around her.

In addition to this example of exposing the liminal, the practical studies undertaken with Lok made deliberate deviations away from the traditional performance frame in efforts to embrace a frame of performativity. Governed by the orthodox codes of the proscenium arch theatre, the traditional performance frame physically, metaphorically and emotionally separates the audience from performers.<sup>122</sup> Both *Dismantle Map* and *Living La Pedrera* upheld resonances of this separation despite their performances in unorthodox performance sites. It is for this reason that the characteristic of separation within the traditional performance frame was abandoned in *Studies with Annie*. Instead, the framing of the work undertaken in *Studies with Annie* revealed efforts to devise an arena where practical experiments in *reaction, readiness, repetition* and *replication* could unfold in an informal environment of a studio setting where a small invited audience could feel included in an event which was supportive of the dancing human being.

*Studies with Annie* elicited several findings. The practical tasks used in Annie's improvisations were successful in their contribution to the over-arching research question concerning the activation of intersubjectivities by providing both tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge (to use Nelson's terms). Or rather, in the

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<sup>122</sup> See Foster (1986:61-65)

terminology provided by Max Van Manen, the research uncovered in *Studies with Annie* constituted 'actional knowledge'. Actional knowledge, as Van Manen explains is where:

We discover what we know in what we can do. As we give accounts of what we do and how we act, in the end we are left not with propositions but with actions. In other words, we possess knowledge of the world through our actions. But this 'knowledge' is more tacit, nondiscursive, silent. Therefore we may say that, in some sense, we find out what we know through what we can do and how we act (2002:5).

Therefore, the findings that have emerged from *Studies with Annie* are articulated in these modes of knowledge that find their basis in phenomenological experience and critical reflection. Examples have been provided in this section concerning how *Studies with Annie* addressed the following four areas: 1) the thought-movement circuit, 2) facilitation of liminal moments, 3) manipulation of the performance frame and 4) focused use of the practical processes utilised to strip away performance persona; yet, the most important finding that has emerged from this work is that persona cannot be completely stripped from the performer. This is because the framing of the dance event (even as performative non-performance) will not allow persona to be completely removed from performer.

This finding resonates with the situation illustrated by Sartre (1958:259-261) described in Chapter 2, concerning the effect that the awareness of another has on our own being. Sartre describes the situation of someone absorbed in unselfconsciously looking through a keyhole, who is then transformed or "suddenly affected in their being" when they hear footsteps in the hallway behind them. Sartre

calls this experience a transformation of *being for oneself* into *being for the other* and claims that others are revealed to us not in a cognitive, intellectual sense but through our own transformation of being. I propose that this transformation of being or rather, the adoption of persona is cultivated as a result of the framing of the dance event and that the adoption of persona is even more pronounced in traditionally framed Contemporary Dance performance. It is the triadic relationship consisting of maker, performer and audience in all performance and performative modes of framing that make the presence of persona in the performer an absolute.

This finding prompted a strong direction of inquiry for the work *Grappling*. If persona was a given, did it therefore operate on a continuum of intensity? Could more than one persona be adopted by a single performer over the course of a dance event? These questions, arising out of the importance of the framing of performative non-performance acted as a springboard for the choreographic research undertaken in *Grappling*.

## **5.2 Intentions behind *Grappling* (2008/2009)**

The performers in *Grappling*, Louise Douse and Alex Staines were both former students of mine, during which time they worked intensively with me for six months receiving training in butoh dance. They both also worked (in a workshop capacity) with Atsushi Takenouchi<sup>123</sup> and had several years experience in traditional technical training in Contemporary Dance. *Grappling* was constructed from events

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<sup>123</sup> See Chapter 3, Section 3.1



that aimed to destabilise performance persona and the performers were selected because of their willingness to try to struggle with confronting and revealing the personas that they adopt whilst performing. Additionally, Douse had extensive training in ballet and Staines trained in Flamenco. It is appropriate to mention both performers' previous training because later in this chapter the hypothesis is put forward that stylistic features of dance forms carry with them information about performance personas.

Throughout the devising process of *Grappling*, Douse and Staines worked to become attentive to their adopted performance personas which emerged in the lived moments of the performative dance event. Once recognised, the personas were dealt with in some way, either by calling the audience's attention to the presence of the persona, attempting to lessen the magnitude of the persona or to increase its intensity in order to highlight its falsity. *Grappling* was created in order to illustrate that the performers were operating in a state of real time problem solving.<sup>124</sup> They were given movement based tasks to perform whilst at the same time maintaining a conscious monitoring of their personas as they ebbed and flowed across the duration of the work.

