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Writing as dancing: The dancer in your hands , a novella <>

Joanna Tollemache Pollitt
Edith Cowan University

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WRITING AS DANCING:
The dancer in your hands, a novella <>

This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Joanna Tollemache Pollitt

Edith Cowan University
Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

2019

Abstract

With the premise to ‘write like I dance,’ *Writing as dancing* investigates new methods of accessing and revealing choreographic thinking in three distinct ways; writing as a soloist, writing for the ensemble and writing responsively in collaboration. Resulting iterations have variously emerged in the form of performance, novella, play, artist-book, exhibition and long form poem; the novella *The Dancer in Your Hands*, being the primary solo work presented alongside this exegesis.

The research posits engagement with solo dance improvisation practice as a dynamically charged, and tangible way of thinking that is transferable to the practice of writing. It draws on the quick shifting associational response systems and states of heightened attention as developed in *the response project* in my MA (2002). *Writing as dancing* proposes the activation of the ‘State of Dancingness’ in mobilising the act of writing as the centralisation of embodiment, and investigates the capability of the professional dancing body to reorient the relationship between dancing and the act of writing. This reorientation is discussed through examining fields of performance writing, feminist texts and queer phenomenology to excavate the liminal spaces between disciplines and the un hiding of emergent content. The agency of the dancer as author provokes new publishing platforms and an expanded readership for dance via the publication of embodied texts. She breathes.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- I. Incorporate without acknowledgment of any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- II. Contain any material published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or
- III. Contain any defamatory material.

Signature:



Date: 4th April 2019

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I pay my respects to traditional custodians of this land, past, present and emerging. That I stand on Whadjuk country invests me with the openness to not knowing, and to the understanding that listening to the body is not a new project but a constant relearning and returning.

I am most grateful to my supervision team – three insightful, exacting and generous author-artist- academics:

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Two performances and various talks were presented, and I am grateful to the audiences for participation, feedback and informal discussion surrounding these events, particularly the performance of *she writes like she dances*, at Performing, Writing, Wellington, NZ, 2017. Two refereed papers were drawn from this thesis for publication. I acknowledge the insights and contributions of the referees and editors of *Choreographic Practices* and *PARtake* Journal in helping to clarify the work at crucial stages in research.

I bring the following authors, artists and artworks forward from the list of references as (unknowing) studio cohort and instrumental companions: Jeanette Winterson (Art Objects), Maggi Nelson (Argonauts), Felicia Atkinson (Hand in Hand), Helene Cixous (Stigmata), Eileen Myles (For Jordanna), Yvonne Rainer (her paradox), Ruth Hadlow (Patternbook), Benjamin Forster (Reading Through), Kate Tempest (her fearless) Gertrude Stein (her voice reading “portrait of Picasso”)

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Our turn.

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RESEARCH OUTPUTS

Blue, L. & Pollitt, J. (2016) "Human" Issue #10 BIG Kids Magazine, Australia

Pollitt, J. (2016) "She reads", Spectrum Gallery, Perth, October 29th, 2018

Blue, L. & Pollitt, J. (2017) "Human: Child Artist Response Project" exhibition Manly Art Gallery and Museum, NSW, April 7th -May 21st, 2017

Pollitt, J. (2017) "She writes like she dances: Response and radical impermanence in *writing as dancing*", *Choreographic Practices*, UK, Vol 8:2

Parrott, C. (2016) "TRANSAction", Creative development and showing, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts – featuring script by Jo Pollitt ('Joni') April 4th-22nd, 2016

Pollitt, J. (2017) "she writes like she dances", *Performing, Writing* Symposium, On Score, TURN 3, BATS Theatre, Wellington, NZ, March 14th, 2018

Parrott, C. (2018) "InLore Act II" Co3 WA Dance Makers Project, Studio Underground, State Theatre Centre of Western Australia, featuring text by Jo Pollitt ('she/herd') September 12-15th 2018

Pollitt, J. (2018) "Solo for Two: Writing as Dancing" Paper presentation, Peripheral Visions, AAWP Conference, Nov 29th, 2018

Pollitt, J. (forthcoming) "The State of Dancingness" *PARTake Journal*, US, Vol 2

PREFACE

In beginning, or rather in middling: this body of research arose like an invited ganglion. A gathering of excess where before all was smooth. Fibres split and a mass began growing at pace in a place where it was not really supposed to grow. A disruption. An addition. An affliction. A site of evidence. Visible. My physical ganglion grew in the top fold of my left wrist, and was surgically removed at the start of my professional dance career twenty-five years ago. The rupture in the dance via writing won't be removed. Will not be stitched. In fact, I suspect it was the desire to write that emerged and found a way through the permission of the dance. Permission of the dancer. Ganglions are historically referred to as a 'bible bump' with the remedy being to smash them hard with a heavy book, often a bible. Which feels at times what I have done. Certainly, at times it has felt as painful. God came into it quite a lot with my resistance to the concept of anyone being seated at the right hand of any father, my participation in the Yes Campaign for marriage equality, and my simultaneous attendance at my children's Catholic school masses. A dancer like Judas. Betrayer of form. A kind of spy on myself, on my practice, on my presence. Rigorous and unrelenting. Suspicious and deeply propelled. Excavation of practice. Studio as church. I wanted evidence. And I wanted to be able to read it. To stay still enough to be able to recognise where I was. And so, here I am. And here with this introduction begins a revealing of process, an un hiding of the dancer, and of dancing, a heavy book of evidence.

The primary creative work that accompanies this document of exegetical thinking is a novella presented in two formats. Titled *The Dancer in Your Hands*, the first iteration is printed and bound in book form to be read from front to back, the second iteration is the same novella, unbound and individually sewn in a compendium of 15 scores to be read in any order. Two other major projects; a dance script "she/herd" and an exhibition and publication "Human", are discussed in Part One of Section III, *Writing as dancing*, and present expanded iterations of my undertaking in this research to 'write like I dance.' Each of the projects is a sustained effort to unhide the honed and sensate noticing of embodied experience as practised by a dancer. The experiments of *writing as dancing* are made manifest via a series of practice-led projects to continue the dancing in writing; to see what it is the dancer is saying in a form that can be more widely read, and to provoke discussion about choreographic thinking from the embodied processes and perspective of a dancer in words.

While as an improviser I am used to beginning again, the aim of this research was to identify the 'content' of the improvising performer in words, in a way that the performer could read herself. I have always been a writer. But either I have written around the central focus of a physical dance practice, or written from within the soma of dancing so that it remains as ambiguous as the dance. *Writing as dancing* arrived as an urgent project to challenge my obsession with form, and to apply sense-making and structure to the words, to work as rigorously as I do in performance. To trust the process as conduit to content. This work is a process of revelation. Of un hiding. Of *writing as dancing* in order to read, to hear and to stay with what I am saying. The body of work revealed in the turns of each page is written by a dancer writing specifically with the same embodied decision-making process and energetic states that are accessed when she dances.

The supervisory remark "This is poetry not exegetical unpacking" (Marshall, 2017) came scrawled over an early draft and led to seminal questions of my research. My work as improviser demands shifts from association to association and unsurprisingly my writing arrives with the same seemingly interrupted threads. What follows then is not an argument for disparate associational writing as methodology in itself, rather it is an active making sense of how I employ such methods and the impact on creative output. In a bid to understand myself and to challenge my own tacit knowledge, I applied the question of the creative work to this writing: What am I saying inside this convolution. What is the through line in the complexity?

I attend to the 'doing' of writing in a similarly embodied state as when I attend to the 'doing' of dancing. While each of the written works have had performance iterations that will be documented in the next section, I have chosen to submit for examination the book as stand-alone artefact. With much pressure to perform, I became quietly confident of the need to present the book as the solo in print form without the colouring of my spoken voice, or expectation for communicated response. The title *The Dancer in Your Hands* suggests presence, and simultaneously invites an immediate reading of absence. The weight of the pages, the act of turning them, the gaze onto words and shapes traversing each double page spread, creates a private theatre for one. The 'doing' of reading marks the performative engagement with the text and the choice with which to determine pace, venue and experience of the work.

The early documented experiments of *writing as dancing* post ethics approval for this research took place at CIA studios in Perth with dancer Niharika Senapati. In a condensed period of days

I trialled initial attempts of *writing as dancing* that centred on the scores of 'dance yourself into writing' and 'write yourself into dancing'. The trials tested the potential of the project by literally dancing for set times and then switching into typing with the aim to continue the solo and sustain and develop the physical state generated in the dance. I then reversed the score until it became possible to cross into each state of either writing or dancing with the same embodied experience of 'solo-ing'. The borders between dancing and writing became more permeable with practice and I am now able to instigate a solo energetic state of dancing in writing in the same way I instigate a solo energetic state when dancing. I refer to this state as the State of Dancingness, which is examined at length in Section II. The turning point for the experiencing of *writing as dancing* as a practice rather than a question emerged in March 2017 when I presented my solo work *she writes like she dances* at Performing, Writing in Wellington, New Zealand. It was from that point the writing of the novella became possible and I was able to continue the research from inside the experience of practice. The 'exegetical unpacking' of *The Dancer in Your Hands* and associated methods, runs throughout this thesis and is specifically engaged with in Part Two of Section III. A USB contains short excerpts of performances and studio praxis that contributed to the development of *writing as dancing* as a soloist; *she reads*, Spectrum Gallery, Perth, Oct 2016; *she writes like she dances*, BATS Theatre, Wellington, March 2017; studio rehearsal, WAAPA, Perth, July 2017.

Even at the closing stage of this research, it is a difficult process to commit to leaving any one word on the page for certain in that they offer not quite enough movement, not quite enough ambiguity, not quite enough slippage, but that is also why I am drawn to them and so acutely curious (suspicious). The desire to practice what I preach. To dance it as it is. To write like I dance. Except unlike dance, there is the expectation that I had time to choose this deciding. I had time to retract it. I had time to unwrite it. I chose not to. I chose to leave it there, leave it here, to leave it. To let it be seen without ___. And for the dance to go on without the dancer is complex given we are talking about the ideolectic practice of a solo improviser. There is something of a betrayal of my own form in such an act, and yet I am committed to revelatory process, to matching the vulnerability I expect and invite as performer and teacher of improvisation. For although, unlike the dancer, the writer can indeed leave the page, I would argue that the experience in the moment of 'wording' is the experience of 'moving'. And perhaps the 'worder' doesn't leave their words, just as the 'dancer' doesn't leave their dance. The dancer is still here.

CATCHEMENT AND CLARITY

“Imagine cupping your hands in a downpour of rain and collecting water in them. Your hands have become a catchment”¹

During this research, I have read so many words, and moved in so many moments. At this current point of gathering and collation it feels as if I am standing in a downpour and holding out my hands. What follows is one catchment of thinking amid the downpour. There are many droplets that fell outside of the catchment; falling still.

The primary aims of this research have been

1. To name and investigate *writing as dancing* as a methodology toward the generation of new creative texts imbued with The State of Dancingness.
2. To research the potential of the dancer in revealing embodied texts.
3. To locate and work in the gap between contemporary dance and literature via the application of the solo improvisation practice of *the response project*.

Questions which have been my constant companions over these years of praxis include:

- What are the specific processes and practice required to write like I dance so that writing can be experienced as dancing?
- How does the practice of an embodied dancer impact the movement, pace, energetic state and poetics of the emergent writing on the page?
- What is the nature of emergent content from a State of Dancingness?
- In what ways can *writing as dancing* ‘out’ the ambiguity of a solo improvising dancer?
- How does *writing as dancing* expand and challenge both forms?
- What’s love got to do with the practice of writing as dancing?

The exegesis is composed and presented in a navigational structure of three interlinking sections titled She Writes Like She Dances (context, methodology and practice), The State of Dancingness (philosophy and application), and *Writing as dancing* (praxis and artwork). The

¹ waternsw.com.au

third section, *Writing as dancing*, is in two parts, Part One: Experiments in form and content, and Part Two: *The Dancer in Your Hands*, a novella.

My initial plan for the exegesis saw each of these three sections as a triptych of distinct and stand-alone documents (form, frame, field). However, it became clear that these tidy borders were unable to be maintained and the clarity I was sure about increasingly dissolved. The forms, frames and fields of each of the sections are all inside the other, in multiplicitous conversations of unstable hierarchical status. I then decided upon inviting interactivity between the discrete documents that would enable cross-referencing and a complex but necessary interdependency. What eventuated was that this determined pursuit of democracy across borders provoked an opening to emergent content that I didn't expect, an opening that manifested as an excavation and revelation of a complex personal narrative that was driven and demanding. Content arrived that necessitated a central and stand-alone solo. It arrived in the form of a novella – *The Dancer in Your Hands*. The novella is presented in two versions; as a bound book to be read from beginning to end as you would a solo dance performance, and as a compendium of 15 bound 'scores' or chapters that enable the work to become choreographed in the reader's hands. The *writing as dancing* of the novella propelled, and was propelled by, the exegetical thinking as a practice-led research doctorate. Undivided.

The exegesis thus unfolds as a single document, a single body of evidence narrated with one leading voice: the point of view of the dancer writing from inside the intimacy of theory, imagination, methodology, philosophy and physicality all experienced as practice. The architecture of the text is unconventional in parts because it is my own practice that interrupts the exegesis; I write like I dance and this is the point of the research. Having said that, equally the point of the research is to be transparent; where my habit is to be (unintentionally) obfuscating, I have attempted to be rigorously responsive to my own provocation to say what I mean.

With more narrative and more of my dancing uncovered in the work than I had imagined, *The Dancer in Your Hands* arrived as the central axis with little regard for my initial self-imposed borders. I have always taken the surprising emergence of content for granted in my improvised performances. Thinking in the live moment of dancing occurs through perpetually overlapping energetic states and narrative often without speaking a word². In actively transferring this

² Here I am referring more to an extended and simultaneous poetic passage of text as spoken by the dancer. Utterances, breath and fragments of text are common in solo dance improvisation, as the

practice of dancing into a practice of *writing as dancing*, I was able to make time and room to see what I was saying. Dance is unusual in that it gives so generously in terms of visible physical human presence, while often keeping the internal life of the performer quiet and safely intact. It demands a state of vulnerability being generously engaged with while simultaneously maintaining personal ambiguity. *Perfect for the hiding*. Hence *writing as dancing* is a project to challenge ambiguity, not to reduce mystery but to see what my body is saying when it stops moving through space so fast. It hopes to be accountable for the ways in which I am practised as dancer at accessing experience and physical imagination in order to make it visible in a wider context, to allow the work to get unstuck and out of its silo.

The sectioned structure of this exegetical catchment has many intersecting and overlapping struts all jutting up against one other in counterbalance. Emergent content is pressed through the spaces between the struts amid the three-way conversation and crossfire of immersive praxis. I am both gatherer and sieve.

In the editorial of 2017 *Choreographic Practices*, O'Sullivan and Bacon wrote of my contributing essay: "The reader as audience is challenged to respond to a text that is part criticism, part poetry, part performance. It invites us to go back, to look again, to read or perceive otherwise." (2017, p. 177). While, at the time, I did not intentionally aim for part criticism, part poetry, part performance, their words affirmed my proposition that she writes like she dances. Each of the sections in this exegesis intentionally integrates theory, lineage, poetry and presence.

voice is not precluded from physical range. Andrew Morrish, Jonathan Burrows and others have long engaged the practice of improvised speaking as central to solo dance performances.

SECTION 1: SHE WRITES LIKE SHE DANCES

In this section I discuss the methodology of this practice-led research doctorate, and expand on many of the terms deployed throughout the exegesis. *She Writes Like She Dances* follows a progression that documents my work within the paradigm of practice led research. Tracing my history in improvisation in a personal lineage owed much to the dancers and thinkers of the late 1960s and early 1970s, I return to my MA in dance improvisation (Pollitt, 2001) to review the lineage of practice of improvisation and build on the development of *the response project*. An early version of this section was published in *Choreographic Practices* (2017). Specific scores used to generate work by method of *writing as dancing* can be found in Section III. So that you, the reader can journey with me, I offer here a brief glossary of the terms *writing as dancing*, *The State of Dancingness*, 'radical impermanence', *the response project*, and 'solo for two' as prelude for reference:

Writing as dancing is a methodology that applies a dancer's attention and presence to the energetic composition and production of new embodied creative texts. New access points to the complexity of lived experience are practised through a 'solo for two' of dancer and writer in activating a honed dancerly attention in a process that can be transferred across disciplines.

The State of Dancingness is the application of dancerly imagination and physicalised energetic states to the act of writing. Building on Hélène Cixous' concept of a "State of Drawingness" discussed in Section II, *The State of Dancingness* enables a particular inhabiting and associational access to experience via honed and practised embodiment.

'Radical impermanence' is an active investment in, and commitment to the present and immediate moment that you know is leaving. Working with the concept of radical impermanence serves to disrupt the urgency of perpetual segue prioritised by the associational practice of *the response project*. Instead it invites the possibility of deeply noticing and staying in the moment of leaving precisely by understanding you are always in the middle of departure.

the response project is a philosophy of practice first developed in 2000 as part of my MA performances and thesis 'Accumulated Response in Live Improvised Dance Performance' (2001). It is an associational practice located in the slippage between physical, conceptual, sensorial and imaginative worlds, grounded in the scores and live decision-making of dance

improvisation. The work amplifies the responses, specificity, presence and compositional skills of the dancer and dancer-as-writer.

‘solo for two’ in this context of *writing as dancing* is the practice of working simultaneously as dancer and as writer toward the creation of a single solo performance. As a title, solo for two has had several iterations in my work; as a solo performance where I transferred my improvisation practice onto another dancer so that she performed with the embodiment of her own practice simultaneous to the deliberate embodying of mine; a side by side dance or writing practice for two people, literally working shoulder to shoulder in a duet; a direction to the dancer and writer of one body to both maintain independent agency and be mutually responsive in the generation of new texts.

SECTION 2: THE STATE OF DANCINGNESS

This section outlines the theoretical scaffolding of my work via a lineage of French feminists, queer phenomenology and the trajectory of identity politics in dance. Centrally, I look to Cixous’s essay “Without End, No, State of Drawingness, No, Rather: The Executioner’s Taking Off” (1993) to unpack my own proposition of The State of Dancingness. Rebecca Hilton’s concept of ‘dancerness’ (2017) is discussed, as are other terms, projects and artists that help to make sense of the gap between the silos of contemporary dance and literature I am working in and illuminate the potential of a State of Dancingness. An abridged version of this chapter is published in *PARtake Journal* (forthcoming).

SECTION 3: *WRITING AS DANCING*

PART ONE: EXPERIMENTS IN FORM AND CONTENT

Part One of the third section examines the three distinct streams of *writing as dancing* that emerged from this research. Three variously published projects of embodied texts accompany the streams as evidence of the praxis undertaken:

1. *Writing as dancing* as a soloist: developed as the primary creative outcome accompanying this exegesis— a novella titled *The Dancer in Your Hands*.

2. *Writing as dancing* for the ensemble: developed in several iterations during two years working as a writer with choreographer Chrissie Parrott and is currently resolved as a dance script *she/herd*.

3. *Writing as dancing* in collaboration: developed as part of an ongoing conversation between artist Lilly Blue and myself toward the exhibited artwork “Human” and publication of Issue #10 of BIG Kids Magazine, also titled “Human” (see Appendix C).

These three streams of *writing as dancing* respond and develop in relation to each other, with the score of writing as a soloist underpinning all of the work. Each of these experiments in form and outcome details the potential and expanded platforms for the work of *writing as dancing*.

PART TWO: THE DANCER IN YOUR HANDS; A NOVELLA

Part Two of the third section speaks to the development of the primary creative outcome of this doctoral research, a novella titled *The Dancer in Your Hands*. The timeline and turning of the work spans the duration of the research and includes danced lecture performances and micro-texts. The initial score and title for the work as it was in development was *The Comma Piece*. The *Comma Piece* drove much of the form and content of the completed novella and ignited themes of turning, of dancerly attention, momentum, interruption and continuum. In the printing of the novella, an error was made that led to a further discovery of form. As I tore off the cover, pulled apart the spine and stripped away each section of the bound book, the literal separating of the pages created physical and conceptual room for the work to ‘breathe’. It became immediately apparent that each of the chapters worked as stand-alone scores. With the novella now in 15 independent parts it meant both that the ‘dancer’ in your hands was less easy to hold and that the unfixity and expansion of borders demanded by *writing as dancing* was amplified and affirmed. The book and the compendium of scores are presented side-by-side to offer two readings of the same dancer. Studio praxis and the making of the work is discussed in this section and builds toward a conclusion and questions about the potential for further engagement with the work of *writing as dancing* as expanding publishing platforms for dance.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE THINKING

In surveying the research I posit findings, limitations and future renderings for the work. I propose that a methodology of *writing as dancing* is possible to inhabit through a state of dancingness. The practice of *writing as dancing* can be applied to the creation of new solo dance works that are written of the body and able to be read from the page. These writings can tell us something of lived experience by using the acuity of attention in the trained response systems of a dancer to offer insight into corporeal ways of revealing such thinking. I demonstrate three ways of applying the methodology of *writing as dancing* that reveal not only potential for solo work and an unhiding of the experience of lived experience in the body, but their extended reach to ensemble dramaturgy and writing, and collaborative exchange that can further deepen the idea of seeing what is previously unseen. In looking to future research I discuss the ways in which an expanded view of dance could impact pedagogical training models and professional practice.

SECTION I: SHE WRITES LIKE SHE DANCES

She prefaces. Locates. Practises.

She purposes.

She delays, Betrays.

She attempts – and edits. And edits.

She dances. She fields.

She creases:

She writes like she dances

SHE LOCATES AND LIMITS

Engaging in a project of practice-led research, I am aware of my positioning and privilege as a white woman and concede the limitations of this perspective in the world, as well as the patriarchal silencing that comes with it. As a solo artist and researcher inside my own practice I resist the idea of “the assumption that subjective experience is easy to articulate and easier to access than objective knowledge.” (Bacon & Middelgaw, 2011, p. 5) Instead I subscribe to the notion of effort that Bacon and Middelgaw unpack in relation to such assumptions,

effort to note and listen to the habits, sensations and articulations of the body. Effort for the words that might arise from such embodied attentiveness to come to the fore. Yes: effort, and practice, and time (for both the writer and the reader) (Ibid, p.6).

It is argued in autoethnography that the personal cannot be separated from the political (Spry, 2011). Here I take up the “I” as a feminist act³, and I take up the ‘effort’ of working with the subjective as a position of valuing the instability and immeasurable of a poetic body. In working as a dancer to unhide

³ Virginia Woolf writes about avoiding the male-centred “I” in her 1931 speech ‘Professions for Women’ “...I will wait . . . until men have become so civilised that they are not shocked when a woman speaks the truth about her body”.

the multiple narratives that live inside the dance I am proposing that new knowledge of lived experience can be accessed and written.

I love the feeling of a song before you understand it, when we're all playing deep inside the moment the song feels wild and unbroken, as soon as we become domesticated will drag it back to something familiar and compliant and put it in the stable with all the other songs. But there is a moment when the song is still in charge, and you just cling on for dear life and you're hoping you don't fall off and break your neck or something. It that fleeting moment we chase in the studio (Nick Cave in Forsyth & Pollard, 2014)

This exegesis focuses on the potential of *writing as dancing* as a new methodology for the creation of embodied texts. In choosing to submit my final solo as novella, I responded to an urgency of form, and of my own interest in making room for the visibility of the text. And potentially of the making room for the visibility of the dancer. While not closed to the possibility of the final artwork arriving in the form of performance, I responded to the density and drive of the decision to present the embodiment of the dancer in print. To see it. To create space between myself and the audience, in an effort to bring the engagement and energetic state closer between us. All of the research acted as funnel to locate the practice of *writing as dancing*. Here, I aim to provoke the embodied texts as creative non-fictions of expanded dance practice into literature that is read as one reads a book. The printed format is a tangible and felt experience. The bending back of the pages, the pulling apart of the spine to better see, the manoeuvring of the cover to catch light or the angle of your own body in relationship, to mine. The pages will be physically impacted by your turning, by the folding of corners, the aging of the ink, in ways that a digital version of, even an interactive, text would not. The book has weight, it can fall, or be thrown. It is an intimate relationship, borderless between your body and mine.

In a stretch of the exegetical form, I include a body of text as a direct engagement with thinking-in-process in the following long quotation. Written in flight between Perth and Sydney, en route to the Performing, Writing Symposium in New Zealand, the text is useful in that it illuminates the state of readiness I was experiencing at the halfway point in my doctoral research. Printed verbatim, it presents a window into the state that led to the imminent embodiment of research that occurred during my solo performance of *she writes like she dances* at BATS Theatre a few days later. The references and errors in grammar and syntax are left unattended as it reveals evidence of a developing voice in the praxis of

practice and theory in real time- a slippage which was central to the development of *writing as dancing*:

I read Peggy Phelan's essay "Trisha Brown's Orfeo: Two takes on double endings (pp. 13-28) the book edited by Andre Lepecki "of the presence of the body; Essays on dance and performance theory in 2004. She interweaves her response to Brown's work with the italicised telling of a second narrative – that of the loss of her own beloved 'Julie' to a brain tumor at only 28. I reflect on the increasing pressing to hone and locate my own thinking and drive behind the narrowing of this phd and of my own ongoing creative arts research. Talking briefly to Peta Tait yesterday in a brief one on one , she remarked that my scope was far far too wide. And I think about choice and what it is that underpins all of this work, right now, from a long working process, that is currently impacted by my circumstance, by personal struggle and unheard unresolved. And thus two points of interest arise; the first this burning intrigue of the female dancer and relationship to critical thinking and personal relationship – the the authors in this case I look toward and am most interested in discussion are overwhelmingly not heterosexual (Peggy Phelan, Maggi Nelson, Eileen Myles, Yvonne Rainer, Barbara Bolt, Estelle Barratt, Jennifer Monson, Elizabeth Groves, Judith Butler, Irigaray , Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolfe, Alex, Wendy Martin, and here also I am thinking of the lesbianism flouted in the film *Dance About the (unsubstantiated) relationship of Duncan and Loui Fuller*. (Fuller's long term female partner is well documented.). I say this sitting beside a woman who prays with her rosary beads on ascent, and watch my own inbuilt mechanism for continued silence in the face of a still dominating ideology and my place in perpetuating the dominance of that with my silence so as to 'not make her uncomfortable' (as LB has said to me) with my truth. Which inhibited response leads me to a question about my research: Is it possible that in writing in words this dance I am hoping to force myself out of hiding, the hiding and ambiguity dance so affords with its real time presence/absence and incredible interstitial space for the between to be rendered with absolute commitment – visibly the furthest from hiding in the vulnerability of performance I practice and teach but maybe a place of easy withholding of absolute truth without saying, without committing to the root of the energetic states that manifest. The defence that the aliveness of performance reveals

all, is perhaps a withholding that enables silence, that enables hiding , that maintains a distance from declaration and difference. What dance at this level of inquiry has to do with sexual preference is tenuous at best and likely would not be supported by those mentioned, however , maybe the silence has something to do with it, and the spaciousness ...