Performative non-performance, the proposed mode of framing for the contemporary dance event that aims to activate deeper levels of intersubjectivities,

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<sup>124</sup> Choreographer Rosemary Lee highlights in her work *The Suchness of Henri and Eddie* (2002) a similar choreographic structure where "the process is the product" (Lee, 2002:3); she similarly reveals in her work the real time problem-solving that her two performers undergo. Opening the process of the work in this way allows the audience to "see their thought in their movement and you [the audience member] witness their struggle" (ibid).

aligns itself with this doctoral project's earlier critique of Contemporary Dance technique. In response to this alignment, *Grappling* looked to the psychophysical training methods of yoga, butoh and movement improvisation; and qualities of these training methods can be seen in both the work's process and product. Alongside the embrace of psychophysical training methods, spontaneity, improvisation and instantaneous decision-making were also important components embedded in the choreographic work.

Even though this study supports the impossibility of completely stripping away performance persona, the challenges set for a performer to recognise and address persona whilst performing creates a struggle, a grappling, that in itself may reveal fractures in persona although it may not eliminate it. This grappling with persona together with the negation of value for the aesthetic ideal that accompanies mainstream Contemporary Dance training (and instead embraces psychophysical training methods) aims to promote an engagement between the members of the triadic relationship and highlight the immediacy of the moment which activates deeper levels of intersubjectivities.

*Grappling*, like the two choreographic works made before it, aimed to employ the practical processes of *reaction*, *readiness* and *repetition*.<sup>125</sup> The work comprised seven sections and the order in which these sections were performed was a

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<sup>125</sup> After the performances of *Living La Pedrera* (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2) the decision was taken to abandon further practical work with *replication*.

spontaneous collaborative decision made by Douse and Staines at the beginning of the dance event.



*Figure 25: Video still from Grappling (2009) – Alex Staines and Louise Douse organise the choreographic structure through the use of stones*

Each of the seven sections was represented by a small stone and these stones were arranged by Douse and Staines at the beginning of the work to set the order in which the sections would be performed. The use of stones in *Grappling* had three purposes. Firstly, to create an interactive relationship between the performers and the audience; secondly, to mark the order of the seven sections of the work and thirdly, to provide a live sound score controlled in the lived moment by both performers and individual members of the audience. At the beginning of the work, each person watching was given two small stones and told by the performers that they may use the stones by dropping them on to the floor in order to provide an

auditory signal to the performers that they would like a change in the performance. In response to the sound of the dropping stones, each of the performers had the option to choose what sort of change they implemented or if they chose to implement any change at all. As stones dropped throughout the dance event, the performers grappled with the personas that arose as a result of this occurrence.

Each of the seven sections contained several points of intent between which the performers shifted their attention. These points are identified in the following descriptions of each section. The descriptions of the sections are arranged below in the order of appearance at the performance given at Middlesex University in February 2009.<sup>126</sup>

### **Manipulation Section: Origins in Kinaesthetic Empathy**



*Figure 26: Video still from *Grappling* (2009) – Alex Staines moves Louise Douse*

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<sup>126</sup> See DVD 1, Section 5.4

The content of this section originated from a movement exercise that I devised and delivered to nurses and health practitioners at a conference in New Zealand in 2008 entitled Exploring Kinaesthetic Empathy.<sup>127</sup> The exercise contained similar characteristics found in forms of bodywork such as Thai yoga massage and in psychophysical techniques like contact improvisation and Skinner Releasing Technique. The original exercise is described below but was later further developed for *Grappling*. Working with a partner: A lies supine and B sits or kneels beside them, near to their navel. A's main objectives are to breathe, become passive, release any holding of muscular tension in their body and to keep their eyes closed if possible. B sits and observes A and watches the rise and fall of the chest and/or abdomen as A breathes. Once a regular breathing pattern is established by A, B matches it and notes how it is perhaps different from their own natural breathing pattern.

After both partners have experienced a unified breathing pattern for a short while, B moves to sit or kneel beside A's leg. B lifts A's leg, bending it at the knee and placing it in their lap. B does not touch A's leg but rather lets it rest in their lap, supported as if by the floor. A concentrates on releasing the weight of their leg into the support of B.

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<sup>127</sup> Nunes, A. (2008). 'Exploring Kinaesthetic Empathy: A practical movement-based workshop'. *Unfurling Knowledge: The 14<sup>th</sup> International Reflective Practice Conference*. Waiariki Institute of Technology, Rotorua, New Zealand.

Once B feels that the weight of A's leg has been surrendered B begins slowly to manipulate the leg, focusing on exploring the range of motion of A's hip joint. As A maintains their objectives to release, breathe and release tension, B concentrates on listening to the signals of communication coming to them through their partner's body. These signals may include A holding tension and/or resisting B's guidance of the limb or A trying to anticipate and/or control the movements of the limb. If either of these signals is felt by B then B stops moving the leg, holds it in a very supportive way and lets A return their focus to surrendering the weight of the leg. Once B feels that the weight of the leg has once again been surrendered then the movement can resume.