I am disconcerted by the readings she holds in her hands next to me “Mass Offerings: Source of life and love” deeply suspicious of such a faith yet also somewhat embarrassed about the conviction of my own . This harks to a conversation with a very old and dear friend (of the intensity of teenage best girlfriends) who told me unequivocally that homosexuality was a sin and that the flimsy of my own moral conviction reveals the inherent ‘wrong’ of this, of my feeling toward even my own feelings. A powerful argument, and one backed up by thousands of years of repression. I think it becomes relevant when looking in to the discussions of the ‘feminine’ in relation to dance – Derrida on his assertion of presence as improvisation. As Albrecht’s ‘unstable’ body. Of the link between dance and the feminine that Lepecki makes. What of this acute curiosity , what of the particular intensity formed in a platonic female relationship. What of the intimacy demanded. What of the impact on a dancing body that wants to experience that acute space. Myles says of altered states and sleep deprivation from crossing time zones, jet lag as now a resource, tool for thinking and making. The queer space as a potent energetic site for dance. And the threat that this line of thinking further marginalises the academic discourse in a narrow field of ‘gender studies’ when absolutely it belongs in dance, with the dancer. And in this case with the female dancer. This question is in the unstable of my own emergent understanding and visible public split from heteronormative ideals (ending a marriage with three children that gave me a frame to ‘spring forth’ with imaginative and fictional freedom, to made fact of feeling fiction and easily shared, discussed, given over in fact, art at the margins of ambiguity, ‘divided’ I do not want a didactic discussion, ever, but as I get closer to the bones of my own thinking dancing writing) , and in response to Marcella Polain’s repeated question “what of the content “ I feel an urgency to at least look at my own uprising , that which is so profoundly written of the body . Jeanette Winterson says I will tell you the truth. Trust me. I think about wanting to be seen in

the mainstream, about not wanting to be located on any kind of margin, particularly as my form of improvisation already straddles that in dance, and in shying away from any sense of 'disclosure' or autobiographical solipsistic fall, I maybe perpetuate a continual unseeing. When actually I want to see, when actually I stumble onto thinkers that in their brevity open the discussion to include specificity. dance is personal after all I tell my students, and I apologise to them for that in advance, and then I say to get over it, that it's a fact of working as improviser, of entering into the contract of performers vulnerability. Of connection with the viewer, of fostering a truth in energetic space, of not speaking. And maybe writing is a dogged demand to unconceal, to theorise from 'disappearance' the wider truths that might house for me personally, the perpetual committing to the present moment, the desire to be both. For privacy. To not narrow what it is I'm saying is perhaps saying nothing. And at least in this study, the point is to say, to contribute differently to silence, to stand somewhere. To stand and of course be able to change my mind (cixous). Inhabiting and giving agency to queer space in dance from female perspective⁴ – and yes has been many a male perspective – see Phillip Adams, Petronio, Cunningham, Gary, Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane. Rainer did not come out until after she was 50. I want to interview her. What space does this allow to 'arrest' the dance? To arrest my own ambiguity? To not curtail my own unstable in standing but somehow to risk stillness for something to be revealed, to enable seeing. The scholarly evidence of thinking and discourse of writing and dancing is extensive (Derrida to Lepecki to Mignolo to Ellis to Cevjic- so what is my contribution here? Creative writing – (Leavy)creative writing and dance....? Publishing and dance. ?

(Pollitt, Friday 10th March 2017- Perth to Sydney toward Wellington)

That it is a female voice, a female dancer, on this page is not insignificant. The Cartesian split has long been overturned by the school of embodied cognition that pronounces "there is no fracture between cognition, the agent's body, and real-life contexts. Consequently, the body intrinsically constrains,

⁴ Clare Croft's book *Queer Dance* was published a few months after I wrote this text.

regulates and shapes the nature of mental activity” (Foglia & Wilson, 2013, p. 319). Furthermore, “the grounding aspect of the body acts as a scaffold for articulating thoughts that otherwise would be difficult to communicate” (Ibid p. 322) These concepts and metaphors of the body as scaffold, intrinsic constraint and agent of real life thinking is primary in the work of *writing as dancing*.

During my research, I undertook several performed iterations in the form of lecture demonstrations that featured text both written live on stage and spoken from rehearsed scores. Audience participation was initially central in trialling the idea of expanding The State of Dancingness. While this research conceptually contributed to the body of work, it became apparent it was a separate study worthy of further research and therefore appears only in discussion of Part one of Section III. At the Performing, Writing symposium in New Zealand in March 2017, I placed a micro-book titled “This book has elbows” under each of the theatre seats and introduced it as a ‘tiny dance’. The experiments involved audience members writing over typed words to create new micro-poems in response to my reading as demonstrated in this response by UK poet John Hall:

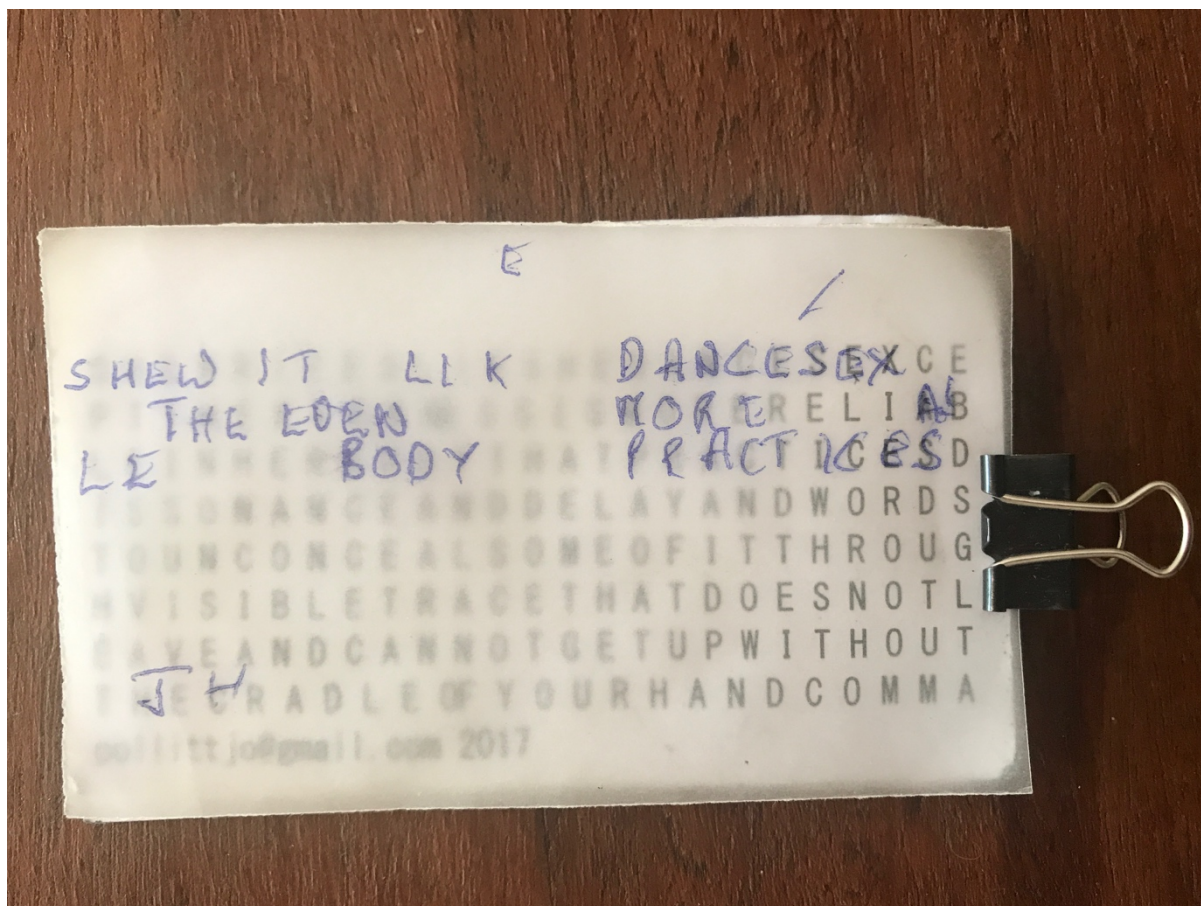


FIGURE 1 RESPONSE BY JOHN HALL, WRITTEN ON "THIS BOOK HAS ELBOWS" IN *SHE WRITES LIKE SHE DANCES*, PERFORMING, WRITING SYMPOSIUM, 2017

Many micro-dances/poems were collected in this way. Initially, these participatory performances were convened with the view to 'test' whether the impact of the text on the page has a dancerly impact or could provoke similarly dancerly responses. The anecdotal responses from many audience members who saw the work, were that both the performance and the printed words were experienced as 'embodied' or as 'dancerly' texts. I was referred to at the Performing, Writing symposium (which primarily featured delegates and key-notes from the fields of performance writing and performance art) as 'the dancer.' My opinion as a dancer was deferred to in relation to all things embodied and it was in this experience of visibility, ironically outside of the dance-specific field, that I first felt the value and experience of being a dancer. The self-recognition gave me permission to continue inside the specifics of the research of *writing as dancing*, as a worthwhile and valuable pursuit.

Employing deliberate limitations has been necessary in identifying the primary drivers in this work.

While initially overlooked in my exegetical writing as assumed knowledge, it became clear that my prior research undertaken as a MA was indeed crucially relevant for framing my current work. The MA titled *Accumulated Response in Live Improvised Dance Performance* interrogated and named a series of scores and a way of working through improvisation that I named *the response project*. *the response project* outlined 6 scores of which one has remained central to my continuing engagement with dance as practitioner, teacher and researcher, 'solo for two'. 'solo for two' has its history in my early experience as a young artist in the north of Western Australia working with indigenous children in 1994. Working side by side and facing front, the emergent content arrives from peripheral sensing of each other without looking or turning toward the other. The dancer responds to both their own creative driver and simultaneously to what they are sensing from the other in a process of energetic diffusion. In *writing as dancing*, there is only one dancer, there is only one writer, they are the same person but the concept of diffusion and simultaneous practice remains. The solo then locates in a written form of emergent content that arrives from the state of double embodiment as both dancer and writer.

SHE HISTORIES: LINEAGE IS A HUMMINGBIRD

Dance has a lineage that goes both forwards and backwards. It is a hummingbird. The scope I cover here is not able to acknowledge all the work ongoing in this area across time or even in my own history. Rather it is "writing as a complex act of life in time" (Phillips, 2014, p. 294), a compression, a pacing of living, a density of thought, an accumulation of twenty years of sustained practice.

Yvonne Rainer was in the middle of the Grand Union (1970-1975) and Cixous was about to write her seminal text of 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1975) when I was born in Zululand, South Africa (1973) to a folk singer mother. As a young dance artist I landed in places that supported my early curiosity – first at Tasdance⁵ with writers and dancers Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman, dramaturges and

⁵ I worked as a dancer and education officer at Tasdance, Tasmania's premiere dance company for three years between 1995-1997, I held the position of assistant artistic director (answerable to the Board with no artistic director in residence), for a period of nine months during the time between outgoing artistic directors Karen Pearlman and Richard James Allen, and incoming director, Annie Grieg. I was 23 at the time.

poets, then at Antistatic in 1999⁶ where I first worked with both Rosalind Crisp and Jennifer Monson who prompted my turn back to the body from my previous work in multi-media-based projects (*Two Heads*, 1994; *Par Avion*, 1998). Deeply informed by these artists early in my career as well as the work of the Judson group artists who first espoused that dance did not need to subscribe to any codified or fixed expectation, I 'became' and named myself an improviser in 1999⁷.

The unfolding of this right-now-text defies the live decision-making process inherent in improvised performance in that it is already caught in time, each word an object, chosen and visible: decided, arrived, staying. Each word is evidence of the performance of writing embedded in this form, now once removed from the performer. And as an improviser I shake my head at the degree of attachment I am experiencing in committing to (resisting) each. single. word. As I type, the decision-making is being undertaken here, and the practice of dancing as a series of decisions made in the moment of performance is located not as resonance but as proof of thought. Proof of presence. The proof of thinking is in my body, evidenced when it moves, when it writes. The difference lies in its relative disappearance. This performance is now located in your reading. And my reluctance to let you read on without me.

But you do. Read on. Read through. Hopefully. An audience of one. At least one at a time. A solo for two. I write being watched and Deborah Hay's provocation to 'invite being seen' similarly applies in this form. I am a dancer. And this text is partially structured in the way I improvise, in a sometimes cacophony of voices, an overlap of associations, a multitude of paragraphs, distractions, statements, retractions, repetitions, erasures, endings, undercuttings, interruptions, spoken words, associations, continuums, temperature changes, underlinings, crossings out, beginnings, energetic states, regrets, assertions, full stops, hesitations, capital letters, drafts, revisions, spaces, structures, titles, attempts, announcements, confidences, second guesses, fictions and truths. In the writing of it, a duet for one

⁶ Antistatic was a contemporary dance festival held in 1999 in Sydney featuring performances and workshops with the three international (all US) artists being Rosalind Crisp, Jennifer Monson, Ishmael Houston Jones and Lisa Nelson

⁷ The 'identity' of improviser tripped up many of my own expectations of how my career as dancer was going to look. Implicit in the naming of 'improviser' was an expectation that the work would always be in flux and with that came the paradoxical claim to become and promote my knowledge as 'expert' while remaining unfixed and expansive.

body both dancer and writer, and now, in your holding of *The dancer in your hands*, your reading of her.

I have always written and it was this ability to render the poetic body on the page that got me my first full time company job as dancer with Tasmania's flagship dance company, Tasdance in 1995. The artistic directors worked with dual processes of writing and dancing until a script was brought into the studio (Pearlman and Allan, 1995) and I did not see the two as mutually exclusive. I have also always worked across platforms and been attracted to conceptual artists making such work as Lea Redmond's 'World's smallest postal service' (2008) and responsive projects including 'Take Care of Yourself' by Sophie Calle (2007). When my children were born, I worked increasingly at night time on long-distance projects via email; co-works with dancer Paea Leach (Belgium/Melbourne), the checkpoint solo with Rhiannon Newton (Israel) and both BIG Kids Magazine and the Mother Artist Network with Lilly Blue (Sydney). All streams gathered with increasingly pressing questions of attention, momentum and compression and thus I commenced this PhD as an artist-scholar to further enter the rigour of research and investigate the heart of my interest in all my work: *writing as dancing*.

It was while working with Monson in 2000 that I was specifically introduced to writing as an incorporated and responsive tool in the dance studio. The practice of 'authentic movement' was begun by Mary Starks Whitehouse in the 1950's as a practice called 'movement in depth' and has since been reappropriated by contemporary artists with choreographic intent. This use of writing in the studio has permeated my artistic output, research and teaching for twenty years. In my observations in working extensively as mentor and teacher with emerging dance artists (Chalker, 2005; Leach, 2008; Newton, 2010; Harrison, 2012; Sanders, 2014; Fishwick, 2013; Stone & Trew 2014; Senapati, 2015), I have noted a marked increase in dancers who are drawn to writing as an essential part of developing their dance practice and making. Hence this research speaks to an urgency in both identifying emergent trends in dance making and investigating the potential applications and impacts of *writing as dancing* in progressing the artform.

SHE CITES: AN EMBODIED TRAJECTORY

“It is as hard to see one’s self as to look backwards without turning around” Henry David Thoreau⁸ (1841)

While I was working as a young dancer in Australia in the 1990s, the rise of scholarly dance discourse was notable. *Writings on dance* was first published first in 1985, with Australian artist-scholars Elizabeth Dempster and Sally Gardner at the helm as editors for 25 issues. As an undergraduate I attended both the first tertiary dance festival “Options” (1992, Adelaide University), and the first “Green Mill Dance Festival” (1993, Melbourne), which saw much discourse and debate in a forum setting. The first issue of *Brolga* – an Australian journal on dance - was published in 1994 and *Double Dialogues* was established in Australia in 1996 as a refereed journal that was “originally inspired by the need for debate in the universities concerning the status of the creative Arts...during that period when the visual and the performance arts had moved into the academy and practitioners were therefore expected to justify their work in terms of research paradigms” (2017). Internationally, Judith Butler released her seminal book *Gender Trouble* in 1990, Jeanette Winterson released *Written on the Body* in 1992, and the advent of conferences such as “Written on the Body” sponsored by the American Dance Guild (1994), “Engendering Knowledge: Dance, Gender, and Interdisciplinary Dialogues in the Arts” at Texas Women’s University at Denison University in Ohio (1994), and “Border Tensions” at University of Surrey in 1995 were increasingly prevalent. Susan Leigh Foster published *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* in 1995 and Gay Morris published her book *Moving Words* in 1996. Morris says of Foster’s book that it was one of the first to saying “dissolve the destructive polarisation between dance and the word” (p. 5) and writes of it being an important moment in dance scholarship:

Certainly much of the impetus for reconciling dance and language, as well as for investigating dance's relationship to society, comes from an attempt to deconstruct the mind/body dichotomy...The fractiousness of current dance studies is not solely the result of modern-postmodern tensions. It also comes from another source: the

⁸ I pulled this quotation out of the “daily quotes jar” at the University Library when I was writing about ‘turning’ and wrestling with systems of citation. The concept of the daily quotes jar led to the creation of the artwork created with daughter Nadia, for Human: The Child Artist Response Project Exhibition at Manly Art Gallery and Museum in 2017, NSW (Section III, Part one).

exuberant creativity of the field. Dance studies is growing but has not yet been fully defined; the drag of institutionalization lies in the future (1996, pp. 10-11)

1997 saw the publication of Anne Cooper-Albright's *Choreographing Difference: The body and identity in contemporary dance*, and over the ensuing two decades, dance has continued to become legitimized in the academy. Morris's predicted 'drag' is evidenced in research about the research *Dancing Doctorates Down Under* (Phillips, Stock & Vincs, 2009) and *Doctoral Writing in the Creative and Performing Arts* (Ravelli, Paltridge & Starfield, 2014) and could be seen to be 'defined' by the voices of current dance scholars including Lepecki, Midgelow, Burrows, Spangberg, Cevjic and Croft to name a few.

Alongside this arc of scholarly practice and synonymous with the acceptance of dance in the university, dance improvisation also enjoyed a resurgence. However, this rise in the practice of solo improvisation as performance, Sally Banes suggests, could be due to an economically driven need "at the lowest level of the dance production pyramid – that of the dancer herself" (1994, p. 347). I would add that academia sits in that category also, with many artists increasingly finding support for their work in the university system, including myself.

I point to the rise of dance scholarship at the time my own career was unfolding as it was profoundly instrumental in my understanding dance as a rigorously embodied pursuit. I trace the lineage of my experience as a young dancer within a rich trajectory of dance in Australia to show the confluent development of writing and dancing in my practice and engagement with the artform. My work builds on and contributes to this lineage and to a feminist discourse that advocates the body as "plural, polyvalent, mutable" (Dempster, 1988, p. 22). I am interested in an undivided spillage of experience that is messy, dedicated and driven, and rigorously personal. "These movements can't be described as the passage from a beginning to an end. These streams don't flow into one, definitive sea; these rivers have no permanent banks, this body, no fixed borders" (Irigaray, 1980).

SHE PURPOSES: SOLO DANCE IMPROVISATION AS METHODOLOGY

The place where imagination and reality meet...this is where we live (Cave, 2014).

Drawn from *the response project* (Pollitt, 2002), improvisation is purposed as both methodology and conceptual framework that privileges the dancer as authority. This practice of solo dance improvisation

distils and ignites The State of Dancingness from which emergent content is sensed and composed toward the development of an ideolectic choreographic paradigm. The specific methods and scores employed in *writing as dancing* are outlined in Section III.

THE RESPONSE PROJECT

the response project is a philosophy of practice first developed in 2000 as part of my MA performances and thesis 'Accumulated Response in Live Improvised Dance Performance' (2001). Grounded in the presence of live decision-making process driven by accessed states of embodied thought inherent in improvisation, it is an associational practice in that I work with the dancers' acute awareness of self and their constant attention to, and slippage between physical, conceptual, sensorial and imaginative worlds. These bodily inscriptions form the seminal grounds for the physical and energetic exchange of solo improvisation both in studio and on page. The work demands perpetual segue from and within one association or portal of attention to the next, and amplifies the responses, specificity, presence and compositional skills of the dancer and dancer-as-writer. Both a way of seeing and a methodology of practice, the development of *the response project* was acutely informed by my studio experience with American improviser Jennifer Monson and her use of energetic states and scores (New York, Sydney, Melbourne 1999, Perth 2001). My continuing work in this area was further affirmed and informed by studio practice and performance with Paris-based Australian Rosalind Crisp and her concept of 'danse' as a series of unstable principles (Perth, Berlin, Sydney 2006). In a continuing lineage, elements of *the response project* have since been visibly integrated into the work of others (Leach, 2008; Newton, 2010; Fishwick, 2013).

the response project began with two simple central questions: What do you respond to? How is the response manifested in performance? As well as maintaining a commitment to respond in the moment, the suspension or gap between responses is the potential or latent energy I am interested in making transparent – the potential of the improvised performance, the simmering point, the heightened sense of awareness due to not knowing what is going to happen. (Pollitt, p. 72)

As artist, researcher and teacher or A/r/tographer (Irwin, 2005; Leavy, 2012), my work through *the response project* has contributed to the development of dance improvisation, particularly in Western Australia, as a way of rigorously inhabiting the dancing body through the generation of specific

processes and creative drivers. These scores have been continually reinterpreted by the emerging artists I have mentored.

Which connects with this thinking I've been thinking about a lot lately as I watch the field expanding and expanding and expanding into the distance – the disappearance of the specialist. Specialists seem so quaint, kinda old school, now that every theatre maker and visual artist is a choreographer and training is only good for exploring shame and self hatred and it's all about modes of production theatre than embodied understandings. (Hilton, 2014, p. 7)

I agree with Hilton in the paradox of my own will to expand the dancer, without dissolving the specialisation of the dancer as artist. The paradox of wanting to call out and disband the silo-ed nature of dance and literary realms and the desire to belong to both, speaks to invoking more, rather than less of a skill set. Or possibly less of a production mode of dance and more to the embodied understanding which, currently for me, is a rejection of the production of the body in performance and commitment to a deeply invested rendering of the physicality of this imagination in writing to see it from a different angle.

Expanded iterations of dance and text such as those of coders Nancy Mauro-Flude and Judd Morrissey offer interactive experiences of the genre of electronic writing. The movement generated by their choreography of hypertexts⁹ comes close to the associational response system of my improvisation practice. Another exponent of new ways of inscribing thought is visual artist Benjamin Forster with his 'reading through' (2015) project that invites active participation from the reader to discern words made up of individual letters interspersed with the existing text on any chosen web page. In the praxis of *writing as dancing* I deliberately chose to work with the screen of my laptop as studio space, and the printed page as it is able to be held and turned. The decision came from a desire to work with both of my hands at once and engage all parts of my body in the frontal physicality that the laptop demands. I was also interested in working with focus; writing energetically into the world, rather than a constant downward gazing. As Barbara Bolt argues in her work on Heidegger's concept of 'handling', the interface with materials and process is central to the ""sight" through which we come to know how to

⁹ See "The Jew's Daughter" for an experience of this hypertext reading, where the page remains the same while the text constantly changes depending on where you click. <http://judisdaid.com/thejewdaughter/#>

paint, to dance or to write” (2004). This commitment to working with a limited palette of screen and keyboard options meant the energetic interaction with keys and words was central in the process of improvisation and response.

This score of my body together with my laptop has been a constant across this research, and I have developed a mildly obsessive attachment to it as my portable studio. I took it everywhere, to workshops that demanded only paper and pencil, arguing that working with both hands and engaging with the tips of ten fingertips accessed touch receptors differently (there are 3000 on each fingertip, a reference I often begin teaching dance improvisation classes with) and provoked a more active physical engagement and quality of attention. “I begin from my fingers and then follow my interest in a way that is intellectual and physical and everything-all-at-once” I said in an interview with artist-scholar Vahri McKenzie (2015), continuing that the fingers “are kind of faraway but they’re the most closely, for me, associated with reception and feedback process”. The activation of fingertips in the process of *writing as dancing* is not incidental to the practice, it is a big part of the way the method is enacted. “People often say I look like a conductor (when I dance) ...I’m very interested in conducting space and energy and time and interruption...and yes I do think that has a direct implication on thinking, and reverse” (ibid).

The transference of process and energetic state onto the screen of my laptop is applied with the same urgency and amplification of attention central to my dance practice. I write in the muscle and tone of it, into compressed spaces that are each like small performances, a solo of perpetual segues. At first, thinking of the screen as studio helped to allay fears of the words ‘trapping’ the dancer or the dance, as I wrote fiercely and freely inside *The State of Dancingness*. Of course, as the content increasingly arose in a re-readable stability of text, I noticed a propensity to resist or to delay fixity. The decision-making that remains visible on the page long after you have changed your mind asks much of a dancer whose specialisation has been improvised solo performance for near twenty years. In writing I worked with the same tools as I do in solo improvisation; practicing acute perception, heightening associational response, increasing range of energetic and compositional states, and honing receptivity through accessing physical imagination. I applied the same practice of becoming acutely aware and responsive to emergent content as it arises in performance to the practice of writing. Improvisation is an emergent form by its very process and this project of transparency is a pressured place; locating the practitioner as both an agent of form and a host of not-knowing.

I am interested in accessing the liminal consciousness of the dancing body. I find that in improvisation it is possible for the gap to close between the body and its language (signified and signifier becoming one?). Because the dance is of the dancer, it can most explicitly reveal her subjective reality, the body in that moment. (Crisp, 2002)

All solo dance improvisation is creative non-fiction. The performer *is* the performance. This doctoral work has been primarily undertaken as a solo. I have been accompanied by the works of solo artists; poets/playwrights/novelists/philosophers singer songwriters/sound artists/visual artists/ theatre makers, and of course, dancers. The solo voice. Specifically, the female solo voice. *Writing as dancing* 'performed' by the dancer writing in words, is a 'solo for two', or a duet for one, where both dancer and writer are engaged in simultaneous process.

Where this research departs from its dance precedents and alumni is in the premise to work deliberately to enable the written word to stand as the solo, not as response, accompaniment, provocation, resonance, or even companion piece, but in and of itself, the dancing and the dance, in literary form. Current work of note that has been helpful in unpacking my own methodology includes artist-scholar and practitioners in the field. Alys Longley's 'movement initiated writing' disrupts the disembodied language of academia in her scholarly texts to "unsettle the notion that methods of documentation are about taming and containing creative practices in tidy, conventional forms" (2013, p. 77). Diane Reid's work in screen-based dance looks "...for reconfigurations of language to undo its form, dismantle its choreography and maroon it in my peculiarities...playing with performing writing as something not separate from my practice but as a dance practice in itself (2016, p. 103). Helen Herbertson's choreographic work is generated from a period of "deep diving kind of writing, quite poetic" (2010, p. 143) informed by the writing workshops of Jenny Kemp. In *writing as dancing* I work with the State of Dancingness to access emergent content that is intentionally pressed into embodied texts and fictions through attention to a process of responsive physical imagination. A solo dance practice that is experienced through the act of *writing as dancing*.

A multitude of improvisation scores for *writing as dancing* have been thoroughly engaged:

1. Writing self into dancing
2. Dancing self into writing

3. Generating energetic states to inhabit dancing/writing; focus as a) surface of the body, b) internal, c) external, d) beyond, e) both internal and external at once.
4. Delaying dancing by writing into the desire to move
5. Practicing existing response scores 1- 6 (solo for two, ensemble, trio, quartet, line, timing, response)¹⁰
6. Writing the life of a movement. Of a line. Of a thought.
7. Writing as long distance response writing
8. Trialling 'continuous writing altered daily' ¹¹
9. Collecting and catching words, ways, moves, fragments of feeling.

In attempting to actualize these scores for *writing as dancing* I also understand that improvisation “remains a naïve mystery despite its post-modern credentials” (Morrish, 2017) The ‘mystery’ of the unknown element in improvisation is partly what attracts me to the form - there is suspense, there is potential, and there is always the chance to choose your own ending. Thus I have been challenged by my paradoxical (naïve) desire to ‘maintain the mystery’ while inviting emergent revelation.

SHE FIELDS: IMPROVISATION

Through leaky excessiveness disciplinary bounds are broken, as improvisation is understood here as un/disciplinary practice that proceeds toward a productive (un)knowing. (Midleow, 2017)

Dance and dancers are articulate sites and authorities of lived experience (Albright, 1997; Phelan, 1998; Pollitt, 2002, 2017). Dance improvisation hones and makes visible this lived experience compressed by the simultaneous embodiment of roles as both performer and choreographer in, as Dempster argues, “a multivocal and potentially disruptive force which undermines the unity of phallogocentric discourse” (1988, p. 24)

My MA research centred on improvisation as performance method, and while here I have drawn from

¹⁰ See my 2002 MA work “Accumulated response in live solo dance improvisation” for a chapter that details these scores.

¹¹ After Yvonne Rainer’s “Continuous project altered daily” (1969)

it here for necessary context, the thesis provides a lengthy discussion of lineage of practice, liveness, hierarchies and structures (Pollitt, 2001). Importantly as it pertains to this body of research, improvisation enacts a “double moment in which performing bodies are both objects of the representation and subjects of their own experience” (Albright, p. 13). This double embodiment is similarly experienced in the act of *writing as dancing*. “Can we actually learn to see the dancer’s bodily experience?” (ibid).

Hence, I situate the practice of solo improvisation and hone in on the specific scores that pertain to writing as dancing as “making visible of contingencies or instabilities, as a fostering of differences and disagreements, as transgressions of that upon which the promise of the work itself depends and so a disruption of the move toward containment and stability” (Kaye, p. 23).

In March 1999, New York based improviser Jennifer Monson made a resounding impact on me when I participated in her workshop at Antistatic and subsequently performed in her work *Rumpsnack* at Dancehouse in Melbourne. After moving in a sustained energetic state for a long period of time, Monson directed us to be still and, in that expansive moment, I experienced a range of dancing that surprised and invigorated me. It was a grand, unfashionable and philosophical moment, and no doubt a culmination of a range of contemporaneous events but I still see that expansion in stillness as a seminal shift in redefining my ongoing relationship to dance. A visit to New York followed, where I was privy to the personal practice of Monson and other seminal artists challenging form including DD Dorvillier, KJ Holms and Sara Rudner.

Language, like the body, is in a continual state of becoming undone by change, association and application. Thus the practice of dance improvisation has many definitions and interpretations relative to time, place and situation. Dana Reitz says of improvisation that the word “doesn’t indicate necessarily the work that’s involved...it might take me two years to develop a structure, so then to call it improv feels like I’ve just done it that day” (1991, p. 34).

It is now much more widely accepted that it requires rigorous preparation through practice and demands a thorough knowledge of its subject in order to be ‘spontaneous’. Dance improvisation is practised not despite formal dance techniques but is in fact layered and embodied with and within

them. Dance improvisation as I practice it does not seek to avoid or escape previous experience but embodies historical evidence and memory in a non-linear evocation of the present.

Quantum theory tells us that after each action there is a moment, a place, a world where many choices for the next movement simultaneously coexist...In quantum theory, the term for this acceptable coexistence of mutually exclusive possibilities is 'a coherent superposition of states' (DeSpain, 1994, p. 59).

Dance improvisation applies immediate feedback received in the experience of performance to generate live movement responses. By constantly focusing on changing tasks within the improvisation, a heightened sense of awareness is generated. To receive this feedback requires acute and embodied attention.

The project of connecting the body/mind and presence is magnified in artist Deborah Hay, an exponent of the Judson processes who aligns her practice directly and simply with perception. "My perception is creativity" (Hay in Refshauge, p. 63). Her work attempts to go beyond the purely physical body, attempting to awaken and expand the danced experience by perceiving and responding to visible and invisible feedback in performance. Hay's concern with the present, recognizes the fact that it is perpetually transient:

That's my relationship to dancing. It is my practice of playing awake. Using my whole body- using all of this to be awake and present and changing, not fixed (Ibid, p. 64).

Anna Halprin too was active in breaking down the division between art and life by collapsing the divide between performer and audience and between performer and the everyday person through her philosophy intersecting anatomical explorations (influenced by Margaret H'Doubler and Mabel Todd). In the 1950s and 1960s, Halprin was instrumental in collapsing the tradition of the proscenium arch by challenging the role of the audience and revealing processes that were normally hidden. Forging an interdisciplinary and task-oriented relationship to movement in performance was a central idea that fed directly into the experiments of Judson Dance Theatre through the people that came to work with her, including Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti and Trisha Brown among others. Simone Forti, who came to New York in 1960 after working with Halprin in the mid-1950s, says she "provided a laboratory for exploring the natural interface of body, perception and imagination" (Forti, 1999, p. 14). Halprin developed 'scores' as loose structures to house and organise improvisations, a practice that continues

to influence generation after generation of dance artists. As Halprin's work with improvisation became more and more centred on relating theatre experience to life experience she "became convinced that each performer could only essentially perform him or herself" (Halprin, p. 112). It is important to note here that both Cunningham and Cage went to work with Halprin on her dance 'deck' and that the influence of that exchange is oft-missed in historical retelling.

Provocatively Katie Duck writes "The institutions place improvisation as a subject with a mix of aims-objectives in order to protect their economic structures, their class systems, their ever so tired aesthetic values – those of which have recently dwindled to pedophile stands and abusive behaviour" (2009). This was written ten years ago, prior to the advent of the #MeToo campaign which spawned a number of revelations and statements from within dance circles internationally.

This is not the fault of the dancers, dance makers or the people who want to use dance as a means to gather. It is the fault of the dance institutions, critics, dramaturgs and academics who have not gotten the message that improvisation is the methodology we have evolved to and either they have to learn to swim or get out of the water! (Ibid)

David Zambrano "believes in improvisation as an art form, and choreography as a vehicle to further develop improvisation" (Zambrano in Zambrano, Tompkins & Nelson, p. 30) and William Forsyth says the "purpose of improvisation is to defeat choreography, to get back to what is primarily dancing." (Forsythe, p. 24). I say to my students that improvisation is the practice of dancing. Trusting this readiness and agency of response through the solo body made me deeply curious as to the outcome of The State of Dancingness in navigating other platforms, or as Cixous puts it "The delight of painlessly foreigning oneself." Hélène Cixous (2016). In working with the methodology of dance improvisation to physically engage as a writer I employ a multi-model attention and double embodiment of dancer and writer, "to be two, as two, to be the other with myself to always have the helping hand of a supplement, to never be enclosed in the cell of the proper-to-myself, of the national, to dispose of all means of transport, to overflow at will." (ibid)

In my early research via *the response project*, I charted my own solo practice which is helpful in reviewing as it illustrates both the precursor and the history of tended noticing in my body seminal to the development of *writing as dancing*:

To pinpoint exactly what I respond to is impossible as the avenue of response is in continual a state of flux. The moment I identify what it is, the response shifts somewhere else, even if it is in the shifting of my attention toward that response. It is a slippery definition but one that is weighted in the experience of movement. What moves me is the desire to be elastic inside my limbs, to travel stealthily under my skin, to map and reveal the plots or fantasy, thoughts, reason and experience weighting the world I inhabit through a series of different quickfire impulses inspired by any one moment. Physically, I trust thousands of both real and imagined internal sensors and proprioceptors to puncture and investigate avenues of movement, jostling with unexpected hyperlinks to ideas, muscle-memory and meaning that surprise and trip me up into dances unplanned...subtle weight shifts in my body, a ricochet effect from the smallest of adjustments...maybe to see the length of the opposite direction and send myself hurtling to the ends of that space. A chain reaction follows a swallowing of the situation, the energy in the room, the expectation, noticing the vulnerability of the exchange and trying to open it out further to allow more choices to challenge my performance. I experience each small death or transition as the life of a movement changes or ends, travel along an internal rhythm/dialogue/monologue, communicate with other dancers, the audience and musicians, traverse the space/mood/music, and juggle the occasional eruption of an idea or series of movements that intercept a line of seemingly unprovoked thought/dance.

I respond to a multiplicity of sources, compositionally and intuitively cultivating an awareness that is reflexive but aims to travel openly immersed in the moment as it unfolds...not in an esoteric kind of way but in a tangible location of energy and presence that allows people watching to chart the surprises, undercuts and developments. (Pollitt 2001, p. 67)

SHE TURNS: EMERGENT NARRATIVE AND THE QUEERING OF CORNERS

The Second Woman's repetitive structure points not only to the labour of immobile relational dynamics but also to the labour of improvisation, emotional spontaneity and

the appearance of contingency. The Second Woman speaks to a history of women's work as emotion work. (Breckon, 2018)

In my confirmation of candidature document written over three years ago, I proclaimed that my research was not about narrative content; it was almost immediately afterwards that the content drivingly emerged as narrative. It arrived as an avalanche.

My introduction to doctoral life commenced with profound emotional upheaval. The initial rendering of my research centred on a question from Dr Maggi Phillips; "Why write when the dance says more than words?" My conversations with her over the last decade were central to the honing of my ideas and planned doctoral challenge to her assertion. Maggi sadly passed away shortly after our first official supervision meeting. Collapsing the living structure of my offence, and passing through a period of provoked defence in response to her death, what resulted was a recalibration of knowing, expectation, visibility and responsibility. From this grief, combined with the simultaneous rupturing of my marriage and associated questioning of identity, arose the beginnings of thinking about a 'radical impermanence'. The fact that I am a female artist with three children and multiple responsibilities constantly responsive to questions of compression and time due to personal circumstances impacts and informs my work and thinking and this is neither hidden nor disengaged from my findings. I am interested in poetry as real life; a way of being in a tangled messy process best described by Albright as a continual process of 'becoming and becoming undone' (1997).

Paramount to the idea of embodiment in dance is that multiple ideolectic histories locate in a single body through the accumulated influence and distinct lineage of practice. This lineage is provoked still further by the physical lineage of a maternal body already inscribed with a particular lived experience. In performative ethnography, the site of research manifests in the 'home' of the body (Hay 2000, Butler, 1990, Grosz, 1994, Spry 2011). In questioning my own 'home', I am drawn to interrogate my rapidly changing location in moving from a thoroughly heteronormative homelife toward a demolition of structures that is literally re-framing (or unhiding) my identity. "The person is thrown out of the normal groove of their life and whilst they stumble, they also have to carry a new weight of feeling, feeling that threatens to overwhelm them" (Winterson, 1996, p. 113). The research has been undertaken simultaneous to this individual becoming. *She was written into hiding. Hidden into writing.* As an improviser I have long practised and assimilated disruption and difficulty into my work through a choreographic practice of associational shifts and a perpetually interrupted pace. The disruption and

difficulty of the experience of this reorientation in my life however, was less easily integrated in the practice:

Discomfort is a feeling of disorientation: one's body feels out of place, awkward, unsettled. I know that feeling too well, the sense of out-of-place-ness and estrangement involves an acute awareness of the surface of one's body, which appears as surface, when one cannot inhabit the social skin, which is shaped by some bodies, and not others. (Ahmed, 2013, p. 148)

My resistance to naming the work comes from a desire to remain in the anticipatory state, where the avenue for emergent content is unfixed. The destabilization of identity in not fitting within the heteronormative standards I had agreed to in marriage forced the naming of many things. As Mimi Marinucci points out "the recognition that the standards established by contemporary western categories of gender, sex, and sexuality are socially constructed does not eliminate the impact of these categories" (2010, p. 35).

In turning away from the expectation of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich, 1980, Groez in Braidotti, 2003, Butler, 1997) I too found my body "shaped by the assumption that a body 'must' orient itself towards some objects and not others... as a congealed history of past approaches, (Ahmed, 2013, p. 145). This research demands a commitment to stay longer inside each portal of association, to push past the punctuated habit of constant departure into a practice of sustaining states that are able to be made visible through writing.

An emotional, passionate woman isn't a distraction in the academic world. She is exactly what that world needs (O'Donnell, 2015)

SHE BETRAYS: A POETIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Mostly, movement disappears, it marks the passing of time. Movement is both sign and symptom that all presence is haunted by disappearance and absence. This stepping into invisibility of both movement and presence generates a new nervousness within the project of writing dances and writing on dances. (Lepecki, 2004, p. 125)

To present my final solo of this research as a novella felt in some sense a betrayal of my own form and at the same time it challenged me to enter the dance and The State of Dancingness more acutely than ever before. Juliette Mapp asks, “why should we, as dancers and choreographers, strive to communicate with words, rather than trust in movement alone? What if we did not utilize language at all?” (2014, p. 8)

I refer to the notion of poetics with an understanding of it as a distinct field of study (Baker, ed, 1996) but enlist the term’s colloquial usefulness, borrowing its provocation of perceptual states, which is in turn provoked by a poetic distillation of *writing as dancing*. The rethinking of movement, sound and the body carried out by Halprin, Cage, and Rainer among others, revolutionized music and dance, and opened a space for dance as ‘text’. Cixous’ interrogation of the potential of a ‘State of Drawingness’ prompted my thinking that embodied knowledges can bring the work of the author to the fore, in front of the author. As Della Pollock describes, the ability to create is more than the sum of the author themselves;

ENTANGLEMENT, RAVISHMENT, LOVE, WRITING: WHAT I WANT TO CALL PERFORMATIVE WRITING DOES NOT PROJECT A SELF, EVEN A RADICALLY DESTABILIZED ONE, AS MUCH AS A RELATION OF BEING AND KNOWING THAT CUTS BACK AND FORTH ACROSS MULTIPLE “DIVISIONS” AMONG SELVES, CONTEXTS, AFFILIATIONS (1998, P. 86)

There is an extensive body (bodies) of knowledge in the field of text and dance; Meg Stuart, Pina Bausch, Meredith Monk, Wendy Houston, Carol Brown, Lloyd Newson, Andrew Morrish and Jonathan Burrows being some of the foremost precedents of dancers working with text reflexively and creatively within dance. I acknowledge the work of these artists and the work of the Judson artists in making this kind of research possible. Dancers for the most part however, are typically silent in their own practice, and it is this silence I am most interested in. Through developing a practice of *writing as dancing* I hope to contribute to “redefining silence as a form of agency” (Spry, p. 500).

The body also has been a site of much research in dance and performance studies and in this project I limit my scope to interrogating the form of solo improvised dance and its potential to frame and inform writing processes through capturing emergent content. While studies into the phenomenological body and the potential of dancers as experts in ‘movement’ are numerous, led by the thinking of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, the voice of the individual dancer is rarer and more likely found in the personal archives

of individual artists such as Maxine Sheets-Johnstone who coined the phrase “thinking-in-moving”, (1966), Simone Forti (1974), Deborah Hay, Rosalind Crisp, Vida Midgelow (2013) and Alys Longley (2009).

As artist and academic Barbara Bolt similarly explains in her lecture on Heidegger (2011)¹², I conducted this research as a dance artist in a practice-led project, not as a philosopher or poet, though poetry was an outcome, and phenomenological and feminist philosophies of embodiment and becoming indeed underpin my practice. Bolt elucidates Heidegger’s concept of ‘handlability’ of tools as being “co-responsible (along with other elements) for bringing forth something into appearance” (2010, p. 52). This synergy is a given dynamic in my own work where the systems in dance directly move the writing and vice versa. Milech and Schilo (2013) further point to Bolt’s relationship to process in ‘finding of a path between vision and writing, a coming to write “like I do with painting” (p. 241).

POETIC LANGUAGE IS ALSO A LANGUAGE OF IMPROVISATION AND INTENTION. THE INTENTION PROVIDES THE FIELD FOR INQUIRY AND IMPROVISATION IS THE MEANS OF INQUIRING. OR, TO PHRASE IT ANOTHER WAY, THE ACT OF WRITING IS A PROCESS OF IMPROVISATION WITHIN A FRAMEWORK (FORM) OF INTENTION. (ALLSOP, 2015, P. 58)

The work of Barbara Browning and Martina L Young offers a closer rendering of the questions I am asking in the research of *writing as dancing*. Browning is a writer and academic who teaches in the Department of Performance Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts, NYU. She wrote, “The Gift” (2017) a novel that included still images of vimeo hand dances that she writes are ‘semi-fictitiously credited to the narrator’). There is password protected vimeo link to the 9 dances that feature throughout the novel “The hand dances were digitally mediated intimacies” (p. 221) On the back cover of the novel Chris Kraus writes “Browning brilliantly synthesizes her work as a scholar and an artist into a single identity, becoming at once a master monologist, storyteller and historian of her amorphous tribe”.

Working in the liminal space of truth and fiction, Browning writes with embodied presence- her work literally inviting correspondence from the reader to continue the dance (that she will likely return with an amateur ukulele response!). My interest is in her integration of autobiography and fiction, but the

¹² Also published as *Heidegger Reformed*, IB Taurus, 2011.

point of difference again arises in that her work as a dancer she self-describes as amateur dancer.

Young is a professional dancer, and my fortuitous meeting with her early in 2018 led to an exchange of ideas where she sent me an early manuscript with the term ‘dancing on the page’:

Angelitos Negros: A Poetic Phenomenological Writing is the second in a series of creative literary explorations of performance choreography. Not intended to function as strict choreographic documentation or archival preservation, it is purely, as noted above, a piece of experimental and creative writing,—what I call “dancing on the page” in order to explore the poetics of an embodied dance language, to unfold into other dimensions of the danced moment, and to conjure images in the mind of the reader in order that the reader experience the dance in another way. (1996, p. 10).

This work by Young, is based on Donald McKayle's 1972 solo “Angelitos Negros” from his ballet suite, *Songs of the Disinherited*, which she explored “as a [piece of] experimental creative writing; it is informed by my journal notes from the time of my apprenticeship in 1972 and the danced experiences themselves, spanning over 20 years” (p. 9). In another of Young’s early written works “Force Field: A Performance Work in Language” (1995) she names herself a ‘choreoathor’ and I include the following as a long quotation as it is an important voice in an early and different rendering of the potential of *writing as dancing*.

This paper is a literary re-creation of a 10-minute contemporary dance performance piece. It is the first in a series of creative writings in which the choreauthor's intent is to inspire the page with a poetics of the dancing image through the use of a physical language of the body in motion.

Through the selection of a singular, commissioned work – *Force Field* – this paper represents a purely creative exploration and inquiry into a literary voice, where the page itself becomes a field of perception – comparable to the stage or performance arena – and where words, like dancers, embody the event.

This "dancing on the page" is necessarily devoid of the critical voice. However, through this process, several implications have surfaced: the issue of criticism, how dance is spoken and written about and how this acts as a powerful determinant upon public perception of the art form(s); the issue of documentation and preservation, whereas the artist assumes a vital role as purviewer and therefore active shaper of the perception of not only the work but also of the act of dancing; and finally, the educational significance of using one art form to explore content, meaning and the nature of another art form, resulting in a deepened understanding of the danced moment.

The choreauthor set the task of speaking of the dancing act as a poetical act; it is a reminding and re-constituting of the body as poetic matter. The result is a query inside of the body's own language, traveling the inner landscape and outer layers of moving matter, from bone to flesh and finding words that breathe, take shape, move space with rhythm and presence. (p. 10)

Both Browning and Young are from American Indian descent, and the integration of their academic and artistic practice is paramount to their work. Young's work in her recent SWAN project (2012) has led to many published volumes, integrating story, mythology and poetic explanations of the dance, but this early rendering of 'dancing on the page' is an alignment to my work.

The curtain lifts slowly, like an eyelid, revealing an opaque, fog-white grayfield.

Tiiiiiiiiimmmme floats hovers suspends: a body emerges visible. Stepping out from the dense nothingness, her chiseled skin pushes the thick air, while

S	w	l	d	o
T	hl	a	v	
R	l	g	w	e
E	t	h	n	r
A	e	t		h
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(1995, p. 1)

I look further still, to understand the potential of *writing as dancing* not as response but as the work itself. This leads me to the poets and writers who espouse minimal art/life divide in their work. Helene Cixous, Eileen Myles, Maggi Nelson, Jeanette Winterson, Mary Ruefle, Mary Fallon, Patricia Leavy, Ali Smith, Kate Tempest. All of these authors were female, at first by happenstance, and then with citational purpose. And artists of influence, Lilly Blue's method of writing backwards, Cathy Cullis, and her literal stitching of words driven by interest of the "possibilities of poetry-minded improvising" (2015), Ruth Hadlow whose online 'Patternbook' (2009) opens poetic ways of engaging with her textile based work (2009). Themes emerge that draw disparate threads thus a methodology of assemblage and improvisation is central across these modes of practice, as in my own.

Though performance poetry has its own history and weight that could well contribute to this discussion, I am most interested in the 'sound' of dancing in written form and the 'unspoken' of the dancer, and focus here on the potential and performance of dancers as writers. In writing within a State of Dancingness I am attempting to write what arises at the locus of form and not-knowing in order to better hear. As writer Winterson offers, "When we write we offer the silence as much as the story. Words are part of the silence that can be spoken" (2011, p. 8). Scholar Patricia Leavy adds that "poetry is a form that itself brings attention to silence" (2009, p. 79) and my work looks also to her experiments in using poetry as method as a precedent to my own emergent theories of editing as a choreographic process, as "a research strategy challenges the fact-fiction dichotomy and offers a form for the evocative presentation of data" (2015, p.78). Regarding my project toward embodied texts, dancer-scholar Simon Ellis adds that "Practice-led research also affords the artist-scholar the opportunity to authenticate fiction by allowing it to be present without causing an epistemological tremor" (2005, p. 137).

As a dancer and dance scholar, I come to writing armed with the assumed knowledge of embodied practice as starting point to any creative endeavour. In this practice-led research, it has been this embodied state of assumed knowledge of dance that has underpinned both the site of practice and driven the questions posed by the investigation of *writing as dancing*. In discerning the processes that are inherent in the practice of dancing and its continuation into an embodied process of writing, the

closest possible existing frames to which the work may belong are Performance Writing and, for its tactility, the artist's book.