This process is repeated with each leg, both legs (which can prompt dragging A by the legs across the floor if both partners feel they want to do this), each arm and both arms (again, can facilitate dragging, lifting the upper torso and assisting spinal twists). Once all of A's limbs have been moved, B sits or kneels at A's head and places their hands between the back of A's skull and the floor with their palms cradling the skull. B does not lift A's head but instead the hands just act as a small cushion between the skull and the floor. A concentrates on releasing the weight of their skull into B's hands. Once B feels that the weight of the skull has been released, the hands are slid out from under the skull towards the ears. B then places one palm (fingers pointing towards the floor) onto the crown of A's head. After a few moments, B releases their hand whilst visualising that the release of their hand can extend and make space between the vertebrae of A's spine. B then

moves quietly away from A and lets him/her rest for a few moments before the roles are reversed. The whole task takes about an hour.

The 'Exploring Kinaesthetic Empathy' exercise works on a feedback loop of reciprocal nonverbal communication between two bodies. If, for example, in the process of this exercise, the active participant (the person doing the moving) clings to the agenda of manipulating the other's limbs beyond the comfort levels of the passive participant (the person being moved) then the communication between the two becomes autocratic in nature. Empathy cannot survive under such circumstances and instead the exercise turns into merely a task of physical manipulation whereby the channels of communication are one-sided (i.e. the active individual acts as a director of the passive individual's movements). The problem with this is that the passive person's body becomes objectified and the intersubjectivity required for empathy is lost. (Nunes Tucker, A. and Price, A. in McClean, C and Kelly, R. 2010:245)

The intention of the exercise, when it was first delivered to nurses and health practitioners at the conference was to enable them to participate in a movement practice that facilitated the experience of kinaesthetic empathy and also, to use terminology from Van Manen, would constitute an experience of pathic intuitiveness.<sup>128</sup> Van Manen says,

Intuitive practice is not 'blind' or impulsive behaviour. Intuitive action is marked by a certain im-mediacy [...it] is pathic in the sense that it allows one to grasp the situation from the other's point of view. Pathic understanding is experiential understanding; the understanding of the other's experience. (2002:6)

The manipulation task demands just this, the immediate experiential understanding of moving another's body. This is further justified by Merleau-Ponty's account of intercorporeality. In the process of making *Grappling*, this manipulation task became a regular warm-up for Douse and Staines. It facilitated a close working

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<sup>128</sup> Pathic intuitiveness is a state found within Van Manen's account of Practice as Pathic Knowledge (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.1)

relationship between them and over the six months that we worked together the task evolved to include other points of intent in response to the new found realisation concerning persona in performative non-performance. The other points of intent that were embedded in this task are articulated below.

Firstly, different ways the performers could use the focus of their eyes were integrated into the task. These included two types of focus used in butoh work: the 'crystal eye' which has the characteristic of opening the peripheral vision without fixing focus on one thing, and the 'meditation eye'<sup>129</sup> which has the characteristic of being a half open eye with a soft, unfocussed gaze. Douse and Staines also used direct focus, or a 'conversational eye' where the gaze was fixed either into one another's eyes or into the eyes of a member of the audience. Finally, Douse and Staines used a 'performance eye' where the focus of their eyes was withdrawn but the eyes were open. These different uses of focus were implemented into the manipulation section with the intention to call the attention of the performers to the habitual use of their eyes. Expanding the vocabulary for the eyes was intended to rupture old patterns of engaging with the audience through focus and gaze.

The second task layered inside the manipulation section was the use of sound. Paralinguistic aspects of speech were used as sounds and made by Douse or Staines on either their exhalations or inhalations. The idea for making sounds in this way originated from a breathing exercise (pranayama) and a meditation used

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<sup>129</sup> 'Crystal eye' and 'meditation eye' are terms used by Atsushi Takenouchi (6-9 November 2008 [workshops]) to describe these varying types of focus.



in classical Ashtanga yoga<sup>130</sup> where locations within the physical body (i.e. the base of the spine, the sacrum, the solar plexus, the heart, the throat, the eyebrow centre and the crown of the head) each correlate to a sound. Sound used in this way was embedded in the work with the intention of challenging the performers' orthodox Contemporary Dance technical training as vocal work is sometimes excluded from this training. At times, Staines would move Douse with the intent to extract sound from her as if playing her like an instrument. On other occasions, Staines would move Douse with the intent to 'wake-up' one of these areas of Douse's body (i.e. the base of her spine, her sacrum, her solar plexus, her heart, her throat, her eyebrow centre or the crown of her head). In order to do this, Staines would verbalise the sound which correlated to the part of the body that she wished to awaken.

As found in the original Exploring Kinaesthetic Empathy exercise when B would feel tension arise in A and then B would stop the manipulation and wait for A to surrender the weight of their body, a similar tactic was applied to the interaction between Douse and Staines. Douse always had the choice to react to Staines' touch by filling her body with muscular tension to communicate to Staines to stop manipulating her.

Once the connection between them was broken, both Douse and Staines had the option to execute a series of shaking movements. The shaking movements were

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<sup>130</sup> See Hari Dass (1981)

developed to enable each of them to take the opportunity to shake out the experience of what they had just experienced in order to clear the slate. We named these shaking movements ‘etch-a-sketch’ moments, where Douse and Staines had access to a built-in composure exercise that could be utilised at any time during the duration of the work. “Shaking gives me a form of escapism in the performance and when I can come back from it I feel as if I am starting from fresh” (Staines, 2009, February 26 [written reflection]).