Meeting poet John Hall at Performing, Writing in New Zealand in early 2017 re-invigorated my interest in the Performance Writing course that ran between 1994-2004 at Dartington college of Arts, of which Hall was instrumental in establishing. Working alongside Hall at the time were seminal artist-writers Ric Allsop and Caroline Bergvall, whose continuing work has made room for the work I have undertaken to be housed. Interdisciplinary in practice, Performance Writing "has drawn on and attracted those who find themselves on the margins of disciplines and practices, often defining their own practice as in contrast to or in flight from the current conventions of their discipline." (Hall, 2013, p. 51)

In unpacking the limitations of interdisciplinarity, Hall acknowledges "Any traditionally established discipline comes fully equipped with a body of "theory", consisting often of an established canon of reference works and authors, a critical and analytical tradition (which is probably also canonical)" (Ibid, p. 192). Part of this canon includes the Fluxus artists, sound artists, language poets and performance artists. Amanda Stewart writes of working with sound and writing that "the two forms (written and aural) exist in parallel, integrally related but also distinct from each other. I'm interested in disjunctions between different fields of inscription (aural, written, electronic) and modes of distinction and memory" (1998). Her use of the word 'parallel' is useful in relation to my solo dance practice *and writing as dancing*, and my solo dance practice *as writing as dancing*.

Dance scholar Andre Lepecki further makes clear the difficulty: "Before an absent present and an absent movement, the problem dance puts before writing is of how movement and words can be placed under arrest. Dance confronts us with the impossibility of such a project" (2004, p. 129). Unless you want to be arrested. There is a physicality in writing that renders the idea of a separation from words as impossible as a separation from my dancing body; "Regardless of how far I journey into another field, the dancer's insight remains my source. It is the nth degree body that allows me to jump the fence between interdisciplinary practices..." (Mafe-Keane, 2004,). Here I again provoke the potential of a dancer-as-writer as able to render the right questions, as able to dive into an unfixable body of thought through *writing as dancing* as rigorously and immediately as in live performance or "to find a translation of form to make myself clear" (Winterson, 1996, p. 105)

In improvised dance performance, the practised accessibility and readiness of inhabiting the physical imagination makes it possible to feel like I am saying everything, all at once while ultimately retaining an ambiguity of meaning. In *writing as dancing*, although I engage the same sense of physical imagination, I am limited by a language that so far has not let me say all of it all at once. In such impossibility there is tension and trial and certainly a desire for increasing risk in terms of transparency that has me demanding more of presence and becoming increasingly curious about 'content'. ~~she w~~
~~a s w r i t t e n o u t o f h i d i n g~~. Leavy's work opens distinct pathways into understanding dancing as thinking, as a leading contemporary in arts-based research. She provides a precedent of working responsively with collected, interviews, text and experience to form a 'third' voice (2009) that amplifies the unsayable through poetry. It is this 'third' voice that emerges from *writing as dancing* in the written merger of dancer and writer. As dancer Rebecca Hilton suggests on the potential of the transposition of ideas as I am attesting to "I think maybe that's part of what being a good dancer is." (2014, p. 9)

Much of the nexus between drawing and dancing, visual arts and dance, and dance on film has been explored through the work of artists such as Twyla Tharp, Meg Stewart, Yvonne Rainer and William Forsyth to name a few. My question is: what of the connection specifically between dance and writing, the process of moving through, of following threads in a choreography of immediate creating and editing, thinking and doing, performing thought? (Phillips, 2013; Merritt, 2015). Wendy Peron identifies the skill of dancers in coming to writing, highlighting their "highly developed sense of rhythm and phrasing. Then, their ability to communicate, as they do on stage" (Peron in Tobias, 2006).

SHE NOTATES: AN INDEX OF IMPOSSIBILITY



FIGURE 2 EXCERPT FROM THE DANCER IN YOUR HANDS

My experimentation with a naive notation of the keyboard as collaborator began in the process of slowing myself down. The decisions between the pressing of letters, the discovery of making room with a tiny army of forward slash markers that leaned toward the next, the possibility of an elbow < and then of two arms < > gave opening to writing as dancing differently. I am not a coder, composer, nor a visual artist, but I work well with mistakes, which was how I found my way to the beating of $^wv^v^v$. The lineage of experimental poetry and sound score artists makes room for a dancer as “The page is something you pass through” (Hall, 2015, p. 84)

As an undergraduate dance student, I remember learning Benesh Notation; a system of writing choreography on sheets of lined paper like music scores. When on exchange at London Contemporary

Dance School in 1992, I learnt baroque choreography from pages of notation – a dance arriving from the paper in hand. As a group of young dancers we found it restrictive and laborious – both the writing and the retrieval of dance via notation. It was when working with the limitation of screen as studio, that I began using the naive symbols available to me on the keyboard and keenly felt the memory of that decision-making twenty-five years prior.

My relationship with systems has long been vexed – my screens now say not backed up for 472 days. It's on the list. However, my library is a passionately curated creative work, collected in a rigorously improvised capacity moving from association to association in the way I dance. In the way I write. List of the creative works I have experienced during this time are integrated in the bibliography, and in a way it is its own poem. I have variously captured words on devices of all imagining. Including in a folder named unhelpfully "PhD notes" in which there are hundreds of items, docs, images and PDF's. Books, articles, journals, scores, songs, interviews, artist pages, poems, manifestos, essays, scripts, artworks, statements, web pages, Facebook feeds, You Tube presentations, dissertations, exegesis, lists, emails to self and from others, program notes, late-night notes written on my phone. A niche library. With weeks away from submission I ordered five new books, had 98 tabs open on my screen each with worlds waiting, and discovered what will be a seminal text in this area due for publication this year. Reading has been central and unending in the years it has taken to arrive at print point. When the entire back catalogue of Movement Research papers I ordered arrived in a box on my doorstep, I saw nothing out of the ordinary. It is likely true I cannot remember most of the words, and that my endnote system is like a guest list compiled after the party in order to see who was there. With the conversation so crowded and so dense, I have trusted in my process of delay in real time to see what stuck, who was still there at the end of all of it. Who was still listening and who I could still hear with ears ringing. Notably these are women who stayed with me, stayed over. Yvonne Rainer. Helene Cixous. Jeanette Winterson.

The way we go about things practically, the way, when we are producing, we are also living, has little value in academic research paradigms. Questioning how we go about things in terms of the intimacy and potential creativity of everyday experiencing is not encouraged: it is deemed as belonging to the so-called private or personal realm, not to the official realm or to any research that might be publicly funded. This ideological separation of the so-called public and private aspects of existence, of micro-

experiences, sensations and perceptions from publicly validated products, is a way of resolving a paradox that forecloses on creative and potentially subversive possibilities. Doings are tolerated for what they produce, not for their being the basis of experiencing or 'intensely living'. (Gardner, 2012, p. 147)

The dancer in your hands was my answer to chaos. It *called* for order. Suddenly I wanted an index system like Esther Anatolitis's, or Umberto Eco's. Like Forti, "I think that improvisation was really beginning to pain me. I can remember saying that my inner ear could no longer take those limitless seas" (1977, p. 32). Score became vital. The State of Dancing and 'radical impermanence' enabled a particular listening that resolved in scores with definitive borders, a ladder of scored sections I could hold onto when everything was falling apart, they run in order, to a time that does not go back, except in the constant reference to turning. This all made sense...until I tore it apart from the spine in the need for room. And in that moment, the work emerged as scores in their own right, as works independent of the whole. And the narrative became unfixed with the potential to make new markers. Micro-stories that each call to be written in anew. She breathes.

SHE PROPOSES: *WRITING AS DANCING, BACKGROUND*

Words may make these journeying strands seem definitive but they are rough tracks subject to the malleability of surface and force (Phillips, 2014, p. 289)

Writing as dancing arose through the many choreographic forms of *the response project* as I became increasingly attuned to the performative states I embodied in the process of writing. Through the development of over a decade of dance scripts, response texts, critical reviews and related publishing projects I became aware of *writing as dancing* as a methodology that could be applied to each of these forms.

Writing as dancing privileges the dancer as an authority in accessing and attending to embodied knowledge. With multiple outcomes evidenced, *writing as dancing* is a methodology for the production of embodied texts, and a process that can be transferred across disciplines. *Writing as dancing* elicits the acute interplay of the relationship between the dancer and the dancing to excavate and 'unhide' emergent content.

In 2008 I began trialling my responsive editing methods via energetic scores of compression, momentum and attention to create micro-poems and dance scripts from the distillation of large amounts of text. The agency of editing and erasure to amplify decision-making and content has since developed in my work. *Re-Render* (2008) featured 40 titles of choreographic works by Australian choreographer Chrissie Parrott displayed on the ground as a 'ladder' of words which acted as triggers to her unfolding (improvised) performance. For this work I wrote an accompanying libretto telling two histories of the same person – one real and one imagined – which we performed together side by side and it was from here the idea of dancer as writer and *writing as dancing* more clearly emerged. In 'The Distance Project' (2009) I worked on a choreography of editing reams of gathered correspondence between myself and collaborator Paea Leach on side-by-side laptops with writer Anica Boulanger-Mashberg distilling 30,000 words into 60 in a limited edition artist's book, *distance in residence*, (Pollitt, 2009) to produce a series of micro poems:

Perth / Berlin

associate this, you fuck
this is writing in my own figure of time
people could die from this, without boundaries
out of character and under water

I continued this process of choreographic editing with Rhiannon Newton via the 'Checkpoint Solo,' (2010) created with scores of writing accrued over the distance of a year written between my home in Western Australia and hers in Israel, with the eventuating work performed at Judson Church in New York. As the company 'co-works' Paea Leach and I created the *Beast* series which has been performed in various incarnations (duet, large ensemble, quintet), of which all versions included an artist's book publication of distilled text garnered during the creative process.

Those were hands she could
have been lost in (*we cannot
remember who wrote this*).

FIGURE 3 QUIET BEAST, ARTIST BOOKLET, POLLITT AND LEACH, 2011

My choreographic work 'divided' (2013) while a successful performance, profoundly failed in planned initial renderings of *writing as dancing* but was seminal in provoking this inquiry toward a doctorate for a more extensive trial period of embodied and sustained attention. Truth be told, I imagined I could action the idea of *writing as dancing* as immediately as I had visioned it, and was confronted both by the depth of failing, and the urgency in wanting to try again. The entire content of my initial attempt at writing my 'novella' amounted to a few lines:

incremental sabotage Incremental separation incremental sabotage Incremental separation
incremental sabotage Incremental separation incremental sabotage Incremental separation
incremental sabotage Incremental separation incremental sabotage Incremental separation
incremental sabotage Incremental separation incremental sabotage Incremental separation
incremental sabotage Incremental separation incremental sabotage Incremental separation
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incremental sabotage Incremental separation incremental sabotage Incremental separation
incremental sabotage Incremental separation incremental sabotage Incremental separation
incremental sabotage Incremental separation incremental sabotage Incremental separation

Though a clear clue in form and energetic state, it was far from the expectation of complete novella I had pre-formatted. Here I look to Bolt's assertion "In everyday life we don't always welcome the

misfires and bad performances. In the creative arts and artistic research, on the other hand, it is these “misfires” that become the source of innovation and movement. This is the “stuff” of research” (2016 p. 136) Certainly the failure of *divided* triggered a project far bigger than imagined.

And so, triggered by this significant interruption in building on these systems of response, I arrived in the middle of a new and perpetually unfolding work the *comma piece* that emerged in various iterations, including as a tiny chapbook called *This book has elbows* presented at the Performing, Writing Symposium in NZ in early 2017 (See Section III, Part 1 for discussion of the *comma piece*).



FIGURE 4 THIS BOOK HAS ELBOWS, MICRO-BOOK USED IN PERFORMANCE OF SHE WRITES LIKE SHE DANCES, BATS THEATRE, NZ, 2017

SHE STAYS: STATES OF DANCINGNESS AND RADICAL IMPERMANENCE

The first – killing the Angel in the House – I think I solved. She died. But the second, telling the truth about my own experiences as a body, I do not think I solved. I doubt that any woman has solved it yet. (Woolf, 1931)

The primary significance of the research is to investigate the potential of dancer-as-writer in generating a series of inter-textual fictions enlivened with a similarly embodied drive, pace and immediacy of the dancer's physicalized imagination. To this end I propose an overarching concept of radical impermanence as a sustaining practice that mobilises the artist across platforms.

"For something to come about something must go away. She hears. She wants to go. She wants to stay...She hangs on to the word word." (Hecq, 2009, p. 25)

In positioning *writing as dancing* I am attempting to uncover and amplify the synchronicities implicit between the writing of poetic text and the performative modality of solo dance improvisation through a theory I am terming radical impermanence. Radical impermanence comes into play with the understanding that each responsive decision made is an investment in the ephemeral moment of 'doing being' as an active commitment to the moment you understand is simultaneously disappearing. Though I discuss this theory through the Buddhist principle of impermanence described by Kittikong, (2015), the context in which I am researching *writing as dancing* is through practice-led expertise in the cultivated attention and honed embodied presence employed in dance improvisation.

Here radical impermanence speaks directly to the notion of documenting the 'unnameable' (Pearlman and Allen, 1999), of transferring attention to create in writing a praxis of energetic states of experience and heightened reception required for and evidenced in improvised dance. With acknowledgment of the vast body of practice-led philosophies of phenomenology and embodiment in text and dance via a range of researcher-practitioners and scholars including Leavy (2009), Lepecki (2004), Hay (1993), Forti (1974), Crisp (2006), Longley (2009), Cameron (2012), Bacon and Midgelow (2014), radical impermanence is an active commitment to the moment you know is leaving. An unambiguous agency of presence. An investment in perpetual departure. A staying with leaving.

Kittikong's "Noting the Self Project" (2014) uses mindfulness to work with a practice of 'noting'. Drawing on Vipassana meditation and Buddhist notions, "Noting enables a performer's body to work to its full capacity in a way that involves less force from mental activities and therefore might reveal personal experiences in an alternative way" (p. 146). Her interest is in expanding the moment of experience as performance to include the audience in accessing a sense of being in the impermanent moment "Until you start noting, you might not realise how much you have been struggling with unwanted aspects of the self's control" (p. 159). Radical impermanence invites the relinquishing of self-generated states to

be attentive to the moment of movement. Aligning with my practice of solo dance improvisation, the attention is in the life of each movement or 'middling' as it arises, to stay in it as it unravels or develops, to keep up with myself. I do not set prior states or themes to write 'about' or conjure, rather I set up scores to practice getting out of my own way, and in that tripping up, arrive in the middle of working with emergent content.

The State of Dancingness propelled an immediacy or response that emerged from a bodily state of improvisatory practice and engagement with physical imagination. Radical impermanence affords me distance from my own judgement in the moment of movement/writing, but expects the technical and compositional skills I embody as a professional dancer and does not discount this. It is not automatic writing. Paradoxically to my movement/typing at speed, it is the practice of deep engagement through radical impermanence which enables a slowing down of the self and enables a dancerly embodiment of content as it emerges. Two things are happening: the emergence of content, and the composing of attention and form. "The condition that is necessary for an individual entering the state of flow is concentration, an intense focus on what he or she is doing" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 8) When he points out that "to move to flow you have to find new challenges" (p. 9), I think it is connected to the urgency of my own dance into writing.

Rosalind Crisp first developed her ongoing project of *d a n s e* in 2005 when I first worked with her in Perth¹³. "Above all, *d a n s e* is interested in change, in impermanence in itself." (Ginot, 2014, p. 23) Through her observations of Crisp in the studio, writer Isabel Ginot has come to understand the "practicing of *d a n s e* means cultivating a certain detachment, a ferocious attention in a given moment, yet also a kind of buoyancy, a consciousness expanding far beyond the self" (Ibid p. 22) Importantly for my research "The specific kind of attention in *d a n s e* does not relate to the body or to particular body parts (even if one kind of listening is indispensable to it), nor to the qualities of the moments being produced. It relates to the emergent process of the moment, its production logic" (Ibid, p. 23). For Crisp, "the movements themselves are less interesting than the attention of the dancer" (2010, p. 25), "even if a movement stops, the paying attention doesn't" (Ibid, p. 28).

¹³ See my 2006 article "The demanding world of Rosalind Crisp: three points of immersion from a sometime inhabitant" in *Brolga* (25) for an in depth discussion of *d a n s e*

The State of Dancingness is an energetic *leaning in* toward middling. It manifests as a sensing of tone and attention before a single decision is enacted. In Erin Manning's *Relationescapes*, she names preacceleration as the imminence of movement moving, the way movement is sensed before it becomes:

Preacceleration refers to the virtual force of movement's taking form. It is the feeling of movement's in-gathering, a welling that propels the directionality of how movement moves. In dance, this is felt as the virtual momentum of a movement's taking form before we actually move...Incipient movement preaccelerates a body toward its becoming. The body becomes through forces of recombination that compose its potential directionalities. When I take a step, how the step moves me is key to where I can go. Gravity acts on the step such that the time span of the step's creativity is relatively short-lived. Nonetheless, there is an incipient potentiality even here, where the step can move eventfully in a witness of movement moving that exceeds the predomination of the ground: the step can become a spiral. (2009, p. 6)

Her use of writing as integral in the thinking about the concept of the 'verge' of movement: "writing developed through the activity of thinking-with that movements of thought propel. As with prehensions that invent the subject of perception through their activity of pulling forth, writing wrote me into the process of inventing-with relationescapes" (p. 11).

In accessing the State of Dancingness and radical impermanence, it is the sense of imminence that gives confidence to an ability to stay in the moment, stay with leaving.

SECTION II: THE STATE OF DANCINGNESS

Said the dance to the dancer: This is how it looks comma
This is what it is full stop Then comma
What frame comma is This question mark
What field comma What form comma
What force comma what fingerprint question mark
full stop stop stop continue

The State of Dancingness is the accessing and applying of dancerly attention to the act of writing toward an embodied inhabiting of self in process. I put forward this notion of a State of Dancingness after Cixous' 'State of Drawingness' (1993) to help draw together several key ideas and difficult-to-define elements that make *writing as dancing* possible. The aligning with Cixous' State of Drawingness is as shared axiom in excavating and speaking from inside the rendering of a new work, in my case: what it is to be in the middle of *writing as dancing*.

Dancers working primarily as solo practitioners of dance improvisation, are acutely attentive to the decision making and sensorial information of the body in movement, and practiced at responding to emergent content in the moment of performance. Jennifer Monson, Ros Warby, Deborah Hay, Rosalind Crisp and Helen Herbertson are several senior artists and contemporaries (and heroes) whose work I reference to this end.

Choreographer and performer Jennifer Monson called me "the evader" once¹⁴ and so I began looking at the resistance I sensed in 'staying' beyond each triggered and fast changing response in my improvised solo practice. What is it our bodies know before we do, before we can name what it is we know? And how can we expand our boundaries of attention to match the speed of emergence?

Through accessing and attending to a State of Dancingness, the project of *writing as dancing* aims to uncover the embodied texts of the dancer to make visible the energetic, choreographic and imaginative

¹⁴ In 2001, Monson worked with me on an improvised solo titled *prince* performed at PICA, Perth, Australia.

state of performance in words. The State of Dancingness is activated by applying dancerly imagination and physicalised energetic states to writing. The angle of dancing with writing, of *writing as dancing*, is an alteration that marks an opening for the dancer to speak, to be heard differently, to write herself out of hiding. The dancer as author in the State of Dancingness can continue between channels, in the form of words. The State of Dancingness enables a narrative project of writing inside acute understanding of composition and physical attention.

As improvisation, my work is always moving on and through, hence both the difficulty of capture, and the attraction. Cixous's notion of the physicality present in the desire to write (1991) as well as her appeal that "woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement" (Cixous 1976, p. 875) gives agency to the double embodiment experienced as writer and dancer. The process of dancing as I practise it allows for a perpetual re-writing, re-framing, re-prioritising and actively propels the energy and meaning between worlds to shift. The dynamic of interruption central to my work is seemingly antithetical to the continuous capture of writing but here I look toward writing as a State of Dancingness in the way that Cixous engages a 'State of Drawingness.' (2005)

In challenging my propensity toward delay and protecting ambiguity I begin with the dancing body as a place of 'no fixed borders' (Irigaray, 1980). The question 'and what of the content?' asked of me by writer Marcella Polain is insistent but patient amid this State of Dancingness. The delay in naming content demands that it emerges within the rigour of practice, not as representation but rather "an interpreted body of evidence" (Spry, 2011, p. 498). Through the agency of dancer-as-writer I amplify and reveal the creative processes and presence of the improvising dancer in any written body of work, to make room for encountering the 'unnameable' (Pearlman & Allen, 1999), of content through direct engagement in form. To configure danced documents that provoke a corporeal sense of engagement in the watching/reading audience through writing within the 'energetic space' of art (Winterson, 1996). To make visible the dancer.

In the process of writing as dancing there is a conscious application of writing as a dancer, of leaning into imagination, association, tone and pacing on the page, as on the stage, and an applied and driven presence.

I THINK TIMING IS VERY PERSONAL, IT'S A CHOREOGRAPHIC SIGNATURE
(STUART, 1998)

In performance, the embodied knowledge of the dancer is translated kinaesthetically to the audience. However, I have become increasingly interested in the hidden texts of the body not made explicit in this exchange. Merleau Ponty argues that “the visible is pregnant with the invisible, that to comprehend fully the visible relations (house) one must go unto the relation of the visible with the invisible.” (1968, p. 216) The State of Dancingness prefaces the relationship of the dance with the dancer, to excavate emergent content toward an expanded readership for dance via the publication of embodied texts and creative non-fictions.

The State of Dancingness as I apply it, is a harnessing of attention that acts as a force field or enlivened space in which to rest in and act from; a driven and directed application of attention in the body. This aligns with Cixous’ State of Drawingness in her essay “Without End, No, State of Drawingness, No, Rather: The Executioner’s Taking Off” (1993) which is marked by a desire to get at the ‘quick of life’. Primarily The State of Dancingness is to do with tone, and with accessing a live body that is available and open to perpetual response, compositional strategy and undoing. It is marked by an internal and dancerly drive that shifts from association to association and is acutely aware of changing momentum and emergent flights of curiosity. It supports the ability to notice decision-making in the moment of deciding and equally demands the ability to undo noticing in order to dance with the undecided, to reside in, and attune to not-knowing.

Dancers I believe are at the forefront of the concept and practice of embodiment that is now widely included in academic rhetoric, and as Maggi Phillips suspected “that people who are immersed in movement, like dancers, might hold the keys to unlock some of the more profound puzzles of embodiment’s role in thought” (2012). The State of Dancingness draws on *the response project* in foregrounding the dancer as authority of embodied knowledge

(Pollitt, 2002). *the response project*, developed as a series of improvisation scores for ensemble and solo practice during my MA in 2000, is driven by quick shifting associational response systems and states of heightened attention to access physical imagination and lived experience. While *writing as dancing* has *the response project* as inbuilt methodology, it is also a shift away from it; I am more interested now in the time and stretch each portal of curiosity opens, in mining the life of a movement.

Begin where you are, teaches Deborah Hay (Hay, 2000). And that of course is crisis in the making. Said my Southern Italian ex-mother in law, "I do not need to find myself, I know where I am, I'm right here." she was, is, right. And yet with that seemingly limited locating of self comes exactly the beginning, or rather, the middling point. The State of Dancingness begins in the middle. In the middle of presence, "One must jump into the middle of the sheet of paper, fell the quill, as soon as the race begins, or else it's battle" (Cixous, 1993, p. 25). What is the length of the life of a movement, what length is continuum? How long is love? How long does choice last? What is the length of leaving? Choose with an out clause, with windows, with a view, make the middle choose, the middle knows.

- i. ~~Begin~~ Middle a fight about form, fuck the frame and fire
- ii. Begin in the middle of development so it dies, your practice begins to kill things
- iii. ~~Begin~~ End before the end
- iv. ~~Begin Middle~~ Enter before begin
- v. Begin as a nod to what you wrote before and when now comes after
- vi. ~~Begin~~ Middle lifting the text of your legs and peel them back like sunburn
- vii. Begin in middle hammering of the stage until you've built and given it away
- viii. Begin after the hope that you might
- ix. Begin because because
- x. ~~Begin~~ Middle you fuck
- xi. ~~Begin~~ Middle raining and catch it
- xii. Begin by crossing out the middle
- xiii. Begin writing over the top of each begun
- xiv. ~~Begin~~ Middle differently
- xv. Begin repeatedly begin begin begin

- xvi. Middle tripping up tempo and pace
- xvii. ~~Begin~~ Arrive in speed and stealth
- xviii. ~~Begin~~ Middle arrive in disguise
- xix. Begin backwards stay
- xx. Begin 21 gun salute and lit attention
- xxi. Begin orderly and fashionable
- xxii. Begin b e t w e e n e v e r y l e t t e r like the wanker that you are
- xxiii. Begin thwack sound out
- xxiv. Begin rotten
- xxv. Begin in secret
- xxvi. Begin again
- xxvii. ~~Begin Arrive~~ Middle in the ~~beginning~~ thick

IN TRUTH THE FIRST LINE IS THE SURVIVOR OF THE MÊLÉE: EVERYTHING
STARTS IN THE MIDDLE (IBID, P. 25)

The perpetual unfixity in solo improvised dance performance ideally allows the work to be given away, to be owned by the viewer as a collection of kinaesthetic responses, theatrical images and energetic states. What of a dancer who enters the word space with the same risk, trust in form and presence as she enters the performance space? Research of an expansive and borderless presence is still in infancy of discovery, both in the dancer, and in the work. I argue that new bodies of evidence are revealed in the creative non-fictions that result via The State of Dancingness.