The following chart illustrates how the strands of the dance medium were working in this section. Because of the improvised structure of the work, all of the strands listed in the charts are flexible except for those marked with an asterisk.

<b>Performer</b>	<b>Movement</b>	<b>Space</b>	<b>Sound</b>
Clothes	<i>Reaction</i> (to the activity of <i>listening</i> to the other resulting in Staines manipulating Douse)	Proxemics (intimate space)	The sounds: aw, ee, ooo, ei, oh, ong and ah alongside other guttural sounds made by performers
Gender*	Stillness	Audience in the space	Sounds in environment (including stones dropping)
Height*	Shaking Sequence	Light (over the duration of the work the light gradually increased in intensity on both performers and audience)	Breath
Age*	Use of the focus of the eyes		
Hair	muscular tension in body		

Throughout the work the performers have control over what they wear and they have several combinations of clothing available to them to use throughout the work. Changes in clothing are another means by which Douse and Staines can comment upon their awareness of each of their personas. For example, the traditional black leotards and tights used in the work are generally adopted when Douse and Staines feel that they must perform movements stylistically associated with Contemporary Dance.

#### **Touch Section: With and Without Words**



*Figure 27: Video still from **Grappling** (2009) – Douse touches the surface of Staines' hand saying "skin"*

In this section, Douse and Staines used the words: skin, muscle, bone to articulate their intentions behind the type and depth of the moments of physical interaction between them. They also had the option to say each others' names when the intent behind their physical touch felt as though it went beyond the physical. This section was also repeated later in the work with the same movement vocabulary but where the intent behind each physical touch was thought and not spoken.

The movement vocabulary in this section was set and was contrasted against the other sections in *Grappling* by being firmly identified by a Contemporary Dance style. The purpose for this was two fold. First, the nature of the movement vocabulary itself would trigger in each performer their persona adopted for the Contemporary Dance form. Second, this section of the work would reveal to the audience that both performers were trained in Contemporary Dance and therefore that the sections that contained non-traditional Contemporary Dance movement would reveal a change in the persona of each performer.

The chart on the following page shows how the strands of the dance medium worked in this section.

<b>Performer</b>	<b>Movement</b>	<b>Space</b>	<b>Sound</b>
Clothes	Set movement, choreographed in the style of Contemporary Dance	Proxemics (intimate space - touch)	Performers speech (using the words: skin, muscle, bone as well as calling each other by name)
Gender*	Stillness	Audience in the space	Sounds in environment (including stones dropping)
Height*		Light	Breath
Age*			
Hair			

### **“And now Alex will Dance”**

This section began with a verbal announcement from Douse stating, “And now Alex will dance.” The purpose of this announcement was to create expectation of performance in a traditional sense. Both performers began by executing movement that was in the style of Contemporary Dance as in the section prior yet, the aims of this section shifted toward an agenda by the performers that involved *repetition* and acknowledgement of persona.

These aims were fulfilled through each performer in different ways. Douse occupied herself with the *repetition* of a physically demanding phrase of movement whilst verbalising numbers between one and ten. These numbers directly correlated to her perceived level of persona (ten indicated a maximum level of persona present).

In the repetition section, I got muddled a few times with the direction [...] that was when I was in my ‘cool dancer’ state [persona...] not thinking

properly, just dancing and trying to look 'cool'. (Douse, 2009, February 26 [written reflection])

Whilst involved in this task of repeating movement, Douse also played with ambiguities in terms of actually becoming exhausted and performing exhaustion. Douse had the further task in this section to prompt movement in Staines by verbally suggesting images to her that she could physicalise. Staines addressed her *reaction* to Douse's prompts by either accepting or declining them in the immediate moment. When Staines accepted one of Douse's suggestions and attempted to embody the image, Staines then employed her *butoh* persona.

A big persona I have built up for myself is my *butoh* persona, one in which I thrive in when performing. It lets me zone out from pressure, performance, structure, form, opinion [...] everything a normal performer/performance would normally conform to. It gives me a way to escape performance [...] a way to separate myself from the audience, their perceptions and maybe judgements (Staines, 2009, February 26 [written reflection]).



*Figure 28: Video still from Grappling (2009) – Louise Douse exposed*

At the end of this section, Douse told Staines she had finished. Staines, much to Douse's surprise, replied that she had not; she was still deeply into her butoh persona embodying an image.

This meant I was left on my own in the *now*, without any cover of persona [...] out of nervousness, I decided to look at everyone in the space, look in their eyes, I then told them that I was doing this because it was the scariest thing to do in a performance [...] I sat and waited for Alex to finish and spent my time concerned with myself and what I should be doing. (Douse, 2009, February 26 [written reflection])

This unexpected exposure of Douse, placed her and the audience in a liminal moment. It was a moment of seeing Douse exposed more as person than under a mask of some sort of performance persona. Like *Dismantle Map*, the sectional structure of *Grappling* provided ruptures in the flow of the work where potential to see the performers build and relax their personas could be seen. "The piece is so up and down that I am always in a state of flux, one which is hard to handle" (Staines, 2009, February 26 [written reflection]).