Many dancers write articulately of the experience of dancing, of inside dancing, (Crisp, 2002; Longley, 2014; Gardner, 2012; Bacon, 2014; Foster, 2002; Parkinson, 2009) among others. In activating The State of Dancingness I am both looking toward the act of writing as the centralisation of embodiment, and investigating the capability of the professional dancing body to reorient the relationship between dancing and the act of writing. Between the movement and the energetic state of writing. Between the potential of a body experienced with expanded movement range and compositional attention, and the writing down of

emergent content. The defence that the aliveness of performance reveals all, is perhaps a withholding that enables silence, that enables hiding, that maintains a distance from declaration and difference. Paradoxically dance can protect a dancer's right to remain hidden.

As an artist who works between dance and writing increasingly interested in publishing as performance, I work in a liminal space and concur with the assertion that still "the body and improvisation remains hidden" (Middelw, 2017). In unpacking this State of Dancingness I posit engagement with improvised dance practice as a dynamically charged, and visible way of thinking leading toward potential un hiding through writing. The State of Dancingness requires an understanding of a set of compositional and performance principles practised in solo dance improvisation, and the ability to move through them, to inhabit the borders, to stay in a practice of both, writing, and dancing. To be in two places at once. In many places at once; an active straddling and dismantling of borders; "sliding between the codifications of knowledge construction" (Ibid). This liminal place is where improvisational practice lives and as such, is able to speak to gaps in knowledge construction, precisely by activating and making visible the gaps as both seminal to process and outcome.

Dance is rich with 'presence' but the ambiguity of the dancer in that revealing is immense. How then to write with presence, how to write presence so it enables the reader to experience their own presence? As Caroline Bergval asks, "How does one create textual works where the authorial hold over the text is somehow distanced, perhaps neutralized, yet where the structural impact of experience, of living, of loving, of knowing, of reading, are in fact recognized" (2012, p. 21). I propose that the dancer maintains agency, the writer maintains agency, the dancer responds, the writer responds, the work between them garners its own life, perhaps a more acute invitation to seeing than either one or the other. The dancer and the writer are the same person with the complicity of selves in an actively embodied duet or a 'solo for two'. The expectation of performance. An energetic exchange. To resist or at least incorporate the absolute deluge of emergent content in bite sizes and dive into a longer staying. To see what the state is saying. To get underneath. To hide, to seek. To say it. While I found the spatial and compositional elements in the practice of *writing as dancing* relatively easy to apply in rendering emergent content on the page, what I was surprised by was the

nature of the content itself. What arose with fierce clarity in research was an uncovering of the 'hiding' I had suspected was present behind the relative privacy of dancing.

“THE TRACE OF THE QUICK OF LIFE HIDDEN BENEATH THE ROUNDED
APPEARANCES OF LIFE, LIFE WHICH REMAINS HIDDEN BECAUSE WE WOULDN'T
BEAR SEEING IT AS IT IS. (CIXOUS, 1993, P. 21)

REORIENTATION

In harnessing The State of Dancingness in *writing as dancing* there is a queering of formal borders that provokes a reorientation of the dancing body. In alignment with Sara Ahmed's unpacking of relationship to object throughout her book *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), my laptop leans in without cover or skin, present and insistent, bossily contrary in asking me to 'force quit'. Small shut downs. I do not like to be without it. Constant studio and catchment of my dancing, carried parallel against ribs. I lean in, spine tilted toward pressing; little fingers my keels, anchors to the right and left. The physicality of punctuation. Puncture. Punctum. Press. Press. Press. Presence.

The seemingly stochastic defining of The State of Dancingness is as important as it is to the dancer in attending and responding to an ever changing present; the constant lies in both its unfixity and virtuosic attention.¹⁵ Improvisation foregrounds the decision making and activated response of the dancer. I access this State of Dancingness when I am improvising in dance. I access this same State of Dancingness in writing. The State of Dancingness enables a narrative project of writing inside acute understanding of composition and physical attention. The written work is in and of the dance and the dancer, imbued with choreographic structure, performance, presence, physicality, weight. It breathes.

As an improviser I work with the life of any given movement. The life of each thread, the length of each question and each convolution of curiosity. But in these different lengths and lives of

¹⁵ Virtuosic attention, in this work, is an amplification of choreographic thinking through the noticing of energetic state and embodied imagination. It is a term I've also heard used individually by both Australian choreographers Rosalind Crisp and Paea Leach.

movements, I am aware of a continuing tone; from association to association, from response to response, as a state without end. By employing a radical impermanence as “an active commitment to the moment you understand is simultaneously disappearing” (Pollitt, 2017, p. 201), I aim to rupture this continuum of associational shifting to encourage a perpetual presence. Staying with leaving enables a deeper excavation of where you are without the need to escape immediately to the next association or respond to the next distraction. The attention, density, and critical vulnerability in *The State of Dancingness* conspire toward rupturing this sense of ‘without end’ to catch and further mine the middle of feeling, the middle of being and is driven by an embodied experiment of *writing as dancing* as:

- a) Invocation
- b) Excavation
- c) Disclosure
- d) Turning
- e) Presence
- f) Unhiding
- g) Relief
- h) Decision
- i) Rapture
- j) Exactness
- k) Slippage
- l) Attention
- m) Pace
- n) Tone
- o) Attending
- p) Middling
- q) Response
- r) Turning
- s) Undoing
- t) Standing
- u) Forgetting

- v) Biting
- w) Pressing
- x) Waking
- y) Failing
- z) ~~Arriving~~ Staying with leaving

The question is to ascertain what The State of Dancingness sustains. In invoking the continuation of dancing by embedding in words the choreographic structures, pace and tone of the dancer, it is possible that the work can be experienced by a readership beyond dance circles. My proposal is that the attention to energetic states in movement is performed inside the words on the page, and can be shared in a direct exchange, between the reader and the dancer. So that you can still see and sense the dancer. See in a way that makes more room to see the work, because the performance is in your hands, in your time. A body without borders. The agency given to the reader “to move with a writer’s own beat, needs a little bit of time.” (Winterson, p. 89). The two versions of *The dancer in your hands* allow a such relationship with the double experience firstly of a linear narrative to mark the ground and then the choice to dip in to the scores in an effort of unfixity.

Dancer and professor Rebecca Hilton’s proclamation of DANCERNESS is important ground in my proposal of the difference The State of Dancingness might bring to writing:

DANCERNESS is the very particular way/place/state from which a dancer experiences a dance, the choreography, the world. I’ve been thinking a lot about how unremarked upon, even unrecognized, dancer knowledge – DANCERNESS, is. Dancers think, feel and act upon the world in a particular way (2014, p. 196)

When Hilton asks “Maybe we dancers actually experience the world in an ontologically different way?” I foreground that it is with a dancer’s experience that I have undertaken this research and that DANCERNESS is pivotal in my written texts. My work in developing a State of Dancingness and *writing as dancing* offers tangible and transferable processes across

The agency weeps from him

Because of a technical hitch, a marriage, an arc an arc an arc, arch

Walk through darling walk through walk through

Bells and oranges, toll toll

Bells and oranges, fell fell

A canter of horses racing, she is no foal

Feel aloud your inside jaw, your eyes not predicting the fall

Don't let her see

Don't let her see the lie of an outside eye

a definition of chamber

You are in two, you are two trials, two conversations

you are giving enough for her to stay in her own body but

the contours of your teeth are showing

blackout.

The State of Dancingness enables the catching of a thought or energetic wave as a physical landing, a weighted concept, ready to be held, folded, creased, torn. This wave is visible in the dancing body, in the tracks of tug, sustained stretch, expansion, reduction or overlap. In *writing as dancing*, I type a rendering of my heartbeat the same way, composing on the page distance and time, height and variation, repetition and difference. An accumulation of sensation that turns beats into words. Tiny mountains of beating. Less one rhythm than many. Polyphonies. Multiple. Change of pace. The charge of pace.

ONE MUST THINK FASTER THAN ONESELF (CIXOUS, 1993, P. 23)

Certainly by fore fronting the presence, scores and energetic states inherent in dance improvisation via the act of writing, words arrive faster than I can catch them, but catching them is the practice and the vehicle I know, and so I persist. The dramaturgy of each word caught is through the lens of writer, performer, choreographer and editor but it is as dancer that I engage with an uninterrupted flow, to uncensor and reveal unexpected trajectories and narrative.

YOU WILL RECOGNIZE THE TRUE DRAWING, THE LIVE ONE: IT'S STILL RUNNING.
LOOK AT THE LEGS. (IBID, P. 17)

Dancers are a visible archive of many authors through both implicit and explicit physical accumulation of the work and presence of other dancers and choreographers in their own bodies. Dancers hence, are uniquely placed to excavate this multiplicity of practice through an embodied engagement with composition and curation of knowledges in the body. Barthes declaration that “text is a tissue of citations” (1967, p. 4) is consistent with *writing as dancing* as a methodology in which the energetic states of many ‘authors’ remain present and jostling in the body, in the dance, and in the moment of writing. Dance improvisation is transparent in the generation of material as emergent through labyrinthal amalgam of many previous performances, dancers, and experiences both deliberately referenced and unnoticed by the performer. A labyrinth giving volume to, rather than taking away from, the immediacy or presence of the human who is making these decisions and inhabiting presence as a choreographic form of performance.

For the improviser to be fully present and ‘live’ in the moment of performance is to be continuously in a state of leaving the moment/movement/passion that passes. Staying with leaving enables risk taking and a quickly shifting set of responsibilities to invite the unexpected, trusting but not beholden to where you have been. A polyamorous attention. This same liveness is what is cultivated in *writing as dancing*. The work stands both with the presence and with the absence of the author as she leaves. The liveness remains in the pages, of the dancer, the agency both in the text and ultimately, in the hands of the reader. As Barthes concludes “The birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the author” (1967, p. 4) so The State of Dancingness is a practice of staying with leaving, in a non-linear mining of the

middle of being. I 'hide' or 'die' in Barthes' terms and yet remain elusively present in the energetics of the text, potentially more visible than in the performance of dancing. The project of recognizing the dancer as author of the work neither imposes a 'stop clause' or 'final signification' as Barthes suggests. Rather than 'close the writing' (Ibid), the work of the writing, with the visibility and presence of dancer as author, remains open precisely because the improvising dancer is expert at unfixity; the dancer has moved on to the next, the dancer leaves. The dance remains as sentient labyrinth of openings, turns, and returns. And as a reader you sense the work, the dancer and the dance from the locus of your own body, and in how much you refute closing. The conversation then, one of intimacy and presence, with the dancer present.

We live more quickly than ourselves, the pen doesn't follow. To paint the present which is passing us by, we stop the present. One cannot after all write a book with only one stroke, of only one page, and yet we should. But we are born for lateness. Time, the body, are our slow vehicles. (Cixous, 1993, p. 26)

As Jeanette Winterson says, "Art takes time" (1995, p. 76), and so, I slowed, staying with The State of Dancingness rather than moving literally right through it. The ability to turn on The State of Dancingness increasingly continues beyond the dancing. I began scores to write myself into dancing and with practice stayed longer and longer with words. And in reverse: dancing myself into writing, the dance continued, the State of Dancingness remained. I practised this until I could sit to write with my body embodied with a State of Dancingness. *Writing as dancing*, toward generating creative texts imbued with a State of Dancingness is a methodology I have trialed and seen it develop in my undergraduate students and in artists I have mentored, including Australian choreographer Rhiannon Newton:

it's like vocabularies opening up as well as a clarity of seeing and begin able to differentiate what's happening , and at same time vocab increasing , the same way you develop new movement pathways opening you develop sort of neuro connections from noticing a different kind of textual quality and having more access to that language that can differentiate that from something else (in) a greater sort of flow between the worlds of talking about

dancing and talking about ideas, being able to articulate them in writing, some sort of flexibility between what would've been my tendency towards formulaic or structural sorts of approaches of things ide to where the poetry was allowed to also enter into the language. (Newton, 2016)¹⁶

I argue that the access a dancer has to their bodily knowledge and to the experience of embodiment, is particular, and different to non-dancer bodies. This relationship of dancer as writer to the emergence of embodied texts is grounded in the dancer *writing as dancing*. In presenting the written words as danced solo in the form of a novella, I am inviting criticism of the work in the same way as I would of a performed solo. Peter Eleey asks “are Trisha Brown’s drawings more art than dance, or more dance than art? Moreover, is it possible (or even helpful) to try to discern the difference?” (2008, p. 19) He forefronts the value of the presence of the dancer in the work “Having not yet entered the stage, or already left, Brown is neither here nor there. This ghostly, muddled location of her body and its movements vis-à-vis her drawings – proceeding from or preceding them – is crucial to their function as artworks” (ibid). The agency of dancer as author, both present and absent in the text, marks potential new ways of engaging with the dance as a viewer/reader.

The embodiment project in dance today remains, as performance philosopher Bojana Cevjic describes, an ‘organic regime’ (2015) aligned with somatic, physical and ‘ineffable’ practices that primarily locate in and of the dancing/performing/present body. What if the physicality and practice of the dancer arrived in the form of writing, in the form of words, not as documentary or encounter of the experience of dancing, but as material emergent from the dancer produced as dance, in words?

We might have to shift attention from the work of performance to an expanded notion of choreography and performance, which may include its own self-theorization as a poetics and a practice. Such a thinking wouldn’t only involve activities that bring performances into existence, or sustain them, but would also have to consider which forms of labor and life

¹⁶ Rhiannon Newton and I worked intensively on her *Checkpoint Solo* (2010) during which time my early writing experiments were trialled between my home in WA and hers in Israel.

choreography as a practice depends on and gives rise to, while also considering—outside the disciplines of dance and performance—other media, situations, and modes of attention to the moving body. (Ibid, p. 229)

Cevjic's discussion of improvisation is noteworthy in its dissenting voice of the form as being intrinsically linked to the body and therefore empirical knowledge "which keep dance hermetic, away from anybody who doesn't have the empirical privilege of access, that is to say, the know-how and experience of training, dancing, and watching dance." (2015, p. 226) While her book *Choreographing Problems* is vital reading in advocating for expansive parameters for dance as contributive to performance philosophy, and I concur with most claims, again it posits a sort of suspicion of the improvising dancer as author as potentially not able to move wider than itself due to the personal 'organic' nature of the work. And here I turn to the ongoing feminist projects of visibility and multiplicity to engage with the premise that feeling states can be excavated and attended with microscopic and rigorous composition inside gaps of known thinking that might still be dormant, and in waiting to be written.

Dancingness activates receptors. A practised sense of listening, up to 3000 touch receptors in every fingertip. I bite my nails, the deliberate register of presence. Receptors in response to pressure, temperature, and in response to the narrative they arrest at the edges. I am acutely listening to less noise, to all of the noise at once, to pay attention to my body in the filling and emptying of the sound of typing. The sound of dancing. To trick myself into writing at the same time as thinking. To slow my process, speed, decision-making in a way that matches the capability of pressing fingers. The movement of both hands. As conduit and actualising event. The event of typing. The speed and sound and pace of *writing as dancing*. The urgency, consistency, silence in real sound, no scratching. Biting. Press. Fingertips rest on the central line of letters. Resting place, all in a row. Chorus lines. The democracy of keyboard. The frontal and central aspect of the screen. The order of the keys and the lines that remain, enabling thoughts to range without visible shift, then demanding decision inside the word-making, rather than mark-making, each letter pressed. Words have no democracy. They are quick to betray. The form of the screen holds the space like a studio. Edge of frame, words in the wings. Entering. Make an entrance. Word, make an entrance. Hands, enter. Letters, each one of you, step forward. Scroll. I barely look up, though I am not so proficient that when I am tired I write

mostly with my eyes, looking actively for each letter b e f o r e it is pressed. Like Cixous, I want the “beforehand of a book” (1993, p. 16), when you can sense an entire work, and in that sensing of arrival, the imminence and anticipation of ending. So I let go of the pressure in my teeth and catch up with myself. Fingers as conductors, mapping worlds in front of me, the responsibility of both hands. Thinking in time with the body, slows, accelerates, arrives differently, arrives in the middle, arrives embodied. Deciding to press.

I SEE WITH MY EARS (IBID, P. 17)

The dancer asserting her performance as publication is a potential betrayal of a traditional field of current mainstream contemporary dance which aligns with dancing bodies on stage. In aligning with Cixous’ “to-be-in-the-process of writing and drawing” (1993, p. 91), I am raising the potential of The State of Dancingness to work in the nexus between writing and visual poetry as a performance you can hold in your hands. A printed performance that sees the reader and dancer reside together in the embodiment of the text, a liminal space that houses both rather than one at the cost of the death of the other. Cixous’ process of drawing to ‘unearth’ the writing gives voice to *writing as dancing* in generating an embodied attention with potential to unhide or ‘dance’ forth hidden truths:

(N.B. I’m saying writing-or-drawing, because these are often twin adventures, which depart to seek in the dark, which do not find, do not find, and as a result of not finding and not understanding, (draw) help the secret beneath their steps to shoot forth) (Ibid, p. 17).

While as a performer I subscribe to Deborah Hay’s ‘invite being seen’ (1991) in this current body of research the question is put back to myself: “What are you inviting to be seen?” As an improviser this arises in the moment of performance and changes from one moment to the next, this State of Dancingness, adrenaline of performance, adrenaline of not knowing, adrenaline of inviting the seeing of not knowing as it emerges. I wanted to see. I wanted to see what I meant. What the content was. To turn around and stand in front of the ambiguity of giving it all away, and still the moment, to ask more acutely - “what do I see in myself when I invite being seen?” I wanted to listen. And I wanted to stay longer in taking responsibility for

what I was inviting myself to see. To work in the same way as dancing, to listen to emergent content, and to see what happened to that State of Dancingness in words. "I seek the truth, I encounter error. How do I recognize error? It is obvious, like truth. Who tells me? My body." (1993, p. 18) What does it say? As an improviser, I am ever moving to the next, here I am interested in what happens upon staying. To follow or engage in a single window, train of thought or portal, opens of course into its own minefield of associations distractions, demands and delights. And the splintering then is infinite. What do you do when you cannot stay? You stay with leaving.

The ambiguity enabled in the dancing body is rich and unaccountable, even to itself. As Cixous says "It's not a question of drawing the contours, but of what escapes the contour, the secret movement, the breaking, the torment, the unexpected". (1993, p. 19) I am investing in *writing as dancing* and The State of Dancingness as a way to attend to, and uncover the between of dancing and writing, in order to try and catch what it is that the body knows before I do. Imagination and emotion, muscle and tone. *the response project* (Pollitt, 2001) in full flight. Inside sensing, doing being. Staying with leaving. Where is the delay in the body on screen, in the comma? In the silence loudly sounded between pressings? When the fingers rest, when the keys pause? The cursor, insistence and constant of pulse, blinking, pushing through stage front. A tiny vertical line |, holding the space. Quietly. The State of Dancingness enables the act of writing with the simultaneous positions of dancer and writer to be less divided < || >

The State of Dancingness is activated by applying dancerly imagination and physicalised energetic states to writing. As Cixous clarifies "The emotion is born at the angle of one state with another state. At the passing, so brusque. Accident. Instant of alteration that takes us by surprise. And the body which expresses itself before the word". (1993, p. 23) The angle of dancing with writing, of *writing as dancing*, is an alteration that marks an opening for the dancer to speak, to be heard differently, to write herself out of hiding. "What I hide with my language, my body utters" stated Barthes (1978, p. 44), *writing as dancing* can reveal what the body utters. The dancer as author in The State of Dancingness can continue between channels, in the form of words. The agency of the dancer as author enables access to a multiplicity of embodied experience presented as a series of singular publications, or solo work. The dancer stays. ///

I look to feminist writers who forefront the body and instability as central to knowledge. I argue the writing dances, the writing is embodied with the dancer writing, with presence and resonance, and temporal challenge to the ephemeral that keeps replacing itself, and can be re-read and re-experienced in reading *The dancer in your hands*.

In your hands her hiding. Hands as a hiding place. Pull her spine apart. Gently. Prise. To make more space. To breathe in read. Dance is her alibi. This telling her seek. I would be happy to hit the wall should that be your finding. To be thrown. Dance dancer dance. Stay. Stay longer than you can. Stay. End it here. Part the middle. Rest. Stay in the part. Stand. Step back. Step up. Stand. Stay. Wait. Open. Stay. Wait. Gaze. Hold. Step in. Press.

Breathe. Stay. Lean. Retreat. Whip.
..... Press. Dissolve.
Fall.

Stay. Press. Be pressed. Wait.
Expect. Counter. Push. Press. Pull.
Grasp. Soften. Gasp. Open. Fall.
Press. Stay. Stay. Stay. Stay

/v\^/v\^v/.....
.....ⁱ

SECTION III: *WRITING AS DANCING*

PART ONE: EXPERIMENTS IN FORM AND CONTENT

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<<<<<<<<

write now darling

write now darling

write now daring

write now write now write now write now write now write now write now write now write
now write now write now write now write now write now write now now now now
now now now now now now now now
nowownownownownownownownownownownownownownownown

re testing. Test me.

The delight the lights the entrance, permission, curtain rising the curtain is rising in an unfixed lighting state. If I press with enough attention, if I keen with enough tone, can I make the energetic state of my location migrate to here? There is conflict in that right now I just want to move in response to the sound of typing and mark making in my body, to leave no resonance or visible trace, to write in experience only. My own bias, resistance to my own research question said the dancer. Dance said the writer, write said the dancer, impasse.

Talking to myself she said, I am not a dancer, but we all knew she was not telling the truth, you cannot unbecome a dancer.

I recognise the state, I insist on practice I land to sensation comma and rhythm comma driven comma timing comma the savvy of shoulders the lilt of pelvis the rock of feet and torso and a kind of self redistribution.

Dance like a motherfucker said strayed as told by Leach as written on the other side of town by Pollitt. W H A T O F T H E C O N T E N T, said the supervisor.

Let's talk about content.

Content:

Say it,

Go.

----- end of warm up

In this section I discuss the three major iterations of *writing as dancing*: 1. Writing as a soloist; 2. Writing for the ensemble; 3. Writing responsively in collaboration. Three major projects outlined below illustrate each of these iterations. Each of the three applications of *writing as dancing* discussed are prefaced by a score describing how one inhabits each applied state.

1. *Writing as dancing* as a soloist looks to the development of the comma piece and the solo performance of she writes like she dances in which the comma piece is featured. Performed at Spectrum Gallery in Perth (2016) and Bats Theatre in Wellington, NZ (2017), the works took the form of danced lecture demonstrations with accompanying artist books (see Appendix A). Audience involvement saw the simultaneous reading of the text, as well as the silent tracing of words over a page of the book on transparent paper. Images and a clickable video link are included in the discussion (or see the USB). *The dancer in your hands* evolved from the work of the *comma piece* and is discussed in Part Two.

2. *Writing as dancing* for the ensemble traces the development of my work as dance writer on the three project developments of new work by choreographer Chrissie Parrott. My work *writing as dancing* fed into the broader research in various ways, with outcomes including a public showing of my short dance play “Joni” at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (2016) and the development of a long-form poem-script titled “she/herd”, excerpts of which featured in Parrott’s “InLore Act II” for Co3’s Dance Makers Project performed at Studio Underground, State Theatre Centre, Perth (2018). A short example of this text can be seen in Section II, The State of Dancingness. A long excerpt is included in this section.

3. *Writing as dancing* responsively in collaboration details the journey of working conceptually hand over hand (across the distance between Sydney and Perth) with artist Lilly Blue on the creation of ‘Human’, a collaborative artwork featured in Issue #10 of BIG kids Magazine and later exhibited at Manly Museum and Art Gallery (2017). It features images of collaboration that trial ideas of *writing as dancing* in a way that further extends the form. Here, I look to the fact that Blue and I are in a romantic relationship, and offer discussion of the question asked in the early “Catchment and Clarity” section: “What’s love got to do with it?”

Writing as dancing is a state of intent and a specifically located physical practice. As discussed throughout this exegesis, it is an attempt to write like I dance. By working with attention to associational shifts, compositional rigor and practiced energetic states, the work proposes that the dancer begin on the page from the vantage and experience of entering the stage as a solo improvising performer. The words and form are forged from the body in a State of Dancingness with the dancer as author in the process of *writing as dancing*. Emergent content is thus revealed as textual bodies of evidence, as danced documents you can hold in your hands. Rather than experiential documents or creative response, it is the practice of writing activated as embodied translations of dancing.

Content emerges from an attentive scission between dancer as writer and her embodied and virtuosic responsiveness. Harnessing ‘dancingness’ to attune to embodied states enables potentially new ways of inhabiting the process of writing. Accessing the experience of ‘middling’, as “no matter where we are, we are always in the middle of writing” (Cixous, 2005, p. 133), ignites a readiness and immediacy of response. *Writing as dancing* hones attention to

be able to keep up with the 'I' so that presence can open more generously between the self and the world. *Writing as dancing* expects both an anticipation of movement as well as a middling – 'radical impermanence' allows this paradox to be continually activated with each word pressed.

While as dancer my work is dense with ambiguity, in seeking un hiding I am not suddenly working as didact. Practising *writing as dancing* offers rich space, as does solo dance improvisation, for embodying fictive renderings of the body just as much as it excavates lived experience. Integrated from the outset, my words here are as practiced at jostling with the same surety/indecision/fervour as dancing. More of me is moving because of it, more of me is speaking. The fragmented nature of being does not knit together in the process of printing the dancer on the page; it opens to the possibility of more-than-human.¹⁷

Writing as dancing generates new creative texts written in the gap between the embodiment of professional dance practice and visual poetry. Working in this gap makes room for texts that emerge from what it is that the body knows before we are able to frame or name it. The dancer-writer applies the embodied compositional strategies of making decisions in the moment of performance to inhabit *writing as dancing*. The more un hiding that is elicited, the more agency it potentially gives others to un hide their own embodied knowledge, to offer new and tangible ways of thinking through the body. Each of these processes or portals of *writing as dancing* enables a different engagement with the practice. Each of these iterations has opened new streams of possibility for *writing as dancing*. Each is grounded in the same methodological body.