The chart on the following page illustrates the way that the strands of the dance medium worked in this section.

<b>Performer</b>	<b>Movement</b>	<b>Space</b>	<b>Sound</b>
Clothes	<i>Repetition</i> (Douse repeats Contemporary Dance phrase)	Proxemics (greater distance between performers)	Douse calls out numbers between 1-10 based on her perceived level of persona.
Gender*	Stillness – working with <i>readiness</i> (found in Staines' body as she works to embody images)	Others in the space	Douse verbally gives Staines suggestions of images to embody
Height*	<i>Reaction</i> (as Staines chooses how to respond to Douse's image suggestions)	Light	Breath
Age*	Changes in Douse's movement phrase based on her level of real vs performed exhaustion		Sounds in environment (including stones dropping)
Hair	Slow, improvised movement from Staines (using <i>butoh</i> persona) whilst working with images		
	Shaking Sequences (if needed)		

### **Internal, External, Image**

This section of the work was a development of one of the tasks created during Studies with Annie. Like Lok, in this section of the work Staines used the words internal, external and image in an attempt to articulate where her focus was in the moment. As in Studies with Annie, Internal related to internally felt sensations of her body, external related to movement that came about through a direct response



to external stimuli (such as a sound or visual cue), and image related to an imagined stimulus which was then manifested in the physical body. Staines was also given the option in this section to say, “I don’t know” / “I’m not sure” in reference to where she felt her focus/attention was located. This revealed to the audience her uncertainty which was developed in an attempt to reveal person.

Playwright and theatre director David Mamet illustrates how revealing one’s vulnerability illuminated in moments of uncertainty assist in revealing person.

[...] bring the truth *of yourself* to the stage. Not the groomed, sure, “talented,” approved person you are portraying; not the researched, corseted, paint-by-numbers presentation-without-flaws, not the Great Actor, but yourself – as uncertain, as unprepared, as confused as any of us are. (1997:124

Staines had the built-in opportunity to expose her uncertainty in this section through verbally telling her audience of her predicament whereas in the previous section, Douse was caught-out and exposed in her uncertainty in the previous section without warning.<sup>131</sup>

Douse’s role within this section however was to expand her role as performer into that of both performer and audience. Douse sat in a chair amongst the audience in the latter part of this section and used the words ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ to comment upon her perception of the level of engagement of the audience. For example, if Douse looked at one member of the audience who appeared to be disengaged from the movement that Staines was executing or disengaged from the dance

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<sup>131</sup> See DVD 1, Section 5.4 “And now Alex will dance” section of *Grappling*.

event in that moment then Douse would say “outside”. Conversely, if she looked at someone who appeared to be engaged in the event she would comment, “inside”. Additionally, Douse used this section of the work to reveal her perception of Staines’ attention by providing a commentary using the words: internal, external and image.

The section that followed illustrated a development upon this idea of blurring the role of the performer to include that of audience. In this adapted section both Douse and Staines had the option to watch the other from the perspective of the audience and comment upon what they perceived the other to be attending to moment by moment by using the words internal, external and image but also through offering descriptions of what they perceived to be the embodied image adopted by the other.

The chart on the following page shows how the strands of the dance medium were working in these two sections.

<b>Performer</b>	<b>Movement</b>	<b>Space</b>	<b>Sound</b>
Clothes	<i>Reaction</i> (Staines moves in reaction to internal, external or image-based stimuli – improvised movement)	Proxemics (greater distance between performers – Douse adopts role of audience and moves to sit in a chair with audience)	Staines verbalises the terms: internal external, image, I don't know/I'm not sure
Gender*	Stillness – as <i>readiness</i> (found in Staines' body as she works to choose/find stimuli)	Audience in space	Douse verbalises the terms inside and outside and comments spontaneously on Staines' movement
Height*	<i>Reaction</i> (both performers influenced by the verbal commentary of the other)	Light	Sounds in environment (including stones dropping)
Age*			Breath
Hair			

### **Alex Dances to the Sound of Louise**

In this last section, Staines worked with *reaction* as she danced to the sound of Douse moving. Staines' movement in this section was improvised whereas Douse's movement was set. Staines also had the option to work with the focus of her eyes in the variety of ways used in the earlier manipulation section whilst she danced.

The chart on the following page gives for the stands of the dance medium operating in this last section.