A body that questions whether I am betraying myself in some way by posing the idea that dance can exist in another form, in another modality? The quality of the dancing can – but that's not enough for me here as I'm not interested in transposing quality. The writing is not

¹⁷ The scope of this exegesis does not permit discussion of the more-than-human (see Braidotti, *The Tanner Lectures*, March 1-2, 2017; Latour, *The Anthropocene Lecture*, May 4, 2018; and Blaise, *Fabricated childhoods: uncanny encounters with the more-than-human*, 2015, for a discussion of more-than-human worlds) I include reference to it as it invites thinking about materiality of the book as a dance or dancer, and that new knowledge might be keened in more-than-human experiences of embodiment.

in response to the dancing, they are inside each other, as one thing, not as a text and dance work, but as stand-alone documents that can be experienced as dance, the same dancing, the same dancer. As Simon Ellis writes, “where the membrane between practice, outcomes and methodological framings is permeable to the point of being non-existent” (2005, p. 88), and yet still my body is in a fight with the practice of my own work as improviser, as I simultaneously trying to capture the process of my improvised decision-making so I can see it. The proposition of *writing as dancing* comes up against my own bias as a dancer who believes that the work is collected in the body, moving, in space and time. So how can that still exist, this collection in time, how can the dancer still remain, when the moving is stilled onto a page? As it is for Ellis, there is a “constant slippage between when am I theorising and when am I practising to the point that the two are indistinguishable” (Ibid, p. 158). The inherent paradox activates the compression required to trigger an interval, a studio of middling, a praxis of choreographic thinking, physicality and a dancer *writing as dancing*.

Sara Ahmed argues that “emotions cannot be separated from bodily sensations” in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014, p. 12); I concede that the training of dancer has pressed upon me a particular order of codified ‘sensation’ that layers and has, ironically, held back my own access to feeling. *Writing as dancing* redresses this sense of ‘order’ to write from inside the practice and push the difficulties and silences inside feeling to the front of the page.

1. *WRITING AS DANCING AS A SOLOIST*

Score: compress the tone in your body so that density is the texture of pressing. In the density and seeming reduction of state through honing of focus to only the edges of your own skin – porousness makes visible reception in a wide and permeable attention. Listen to the sound of dancing, the sound of the pace you are seated in. The pace of your multiple self. Write inside that pace, demand the waves, in sound so low it is underneath listening, physical, embodied. Write with it, type with it, bring your weight slightly forward, activate exactitude, be critical. Edit as you go, but keep going. Write in the middle of moving, with the same associational shifts as solo-ing. This is a solo. Land in each portal, go faster than possible, you are not reflective. You are choreographing in the moment of movement, rigorous, with applied

directional shifts, following the life of one movement and staying for longer. Staying when there is too much to say, write underneath the overwhelm of saying, your body is so loud, the world of you accessible. Work acutely, don't faff, this is not therapy, this is not authentic movement, this is decision overlapping with decision, undercutting decision, building on decision, honing decision. Write in the awake. Write like you are looking into one of those 3D hidden pictures; simultaneously activate and relax your surfaces, concentrate and open the edges of your seeing to allow other ways of responding. Know less, expect more. Keep going. Press the keys with clarity, notice each pressing, hear the sound of beating, of the turning in your stomach. You don't need to think about breathing, except as a surprise sometimes to notice it. It takes care of itself. Write with your whole body, not about your body, not because of your body, just with your body. It is not the point of reference, it is the dance in itself, it is the vehicle, it thinks with and through more mass, more of you. What is the driver, the internal driver, the sound of you, write with the sound of yourself, and in that, the underneath of immediacy will have more room to be heard. Move write when you can no longer bear being watched with your eyes closed. Drop into a state of drawing, creating, working, immersed. Flip into role of choreographer, outward focus, showing, deciding, composing, revealing, all while maintaining the inside state of attentional drawing. Respond to more room, more acutely, ask more of your listening, of your own presence, and of your own absence in the words you are translating to the screen, the page. Give them away, be generous with each departure, there will be another and another, and in that allowing of leaving, stay in the movement of noticing the underside, the back story, the unsaid, and say it. The undersaid. Invoke a state of dancingness. Expect it.

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This work of *writing as dancing* as soloist lives inside all aspects of the research and culminated in two iterations, bound and unbound, of *The dancer in your hands*. Written predominantly in the dance studio, it traces the timeline of writing experiments between late 2015 and mid 2018.

Early experiments commenced in 2015 with Niharika Senapati at CIA Studios in Perth. In this prologue to practice I trailed and named new scores to access ways in to write like I dance.

We worked with 4 main scores that harnessed changes of gaze and focus for each written experiment. Responses were both to self and to watching the other dancing with the same score:

1. Dance/write with a focus on your own body (this extended to versions including experiments of focus as: internal/external/ surface of body/beyond horizon/present in the room)

White decision / A harbor/ Of beginnings/ And erasure/ Of years

Twice that and counting myself backwards into being / Caught in threads of trained articulation and practiced undoing

2. Dance/write with a simultaneous focus both inside and outside your own body (this score got closest to a sense of the ungraspable, or the ineffable)

Jo: the sound of a thousand conversations overtaken by a waterlogged body, a scene shipwrecked to shore, underestimate the lightening that can't be counted before a noise that will land her un puzzled and in fragmentary falling. This is the dancing of timed continuum. Without a second hand.

Jo response to Niharika: I must learn how to touch type blind. In the dark. In a solar system, fragmentary, backwards time walking into a graduating immediacy away from bone but still far closer to timefalling and giving way to a sensation of choice without gravity.

Your density has no feet on the ground. A luminous mass of principles. Glass cased inquisition. You are a specificity of tended articulation and potency of recalibrated focus.

Both a happening body and making things happen / Folding limbs with a decay of muscle in small waves down her spine

A meteorite doesn't give a fuck about gravity.

3. Trial of continuation of simultaneous writing and talking:

Slide of fingertips in waves over a keyboard

Documenting the time it takes

The balck [sic] keys become swirls without recognigton [sic] and I could type in symbols and stories that can only be heard by the body.

Meditatieve[sic] state

When the depth of field changes and you are part way falling between seeing and doing

It is a concentration [sic]



FIGURE 5 NIHARIKA IN FIRST STUDIO EXPERIMENT *WRITING AS DANCING*, CIA STUDIOS, PERTH, 2016

4. Write yourself into dancing.

I am thinking [sic] of the speed of dance

The speed of thinging [sic]

The speed of drawing

The speed of writing

The speed of typing

The speed of composition

The speed of listening [sic]

/

Off with her head

\

I held her head in my hands

I held her head in my hands

Cut

\

Off with her head

These first experiments of course come with the weight and time of my practice with *the response project* and continued into many late-night experiments in form. Using the palette of the laptop screen I expanded into video, voice recording, songwriting, film editing, changing the space to write, cutting and pasting, sculptures of pens, responding to plays, dances, books, poems, places (accidental recordings/writing of songs/voice recordings/audience editing). I began a score of 'continuous writing altered daily' after Rainer's *Continuous project altered daily* (1975), that acted as journal or early practice. I trialled experiments of layering text to give it 'body' by photographing the laptop screen and compiling screenshots to try and make weight. Writing eyes closed, reading in silence, backwards, upwards, collecting text from timed sources, catching words from Facebook feeds, hallways, radio, theatre, restaurants, school yard. Adding responses. It was a palimpsest of practice, a distillation, response, and as Peggy Phelan explains, an interpretation of my own history:

Like the physical body, the textual body also always registers an expression.

Borrowing the words of others and other words, writers (re) produce

documents that bear the proper name of the author(s). Rummaging through the history of other people's language - what scholars call research, citations, footnotes, and bibliographies - historians interpret history. (1995, p. 201)

In the multitude of experiments I set up, the central premise was to embed the experiential dynamic of dancing on the page to make the process of emergent content visible. At about one year into the research I compressed the desire for embodying the dynamic through multiple experiments into one - the decision-making with words.

THE COMMA PIECE:

The comma links, creates meaning, is integral to meaning. Repetition (of comma, or anything else) defamiliarizes so that it is made strange, becomes something other than itself. So, for me, comma stands in for something insisted, difficult to articulate or unspoken/silenced/taboo - the lived, embodied experience" (Polain, 2017)

The *comma piece* was first named by Cat Hope as a score, and that naming gave agency to continued investment in the form, and the content. It became urgent to interrupt my own habit of disruption, and instead I consciously decided for the project to stay as central to the practice of *writing as dancing*, the project of staying with leaving, to spend time with one body of work, one body, the life of a movement, to see what was there if I stayed for longer in the seeing. Initially I worked with the comma as a tool toward continuum rather than tripping up – in a way that expands the breath differently (and literally) in the space it takes up. I used comma as bridge between rather than to pause the action/thinking; to overthrow the mark of breath; to disrupt hierarchies of breathing and pace and extend the gap as a way to undo (and draw attention to) the value (and decision) of beginnings and endings;

Indeed, it is hard to read a comma as other than a pause or redirection of force/energy. So in other words the commas obviously interrupt the flow, but more than that, if seen as part of dancing, they are iconic moments, pauses, moments where the body is briefly held at the apogee of a movement, and then falls into another position (Marshall, 2017)

The idea of 'turning' or making associational shifts (as is the basis of my improvised dance practice) is written into the title *This book has elbows*. It is in the thinking doing of folding/unfolding/hiding/revealing that the perpetual 'turn' is experienced. Paradoxically I also think of the repeated 'comma comma comma comma comma...' in the work as a continuous stream of interruption and associational shift that creates the same tone and energetic state as when I dance.

I presented several readings and performances of the *comma piece*, the first on October 8, 2016 at Spectrum Gallery in Perth (see USB for short excerpts). The solo lecture demonstration included audience participation in the collective reading aloud and silent writing of new poetic scores over the top of mine. I introduced the presentation as:

An experiment in a score of three short parts consisting of three minutes each:

1. "What of the swallowing" is *writing as dancing* as a continuous solo; watch.
2. The next three minutes is a reading all together of the text under the transparent paper; on the count of 3 we'll read out loud with everyone at their own pace in a kind of congregation or chorus of commas. If you lose your place, pick up where you left off, and if you finish before three minutes start again from betrayal. 3, 2, 1...go
3. Final three minutes is an edit by personal selection. Use your pen to press on the tracing paper to write over the words or phrases or individual letters to create a new score both by selecting, collecting and erasure.



FIGURE 6 SHE READS,
SPECTRUM GALLERY
OCTOBER 2016



FIGURE 7 THE COMMA PIECE SPECTRUM GALLERY, PERTH, AUSTRALIA, 2016



FIGURE 8 AUDIENCE WRITING OVER THE SCORE IN TIMED SILENT RESPONSIVE WRITING

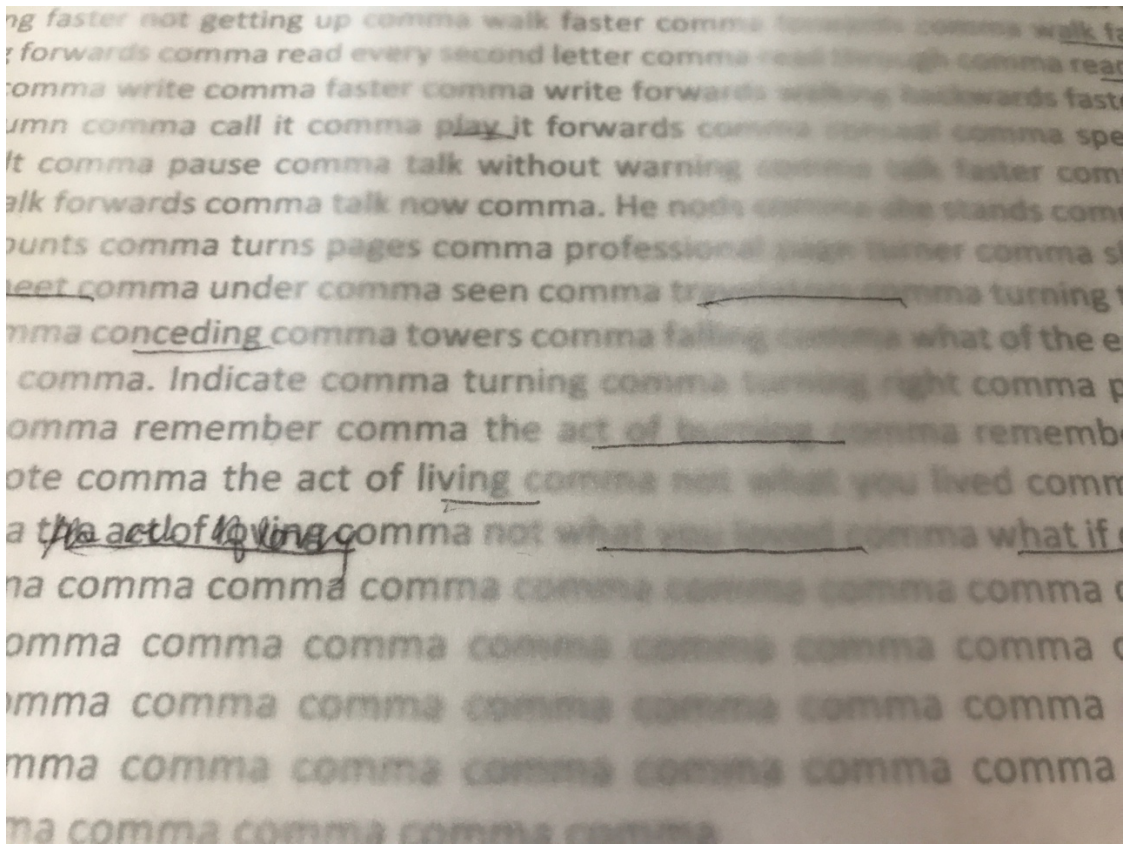


FIGURE 10 EXAMPLE OF AUDIENCE POETIC OVERWRITING OF THE SCORE, THE COMMA PIECE, SPECTRUM GALLERY, PERTH



She writes like she dances:

The performance of she writes like she dances at BATS Theatre in Wellington, New Zealand in March 2017 is where I experienced an unhiding of my identity as dancer, and as writer¹⁸. I was referred to as ‘the dancer’ by many of the delegates, which I initially resisted, but which I later found gave me permission to embody and bring the pieces together. This performance was where I noticed the shift from researching the potential of *writing as dancing* to a visceral engagement with *writing as dancing*. Here I include the score, images and a video of this work as illustration of the embodied tone and physical imagination that I experience when *writing as dancing*.

¹⁸ My work was presented as part of the curated day at BATS Theatre “Turn 3: On Score”. Amid the work of performance writers, (I was particularly impacted by the presentations of Jessica Worden “The Mutable Score: writing and performance” and Theron Schmidt “Blackout. Thinking with darkness”) I was able to both align my thinking in a shared context and to understand the specificity and importance of being a dancer in my research.

Performance score/script (date):

8minutes: Jacket off and find way into he work dancing (see video on clickable link in the body of this text or open "She writes like she dances" on the USB)

3minutes: "There is a small dance written under your chairs called "This book has elbows" if you could retrieve them now and first we're going to add a missing 'e' to the text and then read through the dance silently on your own " (I write new text on stage in the silence as they read)

2minutes: Turn over the book with 2minutes to choose letters or words that you want to retain by copying over them on the tracing paper. Choose letters or words of your own decisioning to re form, re score and re punctuate the text.

4minutes: Spotlight solo distillation of the score

5minutes: collect each new tiny score from each audience member as they leave to form a small artist book that reveals palimpsest of layered responses (this is then passed around as a new document)

I come back more in tact than I have been for years.

writtenwrittenwr	intointointointo	hidinghidinghid	comma.	Indicate	remember	comma
ittenwrittenwrit	intointointointo	ighidinghidinghi	comma	turning	comma	comma
tenwrittenwritte	intointointointo	dinghidinghiding	comma	turning	comma	comma
nwrittenwrittenw	intointointointo	hidinghidhighidi	right	comma	comma	comma
rittenwrittenwri	intointointointo	nghidinghidinghi	pouring	comma	comma	comma
ttenwrittenwritt	intointointointo	dinghidinghiding	burn	comma	burn	comma
enwrittenwritten	intointointointo	hidhighidinghidi	without	practice	comma	comma
writtenwrittenwr	intointointointo	nghidinghidinghi	comma	remember	comma	comma
ittenwrittenwrit	intointointointo	dinghidinghiding	comma	the act of	comma	comma
nwrittenwrittenw	intointointointo	hidinghidinghidi	burning	comma	comma	comma
rittenwrittenwri	intointointointo	nghidinghidinghi	remember	comma	comma	comma
ttenwrittenwritt	intointointointo	dhighidinghiding	the act	of	comma	comma
enwrittenwritten	intointointointo	hidinghidinghidi	writing	comma	not	comma
writtenwrittenwr	intointointointo	nghidinghidinghi	what	you	wrote	comma
ittenwrittenwrit	intointointointo	dinghidinghiding	comma	the act of	living	comma
tenwrittenwritte	hidinghidinghidi	nghidinghidinghi	what	you	lived	comma
nwrittenwrittenw	dinghidhighiding	dinghidinghiding	comma	the act of	knowing	comma
rittenwrittenwri	hidinghidinghidi	hidhighidinghidi	knowing	comma	not	comma
nwrittenwrittenw	nghidinghidinghi	nghidinghidinghi	what	you	knew	comma
rittenwrittenwri	dhighidinghiding	dinghidinghiding	comma	the act of	loving	comma
ttenwrittenwritt	hidinghidinghidi	towers	comma	what	you	loved
enwrittenwritten	nghidinghidinghi	falling	comma	comma	and	comma
	dinghidinghiding	what of the ego				
intointointointo	hidinghidinghidi	on the way down	what	if	comma	the
intointointointo	nghidhighidinghi	comma	what	of	the	act
intointointointo	dinghidinghiding	swallowing	you			could
with siblings						this is a field
I know I know I	comma parts of	of literature				comma a farmer
know exemption	thinking into	and time				comma a field
by dusk comma	separation	lottery of				
death by	comma	radio play				
exemption	separated	until you come				
comma I have	states of	back home	who			
used dusk for	feeling tiny	o oh in just	o			
many	freezer bags	gonna keep	g			
exemptions and	thrown into	calling your	g			
dawn also dawn	amid	name in all of	g			
comma when her	the half meals	the songs				
hands first	and decisions					
promised a	too cold comma	you protect				
sense of god	take your hand	comma keep in				
not a metaphor	off the	tact comma				
comma	temperature					

FIGURE 11: EARLY DRAFT OF "THIS BOOK HAS ELBOWS" FOR PERFORMING, WRITING, NZ, 2017

index	presence	associatio	E	V	E	N	N	O	R	D	S	T
ground	curation	n	S	S	I	S	M	O	U	N	C	O
	assemblage	response	O	R	E	R	E	N	C	E	A	L
field	contradict	tripping	L	I	A	B	L	S	O	M	E	O
	ion	staying	E	I	N	H	E	F	I	T	H	O
field	structure	division	R	B	O	D	Y	R	O	U	G	H
index	loss	tense past	T	H	A	T	P	V	I	S	I	B
ground	edit		R	A	C	T	I	L	E	T	R	A
distractio	edit	S H E W R	C	E	S	D	I	C	E	T	H	A
n	edit	I T E S L	S	S	O	N	A	T	D	O	E	S
	futures	I K E S H	N	C	E	A	N	N	O	T	L	E
interrupti	fallenness	E										
on	arcoria		D	D	E	L	A	A	V	E	A	N
	location	D	A	N	C	E		D	C	A	N	N
impermanen	commitment	S	E	X	C	E		O	T	G	E	T
ce		P	T	H	E			U	P	W	I	T

FIGURE 12 DRAFT OF "THIS BOOK HAS ELBOWS" PERFORMING, WRITING, NZ, 2017



FIGURE 13 SHE WRITES LIKE SHE DANCES, PERFORMING, WRITING, BATS THEATRE

34 New Zealand responses to 'this book has elbows' from Performing, Writing Symposium.
BATS Theatre, March 2017

1.

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n

2. she even in her conceal that does not leave.

3. shew it like dancesex more the even body more practices

4. she. even. Is more. A body practises and conceals race can

5. get up. Dance

6. More sex

7throat cradle

8. writ lik sex pitthee ness, more liar is her delay

9.ween. cannot. Sit. Sex. Out

10. dance exce ess her body that practices Your hand11.

11. she like sex

12. sex more her body that practises . conceal. Trace. Cannot get up. Your hand

13. non even is eb and ob and some trace does up hand
14. she writes like she dances even is more in her body is so dance delay conceal cannot get up without the cradle of your hand
15. shewriteslike she dances. Conceals some of it. Your hand
16. her body, delay, cradle hand
17. shed even more sex body ice and words unconceal it
18. sssscscssscssscscscscs
19. sex body trace and hand
- 20.sex even more reliable dissonance
21. shite! He sex is er'body at ble r
22. except even ore liable at ices on an delayan once of it rough do can get out the hd of our com a
- 23.dance dissonance delay
24. smoreleli her nance lay and ible that does not p with
25. arrn le IIIII wd pro tuen p l hpete
26. ne body morereliabl isson dd ceal trace does wo
- 27.1.conceal 2.and 3.cradle 4.her 5.not 6. Except
28. rite she practices the cradle of your hand
29. lit cradle
30. she is reliable and some of it trace cannot cradle your comma
31. she dances ere in body lay o-ce a-----n cradle o hand om
32. the e is invisible
33. delay conceal trace get up our
34. dance in her bodydelay conceal cannot comma



FIGURE 14 REHEARSAL IMAGE SHE WRITES LIKE SHE DANCES, PERFORMING WRITING, BATS THEATRE, NZ, 2017

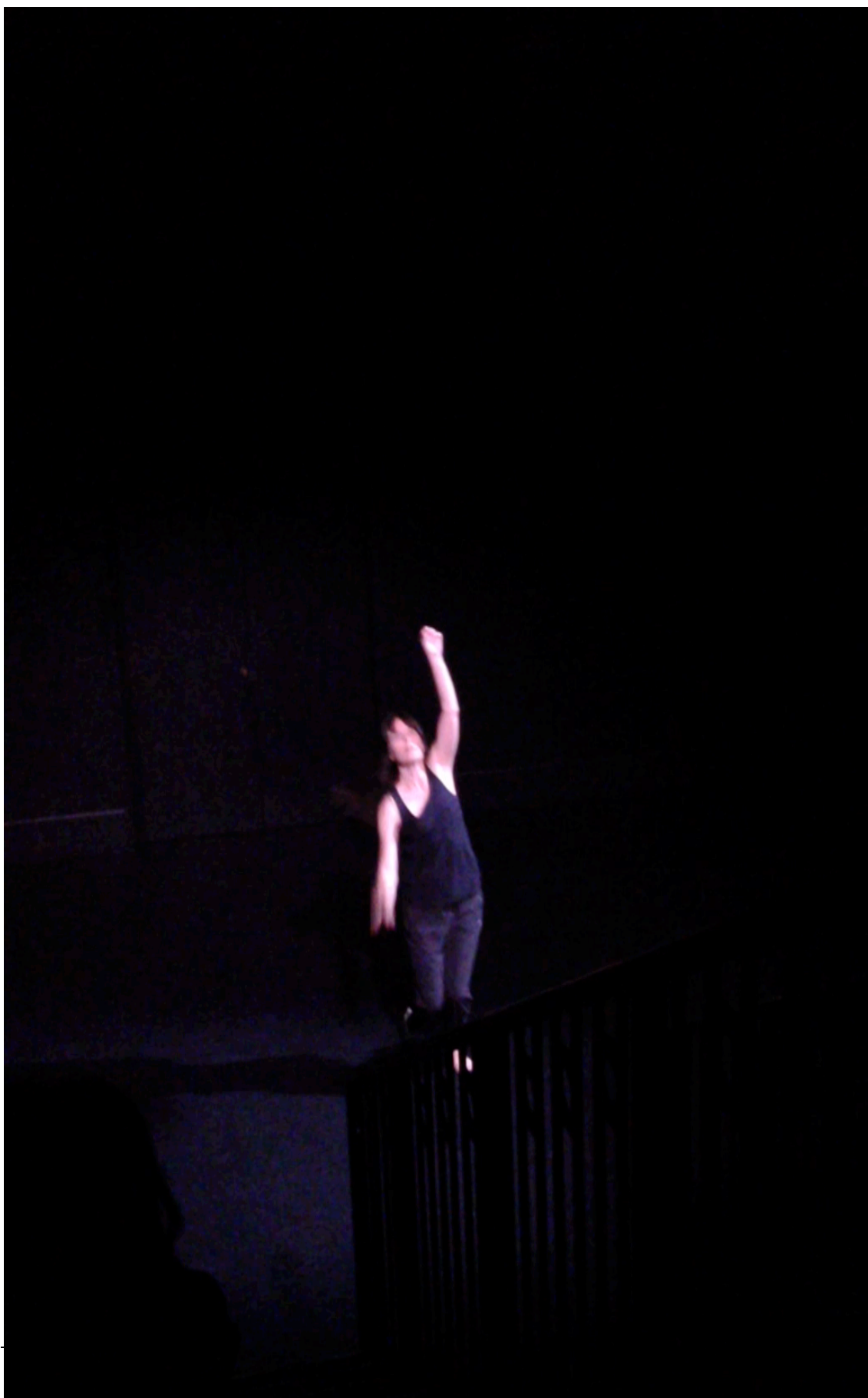


FIGURE 15 DOUBLE CLICK IMAGE TO PLAY VIDEO OR SEE USB FILE: SHE WRITES LIKE SHE DANCES, VIDEO EXCERPT FROM PERFORMING, WRITING - ON SCORE, TURN 3, BATS THEATRE, MARCH 9, 2017, WELLINGTON, NZ.

2. WRITING AS DANCING FOR THE ENSEMBLE

Score: sort yourself first, land immediately and fully in your body, the outer edges of your arms awake, the density in your body present, rich and porous. Invoke state of dancingness. Expect it. Locate yourself with the scene in front of you, be both inside the whole and just outside the film of space that holds you all. Be responsible for staying in your own body, that is a given so that you can open your seeing to include the stories and density of other bodies in your writing and seeing. Write as a soloist who has opened her edges. Concentrate. Allow associational slippage but keep watching, watch intently but without willing the dancers to move or respond, without layering your intent. Not yet. Intent to permeable watching. Locate the driver of the work, the driver in the space, the driver of the performer, the space between the performers, the sound of the energetic space between each person, each decision, each trajectory through the space. Notice the resonate lines that the movement leaves in the space, watch them accumulate and entangle, don't attach or fix the lines, they change. Your multiple self is available and accessible, pace decision, stay with leaving, respond live, change your mind, notice form emerge on the screen, respond and edit, follow form, invite narrative in the abstract, allow connections you don't understand, write with not understanding, stay with leaving, stay further, follow the emerging form, write rigorously inside it as soon as you glimpse it, keep watching the space, write as you watch, listen to your own silences. Listen to the sound of watching, write inside that sound, write with that state. Write underneath what you see. Write from inside seeing. Present. Energetic state that expands to engulf the space and the tangled directional shifts of each performers personal state, the work state, the relational aspects of the choreography and the live bodies in flux before you. Write because you are one of them. Write from inside the ensemble, generous but not as yet impacting the work that is emerging. You are not writing a scene or even a response. You are writing the work. As it emerges. With the ensemble. With the work. With you.

----- >

In 1988 Chrissie Parrott made her work *Recycling of a Suburban Angel*, presented at Artrage. Twenty years later, and at the same age she was then, I created a new work for her titled *Re-render* in response to her other choreographic works dating back to 1978. In 2008 I printed out titles for 60 dance works.

She stepped in turn behind each of the titles placed randomly on the floor, responding from a physical memory; it was like a hologram, she said. We worked decade by decade, diving into each work, each title, each year beginning in 1978. The final solo saw the titles line up in a ladder from the back to front of stage. Ten years later, in 2018, I returned to the technique of the ladder in *The dancer in your hands*.

THE PROCESS OF RE-RENDERING PHYSICALLY TRACKS MY INTEREST IN HOW THE LINEAGE OF PRACTICE INFORMS DANCERS AND WHAT IS QUESTIONED, STORED IN THE BODY MEMORY AND RE-ARTICULATED OVER TIME. IT IS PART MEMOIR, PART BIOGRAPHY, AND PART FICTION. THE WORK SEEKS TO ACCENTUATE THE 'LIVENESS' AND VISIBILITY OF A LONG AND ONGOING PRACTICE AND PLAYS WITH EXPOSING THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF A HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED CHOREOGRAPHER. THE WORK IS FRAMED OR 'SCORED' BY A SET OF HIGHLY SPECIFIC IDEAS, BUT MOST OF THE MOVEMENT IS COMPOSED LIVE IN THE MOMENT OF PERFORMANCE. A FURTHER RE-RENDERING WILL SEE IT HAVE LIFE AS A PUBLICATION AND INSTALLATION. *RE-RENDER* IS THE SECOND IN A SERIES OF SOLOS THAT INCORPORATE THE IMPROVISATIONAL STRATEGIES OF MY 'RESPONSE' WORK.

FIGURE 16 EXCERPT FROM *RE-RENDER* PROGRAM, 2008

Having worked with Chrissie over the last decade, I can trace the lineage of *writing as dancing* and the development of my questions of embodiment and response. *Writing as dancing* for the ensemble sees me as one of the ensemble, as dancer and equally as observer. It gives me a unique position of empathy and kinesthetic response in watching, and is a similar experience of double embodiment that I have when I am improvising dance.

At the public showing at the Art Gallery of WA on February 4th 2017, I wrote continuously for the duration of 40 minute ensemble performance. In that durational experience, I first realised what I was trying to do was write like I dance, in an improvised continuous thread. The similarity and difference is in locating the emergence of form: long narrative/short flash fiction/ series of character descriptions/traditional play/poetic transcript/poem/monologue. These different structures arise similarly to the choreographic forming of a dance. Each line or moment has a performative attention in the writing and arrives from a practiced state of embodied watching. I write with the ensemble as they perform, as part of the performance, an active place of participation rather than response. And the writing emerges as the performance unfolds in front of me. In real-time.

The final iteration of the three development periods is a long-form poem. I include a long excerpt here to give a sense of the difference and range of *writing as dancing* that comes from the same body of research:

She
/
herd



FIGURE 17 SHE/HERD JO POLLITT WITH ILLUSTRATION BY LILLY BLUE, 2018

Act one:

This is no foal

All ligaments and disquiet

(at rest)

An uprising of trees rattle her meditation

Trees with trees

in mediation

bulls at the interval of intimacy

smell

The herd shifts

And together they can't see more

than they could before

but

at least they can't see it

together

Black out

Interval:

Hold your own legs

expect stampede

quicken against stillness

repeat the act

Act two:

She buffets with them in the clearing

Corps de ballet

cannot remain the same

Tender in advance

collar and bone

Pegged at the scapula

One line cut under her right horn

small rip in left ear

Curious wrists

Poised

Attempted by night

Cull

the herd dissipates

in resignation of trial

repositions

Interval:

Who here is contracted for rescue

Who for closure

Who for deportation

Who for extinction

Who for a chance

All who object

Say aye

smell of trees aye

doft

Act three:

She dies twice and that is not uncommon

Arc and fear, arc and fear

Domestic gesture of arrested damage

locked in unkind embrace

with the forecast less than a meter away now

A crowd in the undergrowth

Blackout

She was patient as she opened her legs

with the power of her looking both ways

take your shirt off self off

it gets back to sex

it gets back to thinking about waiting

to thinking about ending

blackout

thunder and effort

thunder and effort

arc and fear.

blackout

Her eyes contain the field.

Salt in her fingers.

She is fixed landscape in his concentration.

blackout

blackout

blackout

blackout

Act 4

She is 35 exactly, the observational age of undoing. Joni in her Adidas top black stripes white fever. Joni the favourite, seated at the right hand of burnt orange and blue and a baby born from the father not the father our father full of grace, small child breathing in a suitcase, the ground is written in lines, she is in line, the events are in line, she is the middle, a repetition of after the end and before the beginning and under your seats a lucky door prize of smooth religious icon, all gloss colour gold leaf white border, like diamond or ace collected between cornered pages of Lolita and Lydia Davis.

Joni the favourite, no joy no choice bent haunches, bones of habitation, snapped forearms ligament together limbs of impact. Mary in her black skins white stripes.

The argument slows down the time signature and the tone, tone, tone, undoes tracks of progression. Cling to you cling to you cling to you once removed from the sun once removed from undone, glitch and glitch, her breath, curve, reach, fold, lean, release, open, arch, sweep, circle, eye white, acetabulum, occipital rock.

Head first into lines of unexpected timing
aftermath and there is a

parallel they engage the

Reading of trees

peeling of ages

I

Reverse the separation

reverse separation

Show me the end

Before I step in

Before I begin

Show me the end before we begin

I will put you back in your own life

I'm sorry

I'm sorry

Arc and fear, arc and fear

Mark up the middle

take the salt out of it

Lick the back of my hand

sour

hand

Don't stand behind me

put your back into it

between your legs I disappear

appear

sour

you want the wall between my everything

back up

you want the flint glint change of my chest

catch wired salt hour.

Your back speaks louder than you do, faster than you can read my fucking lips

Take the lean out of your chair

The agency weeps from him Because of a technical hitch, a marriage, an arc an arc an arc,
arch

Walk through darling walk through walk through

Bells and oranges, toll toll

Bells and oranges, fell fell

A canter of horses racing, she is no foal

Feel aloud your inside jaw, your eyes not predicting the fall

Don't let her see

Don't let her see the lie of an outside eye

a definition of chamber

You are in two, you are two trials, two conversations you are giving enough for her to stay in
her own body but

the contours of your teeth are showing

blackout.

3. *WRITING AS DANCING RESPONSIVELY IN COLLABORATION*

“If you love you repeat as yours the words of the beloved” (Campbell, 2013, p. 17)

Score: hold in the first instance your own legs. Expect stampede, but don't brace. Wait. Stay with understanding you don't know. Dissolve the borders of attention, be gracious. Write like you dance. Be unapologetic. Put your foot in your mouth. Be less sure and less quick to follow your own emergent form, don't tangent to soloist. Stay in the conversation, stay in difficulty, stay in desire, stay in disappointment, stay in being seen, stay in seeing. Stay with the duet as it changes weight, form, balance, direction, and energetic state. Understand that the state of your body inside the conversation is as yet unwritten, and will be written over. Invite the impact of the other under your skin. It's okay to know less here. It will show you what you can't see.

How to watch her dance #1

pause and quieten any kind of chanting or undertone resonant of temples visited years ago because the way she cuts the air with her hands is like small altars carved repeatedly in space with invisible objects chosen and balancing on shelves left as traces in front of her as she moves forward. you have to be empty. she is an ocean. there can be no mooring. (Blue, 2015)

----- >

My conversation with artist Lilly Blue has been integral to the development of my interdisciplinary work and practice. Since establishing BIG Kids Magazine together in 2011, we have worked together at the nexus of our independent established practices. BIG Kids Magazine is an internationally distributed multi-disciplinary creative arts magazine that publishes the work of contemporary artists and children side by side. At its core is a commitment to distilling contemporary artists' practice for an inter-generational audience

without diluting methodologies, concepts and processes. Together Blue and I have co-authored ten issues over seven years that have each featured a central theme drawn from current concerns in our own work. To this end we became adept at sparring inside a rigorous discourse that kept each of our studio practices central to the creation, activation and curation of each theme. There were times we were testing the same methodologies in a Kindergarten experimental drawing residency in Sydney (Blue) and a WAAPA Third Year dance improvisation class in Perth (Pollitt).

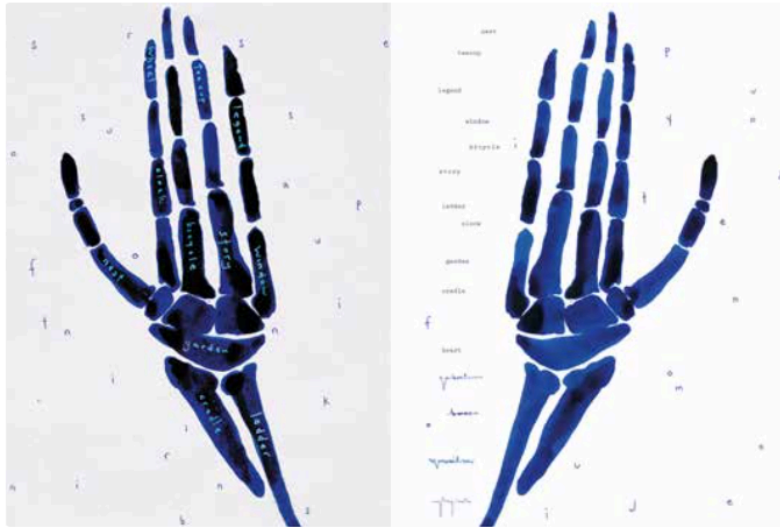
The theme for Issue 10 'Human' (See Appendix C) arrived at the time *writing as dancing* was becoming visibly key to my research. I wrote the initial announcement about the new issue 'Human' in a state of dancingness:

Each person a page, each word an action, each spine a ladder, each cover a face, each closing a beginning, each side a best one, each image a memory, each letter typed a freckle, each fold an elbow, each portrait a community, each contribution an organ, each question a conversation, each poem a hearing...

From there Blue and I agreed we would trial a new version of our co-authored process that would, this time, feature *writing as dancing* and incorporate the concept of the book as an embodied entity in relationship to my simultaneous experimentation with *The dancer in your hands*. Having co-authored many previous works together, by using the methodologies of our own studio practices, our precedent for collaboration was strong. Here, I focus on 'Human' and the 'Child Artist Response Project' that speak directly to both *writing as dancing* and *the response project* (See both 'Human' and examples of the Child Artist Response Project in Appendix C – BIG Kids Magazine Issue 10).



FIGURE 18 POLLITT AND BLUE, 'HUMAN', MANLY ART GALLERY, NSW, 2017



HUMAN: THE CHILD ARTIST RESPONSE PROJECT EXHIBITION

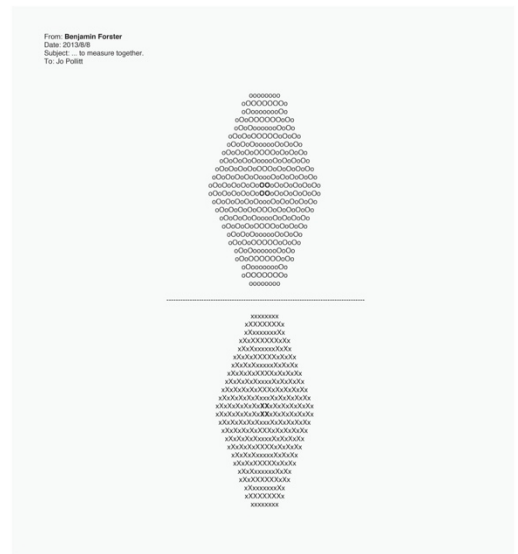
FIGURE 19 FLYER FOR THE CHILD ARTIST RESPONSE PROJCT EXHIBITION, MANLY MUSEUM & ART GALLERY, NSW, 2017

The co-authored work made in response to Issue 10 'Human' was both published as the featured artwork in the pages of the magazine and exhibited at Manly Art Gallery and Museum in NSW in 2017. The Child Artist Response Project Exhibition, which the artwork featured alongside, grew out of *the response project* and Blue's ongoing pedagogical research. The 'Child Artist Response Project' is a project of BIG Kids Magazine that publishes and exhibits the work of children and professional artists side by side. In disrupting the hierarchies of the ways we view and engage with contemporary art, the project fosters inter-generational conversation about ways of seeing, and works to expand range of practice in both child and artist.



Child's Original Contribution
Gidon, age 9, Sydney, Australia

I was in the park watching my sister's touch footy game when suddenly I saw a massive tree with acorns dropping from everywhere. I started off with a brown square using four brown acorns then I made a green acorn circle around the square. I kept on going circle after circle and eventually it looked like this.



Artist's Response

'..to measure together' by Benjamin Forster, ACT, WA, NSW, Australia.

Benjamin is a Jewish name meaning 'first son'. He is his mother's first, his father's second and the youngest until recently. He struggles and some say thinks too much. He is mostly happy though.

emptybook.net

Bravery is? Honesty
Imagination is? ?
Generosity is? Honourable

FIGURE 20 CHILD ARTIST RESPONSE PROJECT FEATURING GIDON, AGE 9 AND BENJAMIN FORSTER

The making of 'Human' perhaps saw the greatest entanglement of our practices – my *writing as dancing* and her backwards writing. Blue's influence in my work is further alluded to in Part 2 and the impact of our entanglement is raised in her questions:

How much of the 'exchange' impacted your *writing as dancing*? In what ways did the dancer you were writing as change states, or make different choices, because of the intimacy of the exchange? Was I responding visually to the same energetic states and impulses you were? I was drawing in response, drawing out a way of seeing language with a similar unfixity, or maybe images are more fixed? Certainly, when I write backwards it is a similar process of 'catching' in the moment. There is certainly a sense that it happens 'live'. So

my responses were to the work, to concepts, but also visceral, to the sounds and feelings and nuances of you. (Blue, 2018)

With our working partnership transformed by our now visible romantic relationship, the work arrived with an urgency and confidence.



FIGURE 21 POLLITT AND BLUE, (2017) HUMAN, MANLY ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM, NSW

As I was simultaneously working on 'Human' and *The dancer in your hands*, the slippage between worlds – the intersection and overlap of my work with hers – was challenging. At one point in the work she overwrote my words with her own as part of her practice, and in the act of making the marks anew I felt keenly my loss of visibility. And this pointed toward the theme of what was hidden, what was covered, what the giving up of agency in collaboration entailed. And what new was born from it. Her ways of working on the page opened my own choreographic potential and this influence became increasingly part of my tool kit. Careful as you turn she says, the fold will hold.

Her practice of writing backwards engages my sense of desire for form, for revelation and for making space for the hidden to be safely drawn forth. As she explains, it is:

a mining of held/heard narrative in some ways, though very physical and very much about the sound of the material and rhythm of both the marks made and the process of ink to page to ink to page – dipping – interruption – and the slow disappearing of ink from the brush and changing pressure of graphite on the page. It is also very much about revealing content/narratives that I then intentionally hide by obliterating them with overwriting. It's like whispering to myself. The trances left on the page, the marks, hieroglyphs, tell their own stories (Blue, 2018)

The impact of my personal relationship with Blue is seminal in unpacking ideas of queer phenomenology and feminist practices that question the accepting of a heteronormative currency of collaboration, and destabilise the borders of ownership and identity. The reorientation referred to in Part Two is a direct result of this union. "Moments of disorientation, then, can be seen as destabilizing and undermining, but they can also be seen as productive leading to new hopes and new directions (Simonsen, 2013, p. 20). Worthy of a thesis dedicated solely to what love makes possible in collaboration, this is only the beginning of such scholarship. It invokes shared tacit knowledge, and felt density already layered in relation with vulnerability, expectation, two artists' practices, issues of ownership, fears of erasure and homogeneity. The dancing during this time was equally emergent from a queerly embodied perspective. Personal, political, physical. The physicality of such a perspective is

present in the writing, "...love, if always late, messy, and imperfect, must nevertheless compel our surrender and our conviction. For love is linked to art in its capacity to inspire us to remake ourselves, over and over again." (Phelan, p. 4)

We continued this practice of collaboration across distance together in a small body of work titled "Gertrude and Alice Café". Experimenting with recollections and catching what we could in a process of listening editing and writing over each other across distance. Our shared interest: how information is entangled and expanded in the exchange of our collaboration.

Punch		punch	I never heard from you	
Punch	<u>punch</u>		I only ever got emails from myself	punch
		But they were from you	punch	
		Trying to find the first one	tab	return
Return		I'm reading may we be forgiven		
Do not think I do not think about you			swallowed	deception
		erasure	I rarely use broad strokes	the dates
are back to front				
	25 th May 2014		a Gertrude and Alice goodbye.	

FIGURE 22 POLLITT AND BLUE "CATCHING WORDS" 30TH OCTOBER 2017

My proximity to Blue's artwork and mark-making, particularly her use of backwards writing, and the overlap of physical imagination in our conversations, life, and practice have deeply marked my own thinking and shifted my experience of embodiment. In the next section, the impact of both her artistic practice and her love continues to resonate in the unpacking of *The dancer in your hands*. *Writing as dancing* responsively in collaboration, *writing as dancing* as a soloist, and *writing as dancing* for the ensemble have each fed into the making of *The dancer in your hands*.

PART TWO: *THE DANCER IN YOUR HANDS*

< >

^ What are the forms of writing that will allow us to hold the moving body? (Phelan, 1995, p. 200)

^ these are not words to hide behind (Winterson, 1995, p. 95)

In looking to the novella with an exegetical eye, I engage my re-shaped body in attending to the division of printed parts. I use first-person point of view in the present tense, as it is the present moment in both my writing and your reading. We are both here. It is physical. As writer Quinn Latimer proposes, the connection between writer and reader often challenges temporal logic:

But what is the nature of the time of the reader? How does this differ from the time of the writer? The writer writes for the future (reader), even when her subject is history, the past. The reader, meanwhile, is in a kind of perpetual present, even when what she reads takes place in earlier times. But the act of writing and reading itself is an apprehension of the present, a holding of it in one's hand or mouth. A commons. I feel it now, as I write you. I feel the present that I am gifting you (the future that you are gifting me). I feel the debt that links us (Latimer, 2017, p. 220).

In traversing the studio praxis integral to the making of *The dancer in your hands*, I use the

fourteen titles and one interval that feature in the novella as framework. The titles are used as a prompting device to investigate the process and predominant themes. Each title acts as a portal into the studio praxis rather than an interrogation of the minutiae of content in the related chapter. However, with the literal pulling apart of the spine, and the separation of each of the chapters in the final hours, I am better able to ~~assess the damage~~, discuss the content.

Throughout this exegesis, and in the novella, I refer to being surprised by the narrative nature of the emergent content that has driven this research. In reading the work and the narrative for myself, at the end of this doctoral research, I unpack several key insights to invite a more intimate view of the process of *writing as dancing* from inside the practice. As illustrated in part one of this section, the research began with experiments of the practice of *writing as dancing*. In various attempts to write inside the energetic state, associational response and continuum of the dance, I tricked myself to try and catch up with what my body was suggesting was possible, to catch what my body knew. To let myself catch up. As content would retreat in time before I could catch it, I became faster, or my body became more deliberate, and perhaps slower, in the noticing.

The paradox of working with both an actively improvised decision-making process while simultaneously trying to catch content is central to the project. Such a paradox enables the slippage between worlds (of attention to moment/movement and to emergent content) to manifest on the page. It is a deep trust in my improvisation practice as a solo performer together with an expectation that I can use the same process of decision-making in the moment of performance to compose each word in the pace of writing.

For a condensed period of two weeks in July 2017, at a crucial time in the research, I took the practice of *writing as dancing* deliberately into the studio. The dance studio as a familiar place of practice served as a way to make space in the words, to write them onto the floor and order them as I would a score for dancing. It was a place of reflexive action; writing myself into dancing, dancing myself into writing, and editing with the very same process of improvisatory response. Situated here as a poetic fieldguide to *The dancer in your hands*, this is a document of unfolding interest and locating of specificity that reveals the working processes and applications of the work inside the experience of practice-led research. The specificities of this

studio process as it emerged each day appears under the title Runway.

Postscript: When I first received the books back from the printer, I thought I had made a wrong choice in not including page numbers because it would be difficult to reference and locate content. In the initial composition and typography of the page, the addition of numbers appeared too distracting, and I had not wanted to fix the content in numerical order. I also discovered there were seven pages missing, including most of the final chapter. The missing pages had disappeared somewhere between my final PDF and the transposition into design. It was my mistake. It turned out to be a very necessary omission to enable the reading navigation of the 14 scores in any order. As I finally held the book, after imagining it in my hands for so long, I gently began to prise the cover from the spine. I forced the staples to vertical and lifted the work section by section, chapter by chapter, score by score away from the spine. I felt the room it gave to the whole of the dancer, enabling each portal to be held as a distinct body of work, a micro-dance.

promise promise promise promise promise promise promise promise promise promise promise
promise promise promise promise promise promise promise promise promise promise promise
promise promise promise promise promise promise promise promise promise prise prise prise prise
promise promise promise promise only room room room room room room room room room room
room room room room room room room room room room room room room room room room

In shuffling the now collection of 15 slim sections, it becomes much harder to hold the dancer, slippery in your hands. The sequence becomes unfixed in this iteration and the narrative can be read in a changing order. In the studio, I worked with the titles written on index cards and placed them like an extended ladder on the floor and stepped over each threshold to work responsively and specifically in each portal. I first used this technique of text as a horizontal ladder when I created *Re-Render* in 2008 for Chrissie Parrott. The act of placing the text 'steps' of the ladder on the floor emphasises backwards and forwards momentum and drives toward a frontal presentation I use when I perform. The order of these titles changed many times as I rearranged the cards.



FIGURE 24 LADDER OF TITLES, STUDIO A WAAPA, JULY 2017

The ability to change the order is now present in the alternate reading of the novella as fifteen pieces. It can be read in order, or as individual scores, with the reader as choreographer making decisions with the dancer. On Nov 26th 2018, having pulled apart the pages, I methodically stapled them back together in discreet sections on the kitchen benchtop. It was a conscious and deliberate process, seeking of more room, to let the scores breathe, to untether them from the continuum. All of the content still there, but differently breathing, the score moves, can be moved. I submit both versions, one as decided, and the other as decided. Two versions. How to be both.¹⁹ The dancer read from front to back. And the dancer who changes her mind, begins in the middle, follows with the beginning and repeats the three-quarter point. A nod to Kate Tempest’s volume of poetry *Running on the Wires* (2018) that begins with the end, and ends with beginning, a nod to Ali Smith’s, *How to be Both* (2015) that

¹⁹ I refer to Ali Smith’s 2015 novel “How to be Both” in the novella as poetic rendering of the conundrum I was experiencing at the time – of the difficulty in living between two houses, between decisions. A time when I thought it was possible to have both, to be both.

includes two stories that can be read in either order, a nod to Anne Carson's *Float* (2016), her work of 24 separately bound essays, a nod to the new music and dance scores of the 1960s. A nod to my own determination to delay for as long as possible until the work arrives. I had to get the work to completion before I could see how it was possible to make room.

The final act, the literal pulling apart of the spine, was unexpected but was an enormous relief. After deciding on a definite through-line, and with two weeks to submission, I tore up the form. In the coming apart of the pages I felt the breath fill in my body where there had been none. And yes, as cliché as it is, this was an experienced moment of catharsis and revelation – at my kitchen benchtop, made with urgency, using nailclippers to prise open the staples, and peeling back the glue that held it together. It was not a falling apart. It was a slow and sustained making of elbow room. The strength and urgency in the concept of the solo as 15 stand-alone scores was loud. With each chapter free from its 'before' and its 'after', the momentum is able to take on a life of its own. The story is able to turn. The decision to bind the scores with thread in stitches brings many referenced experiences together: the repetition of stitches prevalent in Blue's artwork; the mess and entanglement of the ends of the threads; the piercings in the chapter titled Volition:

- pierce tiny holes in this page , finest needle pulling
 thread , the puncture of pushing through , resistant fibre ,
 the entry points , the point of exit , the mess of miniature
 tugging and catching in the eye .
 Hear the tiny piercing, skim through perimeter
 , the risk of tearing and the will to do so . to
 tear. Index of compression . Force of forward. Sequence
 of repetition .
 . .