<b>Performer</b>	<b>Movement</b>	<b>Space</b>	<b>Sound</b>
Clothes	<i>Reaction</i> (Staines moves in reaction to the sound of Douse moving – improvised movement)	Proxemics (greater distance between performers – Douse adopts role of audience and moves to sit in a chair with audience)	Sound of Douse dancing
Gender*	Focus of Staines' eyes	Audience in space	Sounds in environment (including stones dropping)
Height*		Light	Breath
Age*			
Hair			

*Grappling* culminated in a rapid execution of a portion of each of the seven sections performed in quick succession. During this rapid execution, the performers attempted to hold all of the intentions that were present within each section originally. Once this was completed, Douse and Staines collected the small stones from the floor and from the audience before leaving the space.

“This is the end Louise, are you ready?” I ended up reflecting on what I had said and felt it showed quite an open relationship that I had developed with the audience. I felt, ‘This is me [...] and I am done.’ (Staines, 2009, February 26 [written reflection])

5.3 View DVD 1 – *Grappling*, Middlesex University, London 2009



*Figure 29: Video still image of Grappling (February 2009)*

#### 5.4 Critical Reflection: *Grappling*

The intentions behind *Grappling* came out of the theoretical knowledge, phenomenological experiences and critical reflections obtained from the prior original choreographic studies and completed works undertaken for this doctoral project. Therefore, *Grappling* set out to meet specific aims and to progress the findings emerging in response to the research question. First, *Grappling* aimed to locate itself within a type of framing that facilitated an engagement between participants in the triadic relationship. However, this framing needed to take into account the insight gleaned from *Studies with Annie* which was that persona could not be completely stripped from the performer. Maguire provides a relevant analogy to this point. He writes:

The performer is a person who can see himself or herself in a hall of mirrors – the artifice revealing reality revealing artifice revealing reality ad infinitum. The playwright conjures up moments that evoke our heightened awareness of the reality of artifice and the artifice of reality, that artifice and reality comprise life like alternating layers of a Russian doll. What does the doll at the core represent? Not finality, because there is no finality. It represents infinity. (Maguire, M. in Delgado, M. and Svich, C. 2002:205)

In light of the discovery that persona could not be stripped from the performer completely the pursuit of the following questions became a second aim for *Grappling*: If persona was a given, did it therefore operate on a continuum of intensity? Could more than one persona be adopted by a single performer over the course of a dance event? These questions provided a lens through which to further practically test the processes of *repetition*, *reaction* and *readiness* in terms of their use for assisting in the activation of deeper levels of intersubjectivities. Finally, the performers of *Grappling* had a mixture of stylistic dance trainings in their histories.

As the making of *Grappling* unfolded, both Douse and Staines were enlightened by a mutual discovery which was, that each dance style from their previous training had a performance persona attached to it.

As previously stated in this chapter Staines had undertaken training in the following forms: Contemporary Dance, butoh and Flamenco. Similarly, Douse had training in Contemporary Dance, butoh and ballet. This discovery by Douse and Staines had an effect on the way that *Grappling* was organised structurally. Each section of the work was designed to allow Douse or Staines to recognise which persona they were adopting and to what extent. In my dual role of researcher and choreographic practitioner, I felt that their discovery which aligned dance style to performance persona was important to acknowledge both practically within the choreographic work and theoretically. Their embodied knowledge of this discovery was validated through the hybrid mode of research under which this doctoral project operated.

To remind the reader, Nelson advocates the importance of embodied knowledge and appoints it as having equal importance to theoretical knowledge or critical reflection.<sup>132</sup> Additionally, Wilson's methods used for phenomenological research support the use of informal interviewing which was in essence how the discovery of a link between style and persona was acquired. In fact, Wilson purports:<sup>133</sup>

One is urged to get as close as possible to what the participants in the behaviour of interest are experiencing. Phenomenology demands that we

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<sup>132</sup> See Chapter 1 for a diagram of Nelson's 'triangulation' of these three types of knowledges.

<sup>133</sup> Further details of Wilson's views are given in the Introduction of this written thesis.

seek to discover the world as it is experienced by those involved in it.  
(2002:11)

Therefore the view that individual personas develop alongside stylistic dance training, necessitates a discussion of the connection between movement quality, dance style and performance persona. In its own right the topic of dance style is a broad one. Susan Leigh Foster describes how style is applied to many aspects of dance:

[...] individual dancers exhibit a personal style, dance movement may occur in a given style, choreographers may be identified by their style, and even dance traditions may be said to embody a certain style. (1986:77)

However, for the purposes of this discussion, dance style will be used to describe the technical movement vocabulary employed by a specific dance form. The dance historian Selma Cohen, provides the following illuminating statement in regards to the Asian dance style of Bharata Natya.

Such techniques mould the dancer to conform to the image – long, lithe, and with hidden strength – regardless of his real personality. The dancer always appears as persona. (Cohen in Copeland and Cohen, 1983:345)

This discussion will further conclude that the stylistic techniques studied by Douse and Staines: Contemporary Dance, butoh, ballet and Flamenco also mould the dancer to conform to image. Staines commented that she always started her performance of *Grappling* with a high persona.

My initial persona is a level ten. I would say it is a created one, one which is difficult to handle. I find myself grappling with being to true to myself and



being what the audience wants (a performer). (Staines, 2009, February 26 [written reflection]).



*Figure 30: Flamenco teacher and student*

When Staines was asked to elaborate upon this in an informal interview, she said that it was her Flamenco training that allowed her to access a high level of persona at the start of the choreographic work. From the DVD documentation of *Grappling* Staines can be seen entering the space in a physical posture not dissimilar to the one shown above in *Figure 30*. Her chin is lifted, the focus of her eyes is direct yet removed from others in the space, and her centre of gravity is displaced high in her chest. “The location of centre has everything to do with movement quality” (Nunes, 2006:69) and it is the movement quality that contains information about the style.

Any stylistic choice in dance implies a background of alternatives rejected in favor of some feature of movement that levels distinctiveness to, by signifying an identity for its bearer. If the dancer, regardless of the role, consistently uses specific movement qualities, then these qualities help shape the dancer’s own performance persona – a theatrical version of the dancer’s personality. (Foster, 1986:76-77)

To recount Staines' experience of her high persona at the beginning of *Grappling*, it is evident that her implementation of such a high level of persona foregrounded a sense of artifice with which she struggled.

The beginning of the work revealed Staines' awareness of, but also battle with, the levels of intensity inherent in her performance personas.

[...] it is important to develop awareness of the persona. With recognition, it can be integrated into consciousness. Most of us do best with a persona that is flexible, natural and at the same time strong enough to give us comfortable boundaries. An insufficiently developed persona leaves us too vulnerable – too raw. (Chodorow, 1991:58-59)

The vulnerability acknowledged by Chodorow in the quotation above could be seen in the moment in *Grappling* when Douse described being “left on her own in the *now* [italics mine] without any cover of persona.” This was because the intention set within the structure of *Grappling* placed the performer in the position of maintaining an *awareness of* and *intent to* address the reality of their persona inside the performative frame. The responsibility of fostering this awareness and intent lies with the maker and the performer.

This is supported by a view upheld in choreological studies which details the relationship between intention, impression and interpretation.<sup>134</sup> The intention of the maker and performer is revealed in the impression given by the strands of the dance medium within the choreographic work and can therefore then be interpreted by the audience. This is not a return to a semiotic account of

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<sup>134</sup> See Preston-Dunlop (1998)

interpretation but rather a phenomenological experiencing of the dynamic interplay between intent and awareness on behalf of the performer.

The work concerning person and persona within *Grappling* revealed answers to the questions that were present at the onset of making the work: If persona was a given, did it therefore operate on a continuum of intensity? Could more than one persona be adopted by a single performer over the course of a dance event? The discovery which disclosed the connection between style and persona provided an affirmative answer to the second question: yes, more than one persona could be adopted by a single performer over the course of a dance event.

The answer to the first question was assisted by further practical work on the processes of *repetition*, *reaction* and *readiness*. The *repetition* section which involved Douse repeating a phrase of movement in the style of Contemporary Dance did facilitate her awareness of a fluctuation in the levels of her cool body persona. Likewise, Staines was able to detect a rise and fall in her various levels and types of personas coming into being across the duration of the work. The embodied knowledge of the performers therefore provided an affirmative answer to the first question: yes, persona appeared to operate on a continuum of intensity.

The new mode of framing tested in this work and in *Studies with Annie* was dependent upon this responsibility of the maker and performer as well. The framing of performative non-performance therefore has more to do with the attitude of the

maker and performer than it does with the organisation of the performance space (as the word framing tends to convey). The engagement facilitated between members of the triadic relationship within the framing of performative non-performance is reliant upon the willingness of the maker and performer to do three things. First, that they acknowledge both that intersubjectivities across the triadic relationship exist and also that performance personas exists and cannot be completely stripped from the person. Second, to commit to the act of bringing awareness to their performance personas within the dance event thereby risking their vulnerability, revealing their struggle between person and persona and opening themselves to a shared experience across the members of the triadic relationship. Finally, that the performers utilise psychophysical techniques in their training to enable them to recognise alternatives to the qualities they employ when dancing in more traditional dance forms such as Contemporary Dance.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> A critique of dance techniques broader than European mainstream Contemporary Dance will not be addressed in this study. Although this critical reflection mentioned performance personas attached to other forms of dance in the context of the work *Grappling*, this is not to imply that all value systems attached to traditional dance forms act as a barrier to the deeper levels of intersubjectivities.

## Conclusion

The original choreographic practice undertaken for this doctoral project including: *Untitled Solo Improvisation* (2004), *Dismantle Map* (2005), *Living La Pedrera* (2006), *Studies with Annie* (2007) and *Grappling* (2009) has interrogated the concept of a proposed synthesised account of intersubjectivities and each of the choreographic works has embodied my theoretical stance, each with varying degrees of merits and shortcomings. They are consequently a central aspect of my theoretical debate and not merely a demonstration of it. The research question addressed in this doctoral project: could experiments in persona versus person in dance practice lead towards a strategy to activate (or de-activate) intersubjectivities across the triadic relationship in the contemporary dance event? This was investigated under three premises. First, that as embodied human beings we are capable of more than existing as vehicles for subjectivity. This premise upholds a non-dual perspective of mind and body. Second, because this research locates itself within a hybrid methodological process of researching practice and theory which incorporates practice-based research and practice-led research the knowledges which have emerged (embodied knowledge, theoretical knowledge and knowledge from critical reflection) have worked together in an interdependent relationship to provide a complete picture of what the research has uncovered. Finally, the research is located under the third premise of my contention that European mainstream Contemporary Dance had lost its immediacy and become remote from audiences; a problem which I proposed stemmed primarily from an

imbalance in values where the importance of persona was placed over person in Contemporary Dance technical training.

The methodologies of choreological studies, phenomenological intersubjectivity and choreographic practice were employed in addressing the research question and, given the nature of the question, these particular methodologies were selected to enable both an exploration of embodied thinking and practically applied theoretical thinking. The development of my choreographic practice had an effect on the research question and the theory implemented to address the question fed into and affected the practice. Therefore, a cycle where choreographic practice, critical reflection and theoretical interrogation were continually over-lapping emerged.

As a reflective practitioner, this doctoral project has wholeheartedly undertaken a study of Merleau-Ponty's theory of intersubjectivity as it relates to a specific type of contemporary dance choreographic practice which has only come about through research located in a hybrid model of theory and practice. The research makes a unique contribution to knowledge by proposing a new synthesised account of intersubjectivities that is best suited to the research question pursued. The new synthesised account of intersubjectivities is proposed to be of more relevance to the contemporary dance event because of its inclusion of kinaesthetic empathy and openness to shared experience. It exists within a multi-layered construct or one that is experienced in degrees. At one end of this construct there is the basic level of intersubjectivity, argued to be present in any dance event as it involves a

mutual corporeal experiencing of oneself whilst experiencing another as Merleau-Ponty posits. At the other end of this construct are deeper levels or degrees of intersubjectivities which open up to states of kinaesthetic empathy and a sense of shared experience.

The state which articulates a loss of self-consciousness named in both Eastern and Western schools of thought as: *no-mind*, *no-thought*, *samadhi* and/or *flow* was dismissed in the process of this research as it pointed in a direction which exceeded the parameters of the study. This state, characterised by an absolute merging between self and other, a phenomenon defined by Nagatomo as non-performance was researched and defining properties of non-performance were attempted practically in the choreographic work *Living La Pedrera* (2006). The shortcomings of this choreographic work discovered through critical reflection and practitioner-based enquiry resulted in a decision to reposition the idea of non-performance within a performative frame. This new mode of framing was tested in *Studies with Annie* (2007) and *Grappling* (2009).

This study was launched out of a dissatisfaction with mainstream Contemporary Dance performance where the person who was the performer seemed consistently hidden from view under the mask of persona and this persona therefore acted as a barrier to the intersubjective human connection which lacked immediacy. This research tracked the root of the problem with this type of performance to values embedded in the technical training underlying the form. The values of this technical

training laid their foundation in achievement-based models where technical virtuosity is more significant than the exposure of the human being. It is my view that this type of Contemporary Dance technical training breeds and reinforces a phenomenon described as performance persona. Performance persona advocates duality; both between our perception of others (in strengthening the perspective of perceiving others as object) and between body and mind. The non-duality of body and mind, highlighted as a premise for intersubjectivities, was therefore jeopardised by the promotion of a performance persona, and it became an aim of this research to find a way to strip away performance persona in an attempt to activate intersubjectivities across the members of the triadic relationship of the dance event.

However, over the duration of this doctoral project this was only somewhat achieved. Attempts to strip away performance persona in practice only seemed to recover the fact that persona, like intersubjectivity, exists. In the case of the findings concerning intersubjectivity, this doctoral project uncovered that intersubjectivities exist in any exchange between two or more people which is why the idea of non-performance could not be upheld in this study. This was because the very nature of non-performance was to dissolve subjectivities. Without individual subjectivities, intersubjectivities would not be possible.

Further, in the case of the findings concerning performance persona, this doctoral project uncovered that personas exist. To say that persona could be successfully



stripped away from the performer would raise broader philosophical questions about what a real self might be. What the lessons learnt from efforts to strip persona away from performer in the work *Living La Pedrera* exposed, and which was further evidenced in *Grappling* was, that both degrees and types of persona exist. Outcomes produced by this research point to the recognition of both intersubjectivities and personas. Therefore, intersubjectivities are activated across the triadic relationship within the contemporary dance event through the *awareness of and intent to* address these two phenomena in choreographic practice.

This doctoral project has illuminated areas which have challenged the practice of European mainstream Contemporary Dance by engaging both theoretically and practically with the idea of revealing intersubjectivities in contemporary dance. It has shown that the experience of intersubjectivity has something to contribute to the art form which fulfils a fundamental human desire to connect to another.

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