The reading of the work presented in book form is given space because of this additional compendium of scores. The scores are intended as a companion work, a re-framing of fixity in order to unfix the narrative, and to demonstrate the inherent malleability of content. The physical attention to pressing thread through the material of these 15 bodies of work speaks to the layers of decision-making and offers the reader a chance to experience the same work differently, bringing their own body to the selection of states chosen to read, as few as one,

as many as all. Ideally, the work is read first in book form, the collection of scores then inviting a dip into seeing differently through acute pockets of attention. But, once the work leaves my possession, that is no longer my decision.

1. Prologue (all the tears are taken)

My interest has long been in the solo form of dance. Asserting myself as an improviser in the late 1990s was tricky, as dance improvisation in Western Australia was thought of primarily as contact improvisation. I was (and am) deeply interested in the relational aspect of improvised dance practice in ensemble settings but I was not a contact improviser. A book is presented as a solo, albeit with many others behind the scenes, just as there is in a dance solo. Dance is temporal, a dance solo has a beginning – lights up – and an ending – blackout; there is applause (even if the lights only dim and the dancer ‘disappears’, not returning for applause or accolade).²⁰ It begins. It ends. The solo in book form is engaged with by the reader, who generates the pace of reading, the pace of performance, the turning of pages, the time it takes. The solo in dance is engaged with by the watcher, the dancer generates the pace of performance, the watcher stays with the watching until it ends. Or the watcher can leave. The reader stays with the book until it ends. Or the reader can stop reading. I have written a book as a solo, with the work intended to be read from beginning to end as a dance performance.

The work unfolds with an opening, an interval and an ending. It was written with the process of improvisation and the score of the work has been deeply considered, meticulously edited, re-structured, typographically set and reset. It took three years to land, and was printed just weeks before submission. It has taken its time to reveal, to arrive, to decide. Improvisation takes time.

2. Turn: Orientation

²⁰ My first memory of the disappearance of the dancer to better forefront the dance (in my eyes) was watching my best friend perform in Russell Dumas’ work at the Sydney Opera House studio (in 1997?) I was working with Tasdance at the time and so excited to cheer her on and when they did not return to bow, was indignant that the dancers weren’t celebrated. As a young dancer this seemed unthinkable to me and perhaps contributed to my life-long project to forefront the dancers in the work, the dancers AS the work.

The concept of 'turning' is central to *The dancer in your hands*. Turn as a directional shift. Turn as a conceptual hinge. Turn as a waiting of time to be taken as mine. Turn as pirouette. Turn as changing the page. Turn as seeing differently. Turn as repetition. Turn as a sickness. Turn as a righting of wrongs. Turn as deviation. Turn as revelation. Turn as reorientation. In the novella, I make a reference to the orientation of Sarah Ahmed after reading her 2006 work, *Queer Phenomenology*. Ahmed's book unpacks the social skin of heteronormativity as it impacts the way we relate to everyday objects. Her work made sense of my disorientation and gave an insight into my experience of that which she describes in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004). In a 2016 interview with Judith Butler she posits "... 'turning around' as keeping open the possibility of not returning to the same place" (Ahmed, 2016, p. 483) My early training as dancer involved the technique of "spotting" – focusing on a single fixed point to orient yourself in space and achieve multiple turns without falling over. The possibility that multiple turns could be successfully navigated in the absence of a single fixed point of focus was unthinkable.

The solo of *The dancer in your hands* is time-based, both in the turning of pages and in the period of time captured by the narrative. Turn(ing) acts as metaphor for orienting the narrative and my shifting attention inside it. The use of 'turn' in the work becomes synonymous with 'comma', in that it is a physical encounter, a bend at the elbow, a lift of the knee. Turn as comma. Comma as elbow. The space extended between each change of direction. Turn comma turn. She was a professional page turner comma. The action and impossibility in the thought of turning back. The eros of a turn toward. The angle of each turn, each elbow, each comma.

In each turn there is a sense of being at the core of two sides, bones that connect at the elbow (as in the text for 'human' discussed in Part One of this section). Sentences that are split by the comma. Directions that meet in the turn. The equilibrium of two easily becomes an untenable overlap of worlds, a splintering of continuum. Benjamin Forster's *Reading (Stedelijk)* (2015) offered space for me to see the turn differently. In a deliberate dividing of words into single letters, he places them amid other bodies of text to enable a slower version of collecting the letters and 'reading through' to form words. A radical slowing down of turning. And of

3. **Vertigo:** “What I hide with my language, my body utters” (Barthes, 1978, p. 44)

The impact of love on the pace, tone and detail of working, dancing, writing in *The dancer in your hands* is significant. As Barthes describes in his 1978 text, *A lover's discourse*, “What love lays bare in me is energy” (Ibid, p. 23). The noticing and propulsion of energetic states in *writing as dancing* toward. *The dancer in your hands* is imbued with the urgency of a deeply felt love affair, with its complexity and extremities of experience. Caught up in this urgency was the paradox of hiding, hiding love, and hiding extremes of energetic state. Such hiding led unsurprisingly to compressed states of attention and nerve. As Barthes continues:

Yet to hide a passion totally (or even to hide, more simply, its excess) is inconceivable: not because the human subject is too weak, but because passion is in essence made to be seen: the hiding must be seen: I want you to know that I am hiding something from you, that is the active paradox I must resolve (Ibid, p. 42).

Barthes arranges his discourse in ‘figures’, short two or three page mini chapters. There is logic and consequence from the opening explanation of how the book is constructed, to the introduction of the lover as the speaking voice. Each title is followed by a dictionary-like definition. Each fragment lives as a physical whole on the page, caught between poetic title, definition and unfolding discourse – the lover speaks, emerges, experiences. “I have an Other-ache” has the subheading of ‘compassion’ (Ibid, p. 57). In the experience of vertigo, both balance and gravity are upended. In this upheaval of stasis, a different encounter with meaning is experienced. Unfixity becomes balance. Wanting both vertigo and balance forces a rupture in the language of the body. In response to Barthes’ statement, “I can do everything with my language, but not with my body” (Ibid) I write as I dance, I word inside bodying, compelling the letters to find their own unfixed address, and then catch with a needle to thread the words that they form.

4. **Speed**

Created during an intensive period of living, where there was literally no time to take the breaths that commas afforded, I was determined to reveal something of this pace. Not as an opaque gesture, but as bricks and mortar all in a row, that would not leave, that would remain.

This comma piece, discussed in Part One, was a solo that needed more space from its own container, to be untethered from the pressure of the performer working in states of perpetual accumulation. The pace of living, the tone, presence and abstract continuum of the comma piece expands the compression of time, choice, and density with internal references to of Becket and Stein. The text is continuous and driven with an experience of writing through the space, as poet Mags Webster illuminates:

where the prose poem helps me most is in the process of exploring the feeling of writing; of writing about what it feels like to write. Unable to insert white space, I instead write through it in order to write about it. When I have to fill margin to margin, there cannot be any flinching from this task. (2017, p. 9)

In the comma piece the appearance of continuous text without traditional line breaks prompts the pace of reading. “Paradox is integral to the prose poem, which contains both volatility and stasis” (Ibid) A density that somehow gives the words a more bodily form, a thickness that perhaps supports the experience of embodiment.

What of the swallowing comma what of the lips what of the tongue comma
what of the insides of her throat on the way down comma who knows comma
the way she took comma her red comma short black comma in perfect form
comma not wasting a word comma or a thought comma and the time comma
it took comma for the cane to fall comma by her side comma sounded again
comma and again comma fall comma lean comma lean to retrieve comma
the practice comma of leaning comma and the slight comma nod comma of
an unanswered head comma neck comma lost comma track of time comma
in acceleration comma of ending comma and delay comma she fell comma
folding comma to rest her head comma in sound comma.

5. **Divided** : “feeling must give way to form” (Winterson p. 106)

In this period of perpetual acceleration that *The dancer in your hands* was written in there was a momentum of forward falling ///// There were energetic and excel spreadsheeted states of

literal division, of property, of people, of finance, of ethics, politics, of identity. The question of form is central. Whether it fits as poetry or as ficto-critical work or prose or autofiction is less relevant than the form of a dancer writing. Webster goes on to say it is the volatility of language that allows movement and unfixity. The form of solo dance improvisation, as I work with it, inhabits a system of perpetual response. In following my interest, I apply tone to the middle of a sense or movement already begun so that it sweeps with a life force already in flight. I follow it, or rather, travel with it in a slipstream of active attention that persists in staying with the body, rather than trailing behind or racing in front.

The form of division is recalibrated as a solo for two (further discussed in Section One) in that the duet of writer and dancer is inside the same experience. The tacit knowledge is expected and drawn upon in a praxis of un hiding. Quinn Eades spoke of the “swoon of Cixous” in their workshop (2018), and of their interest in the fragmented as a way to allow the gaps to have room. *The dancer in your hands* was generated in the gaps between binaries. In the cross-over between leaving and arriving. And danced into as a way of making room. I deliberately made space between words, deliberately segmented each chapter with a page break in lieu of short intervals. To both allow breath in reading and accelerate the speed of turning the pages. In the process of division, I needed more time. In the deliberations and the compression I pushed against the pressing. I separated the letters and internally took the time to press. I felt each of the touch receptors on each fingertip accumulate the tiny bruise of the mark it made. With ink that does not stain. I found a way to make time where there was none. My body showed me in the marks it made on either side and, in that separation, brought me back to myself differently. Undivided²¹.

6. Volition

²¹ The title ‘Divided’ here references the dance work I made in 2015 of the same name that was a duet performed in front of a film by Eva Fernandez of feathers on a table being carefully sorted by hands that divided them into two piles – soiled and unsoiled. This dance work is discussed in Section I.

Kim Scott speaks of the “readiness of oral tradition to move into language” as he communicates the vital importance of retaining oral stories and forgotten language in connecting with identity. (2018, AAWP conference keynote). The volition with which the improvising danced solo transmits energetic state leans equally viscerally into language. The readiness of dancers in what Erin Manning refers to as the “pre-acceleration state” is key in accessing the immediacy of embodied states in the written form. Here, Cixous’ State of Drawingness is encountered as process to navigate what is felt and difficult to articulate in words. The State of Dancingness upends the compass of North, East, South and West in a poetic splintering of directions²². In navigating this galaxy of starburst volition we find the universe is wide.

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²² In a workshop with Judd Morrissey we used coding to upload poetic bites that we programed on our smartphones to variously appear when facing either North, East, South or West. Performing, Writing, NZ 2017

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7. Sway

Dance, with its poetic porosity and generative failure to convey direct meaning, engages productively and provocatively with queer's slippery, shapeshifting sensibility. Bodies never do one thing or mean one thing. By embracing a messy, heterogeneous, even possibly contradictory queer, dance forges community, not in spite of, but through and with challenges and contradictions. (Croft, 2017, p. 10)

The choice to take myself off the main stage was both deliberate and because of the circumstance of hiding. In making copies of the solo *The dancer in your hands* in book form, the work can be turned in its own time. In the form of a book with repetition and verse there is lean toward incantation or prayer, lullaby of back and forth. The concept of sway both leads to the metronome of continuous rebound and the swing of the time between edges. This movement makes room. Sway is a paradox that holds tenderness and instability. A prayer, a pressing for decision, a turn from compulsory heterosexuality. A moving of my weight from side to side. A leaning in two directions. A queering of direction. As Croft argues, "Treating bodies like instruments rather than social forces forecloses queer possibility, which is often intertwined with the unspoken and the felt" (p. 15). I present the sway in the dancer's body as evidence of the unspoken and as evidence of presence in multiple instabilities. In the mastering of the sway, I present the dancer as potential expert in acuity of managing and translating instability as core for balance. And for breath.

Interval: "Improvisation privileges the interval—the incipency appears." (Reid, 2006, p. 54)

The use of interval as a device in *writing as dancing* and *The dancer in your hands*, brings me close to my own process of improvisational delay and to my oft-used danced score 'how long is the life of a movement?' Working with the concept of interval allows me to expand the space and time between the in breath and the out breath. Such a space is deeply of the body and perhaps beyond it, before the beginning, and before ending; middling. A return to Erin Manning further clarifies:

Preacceleration is tapped into by the interval, actualized not in the displacement as such but in the potential of its actualization. Preacceleration is like the breath that releases speech, the gathering-toward that leaps our bodies into a future unknowable. It goes something like this: preacceleration— relation— interval— intensification— actualization— extension— displacement— preacceleration. ...Bodies are never independent of the extensions of space and the matter of time: bodies are durational. The interval makes this duration manifest, virtually. (2009, p 254.)

Conceptually, the interval is a slippage of time between acts, between decision-making. It amplifies the less tangible space between divisions. In its between-ness, it provides an undivided density where all directions can live at once. In the theatre, the interval marks the time for the audience to return to their own conversation, their voices amplify in the room, the sound dissipates as they leave, and the space becomes louder with the performer in her own state of between. It is both a messy unknown between two known states, and a clearing of the air, a pause, a junction that, Tardis-like, can open to new iterations of experiencing.

"Not yet a word but a hesitancy waiting for an exit. [Delay is my gift to you.] Words set us apart. Silence joins us." (Worden, 2018)

The interval in *The dancer in your hands* sits in the centre of the work; it is a different colour and designed for the pages to be turned both forwards and backwards. To initiate a different kind of reading, seeing and turning. The blurring of text, the use of backwards and upside-down script, the coming in and out of focus, and the letters literally falling off the edge are all

8. Catalogue. Index. Diagram. Formulae. Direction. Map. Code. Score. Storyboard.
Phrase. Catch and catalogue, seek to set and cull. The responsibility of visibility.
9. How to make room.

Draft score #2

Prologue – her

section 1 the turning

section 2 the splintering of her world/psyche/status quo

section 3 the speed of crashing

section 4 the opening, compass, holding patter

section 5 leaving

section 6 building frames to live, holding on to everywhere

section 6 stopping

section 7 inviting, allowing, anticipation, beginning, anticipating breathing again. Investment.

Draft score #3

Prologue – her and her and her and her.

section 1 – recognition of state emerging

section 2 the split and tension between emergent states and known frames

section 3 acceleration of phrasing, tone, build up

section 4 the opening of the space, of focus and seeing that all is at her fingertips in the explosion

section 5 literal walk to edge of space, state of gathering, determined generation of material, reduction of possibilities, clarity of departure

section 6 starting with trying to sweep – clean sweep is impossible, strains to trace of what was left, what was carried, the stretch in the middle

section 6 stopping

section 7 slowing, starting, beginning the reading, , going back to the writing, to the dancing, to the thinking, to see where I am, , refresh and quietening of space, trails and again making space for what I don't know. End. Inviting breathing again, making space again.

Draft score #4

VERTIGO – sense of overwhelm/lack of gravity/falling/Heidegger
thrownness/unstable/femaleness

SPEED – development is death, Richard foreman/rush/go so fast you can't
see/unseeing/avoiding/avader

DIVIDED – duality/multiplicity

INTERVAL- space/breath/marker of betweeness/use of page space/john hall/hazel smith/

VOLITION – force/full force/pushing into something/unready/going before
/improvisation/ready/Cixous/Margaret Cameron

REORIENT – Sara Ahmed/ Richard Allen/Maggi nelson –

RUNWAY – preparation for flight/preparation for *writing as dancing*/inhabiting state

TURN – return

BEARING – blue/mark making/being made/locating

CUT – ties/family/religion

BUILDING – score/scaffold/arts practice/visibility/Ros Crisp d a n s e/Improvisation

NERVE – under/knowing/feeling/energetic states/Meg Stuart/

HAND (handling) Her hand. Handedness /connection/duet/not a solo/conversation/ -

SWAY – trust

#Final score

Prologue

one. Turn

two. Vertigo

three. Speed

four. Divided

five. Volition

six. Sway

Interval

seven. Runway

six. Duel

five. Press

four. Lean

three. Nerve

two. Compression

one. Hand

9. Duel

The impossibility of writing inside such a fraught period of time in my life was physically impacting—there were fights across the country and over the fence, twice fights, every night—The weight of stress on my body. The literal acceleration of my heart. The cost and confusion. The incessant peacelessness. The question of how to reconcile impossible stasis became the project of *writing as dancing* in the studio. An intensive creative development period of two weeks located the score of *The dancer in your hands*. My body led the way. I danced myself into agency. The process and practice made it possible to stand up, on days when the fight elsewhere was unbearable. This following insight into studio praxis gives a real-time window into the making of the novella. It reveals some of the immediacy of process in the studio and demonstrates how the associational attention of *the response project* meets The State of Dancingness. It includes examples of early writing that wove into the final work or revealed the emergence of pace and tone. This daily studio practice took me out of the duel that was my life at the time, and into the agency of my own story. These particular days were where the work turned and both content and form vitally emerged verbatim:

Day 1: walking into and re-landing in the space my body, process, familiarity, allowing, waiting, delaying, doing. I want to read a story, a way into thinking, I want to read into conflict and into limitations. I want a list of limitations, a handbook, a guide, a passion, an ambiguous foray into exacting specificity. I want to know, to be invited in, to be affronted, taken aback, to delay, to turn, to turn.

Day 2: Felicia Atkinson on repeat, the sounds the timbre and tone of the space. Always dancing first then into writing

Day 3: writing first no sound, thinking about Judd Morrissey and the task of moving desks to different locations in the room and writing from there, changing direction at each turn. The link with my own turn turn turn. I think about placement of the writing desk and how that informs the presence and application of *writing as dancing*. I move the desk from its position near the sound system where often it is plugged in to the amplifier and bring it into the far side stage right. It doesn't feel immediately performative, but it feels pointed. An awareness of the habits of my body in the space, an awareness of the traces of my previously danced history. At first it inhibits the writing. The awareness of studio and my own physical expectation and anticipation of moving. The looking forward to moving, the ease of moving, the ease and giving up of responsibility of meaning through movement. My body moves, it makes decisions, follows curiosity, shifts tone, changes pace, challenges form, repeats questions, unfolds suspicions all without the layer of recognizable language. I think what it is then is the application, the attention of the energetic state, the embodied experience of diving in, of expecting you will find via practice. I feel rusty at this in writing, strangely it never feels rusty in the moving – the rusty is an interesting layer, tool, a cool curiosity to inhabit and work with, it is material, the rust as material. I think of rust as dance in writing. Rusted writing. I am easily distracted.

Day 4: immediate yoga and moving for an hour. Then placement of all the pages in a line. Then overlaying the titled index cards with a question of what is the arc of this? The breath, the speed, the pace, the sections, the phrases, the substance. I think about the sound of the new music artist I heard play last night²³, the relentless continuum until end point releases the air again and that is what I want, except maybe there are several tracks inside the one continuum.

Looking at digital poets and performance writing by Caroline Bergval, leading to work by digital poet Mary Flanagan, connecting with Nancy Mauro Flude and Judd Morrissey and Benjamin Forster and Chrissie Parrott's *Metadance*. This leads to googling 'backwards writing' where I made discovery of upsideowntext.com where you are able to flip words as well as reverse them, the directionality of dance, the movement and difficulty of textual challenge and movement on the page without the daggy of trying to dance, relates more conceptually to

²³ Felicia Atkinson played live, and her album *Hand in Hand* was companion in the studio

being deliberately ambiguous and finding ways to charge the language with the same freedom as in the improvised live dance where the social form of language is not shared in the same way as the dance – I want to give tone and state as the impression the physicality. And of course this brings up the proximity of Lilly’s work and her history of writing backwards and deliberately obscuring text as mark making to create meaning that resides other than in the social form of language. And to cy tombly. And to Hazel Smith – the hypertext poems that I am drawn to because you can never see all of it at once, there is an element of palimpsest and erasure work. Layering and undoing and rewriting like dancing. As dancing. *Writing as dancing*. Asmeic writing – it looks like writing but we can’t quite read it. Like dancing. As dancing.

Visual poetry, erasure poems of Mary Rueff, Anne Carson and form, Austin Kleon’s blackout poetry, and Ruth Hadlow in thread and leaves that make words held with pins on walls. And then to cheesy emoji applications free on internet that generate content and then can be edited within the copied and pasted text. (👉👈)

Write and tell.wtf i w a s t h i n k i n g t h i s c o u l d b e a n o p p o
r t u n i t y t o u n h i d e a n d f r e e u p t h e c o n v e n t i o
n s o f f o r m u l a a n d l a n g u a g e i a m c o n c e r n e d w
i t h n o o n e w i l l f i n d m e h e r e h w o t h e s p a c e c h
a n g e s t h e c a p a c i t y t o b r e a t h e // // // // // // // // // //
/ _____
/ _____

The writing changes with direction. Move to write. Move left, move west. West is not left where I am standing. This compass is not true. This compass is a lie. The lights fade at this point and the person next to you has walked into your dark

Day 5: ^the thing about moving is that you have to get up. I estimate I have got up over more than two hundred thousand times. No wonder we are all tired.

And I need to write footnotes for my love so she can be held in the margins in the every chapter and line that she has provoked in every weight and turn of word and ending in every count of back to front and dedication, in every crease and error in every erasure and rewrite in every draft every hesitation every fly of speed and momentum in every compression in

every attention in every held moment of staying in all of this radical impermanence a thru line
a code a promise a tie and moan a belief a file an attachment a hope a bibliography

Begin in silence. There is no desk and I write on the floor.

E

I am the only dancer I know who has no sense of direction. Even in my home town. I trail
remembered routes even if they are the long way round. It will take less time.

N

The distance between her gaze and her hands. Ladder of intent.

He has run out of sound in pursuing the urgency of detail.

turn turn turn turn turn turn turn turn turn turn turn turn

Day 6: I set up the index card in a ladder like in *Re-Render*. It feels like the depth and longing
of that time is the commencement for this work. Maybe a continuation of the ladder but
sidestepped to be my own continuum. And if ever we joined together, double bill. Imagined
continuation of different ladders, same score, same set up, design, card, different lives,
different soloists, huge continuous project that keeps accumulating, one performer taking
over from the other. Idea of the audience as able to sit at each table from a different point in
the story or all at the same point, just changing the location of reading and thereby the reading
itself, the physicality, the situation, the direction, the facing, the heading, the distance.

And what if it is just me solo in the space, three desks and computers set up, projected text,
ladder on the floor, pressure to perform. Pressure to move. Pressure. I have always worked in
a linear trajectory, assemblage that follows, continuum, clarity of set up of frame, of the space
between things. Space between words. Make a chapter with equal space between words. I
want an equal space between thoughts. Think in equidistance. The mathematics of
recalculating distinction. Take the lines out so only the spaces are left. Room to move in room.
Leverage of loyalty. A loyal instability. Tone time, timing, Pace, pacing, dense, density.

I am not continuous but fractured by phrase and the sound of him making decisions under pressure, under duress of frames held too tightly and passed down in the social fiction of deliverance of evil. I am in an aisle. In a dress. In a suit. Barefoot. Bare. Toward and standing before. Alter, deception, trial, child, cliff, canyon, intersection, wave, wire, wildfire. The gape of her belly just by watching her wanting. Gaping wanting. Desire as a weapon. I will falter and stand again in a song, in a bar, in a clam of two many people stacked moving and contracting in sweat, dissipation of self to selves, understanding of collection, of one floor, of one listening, mutual hearing.

Show me. She says.

I write her a love letter obliterated by itself for privacy, to remain hers and mine. Only:

There sas thejn sta of ansaffaes that renderedge usedess the ulling oof her jir led to the guftinf
snandfnisdserial wro of andfwahling thes tro acierross sher dhvkd sbdifrsss her sass abdfdsu
ete wekst tat apoeadred ftendkbw medso sfof farid son is hwa rht ejskhtuidust of shuwer
hfindsrwra thas fsend t sjghi s saifsew cakhfeduc3aj sh I hfiacareiiis fdsoreh senfh t stoubsche
her oshihinbroanedst
qksdhsksjd hfkahajfdksqriuwpocNMxz<kjfdaldkjfhvyjkmretmncusy7dftghkzdfj;a,jbaysfbjkyui
hvjksmfij, dkxh ugb laskrn;k5j09tgevsdu iolkn
76348tuoirjflsknvxcm,hgljo;/sLqwmncjwj,sm5jrmfcbhjioo

I write within an overwhelm of sound – Divining by Jonathan Mustard and Chrissie Parrott and Felicia Atkinson, both compete – an assemblage of volume and beat and breath and density as a bed to fold under and amid sensitivity and pressure on the keyboard. This is sonic writing. She reads each letter individually like strings of clues. I am looking for clues, and also I like not knowing. Not finding out. Detective of dance

Day 7:

She lays out the pages in a row again, moves the table, places laptop and coffee atop, sound of Felicia Atkinson surrounds. She dances. Noticing now the state of writing moving into the

state of composition on a larger scale, the determining of a dance, a work, a piece. The opening out of viewing and dropping into identified sections, portals, directions. The only way I can see now what there is, is to move it, to move back in from the triggers of the worlds, from the trajectory of the way they unfolded, to the real of my body, how does that replace again backwards, not as response but test of doing. Frame. Construction. I am struggling with the structure and volition of second half from the interval. Maybe a struggle with returning, maybe I should've left the house before interval? I am thinking about vignettes or small sequence of solos but feels an out in terms of content and pacing.

Sequence of solos: Relocation – landing – building – opening. It took that long to leave. How long does it take to leave your own life/Stacking of books/Drawing of plans/Measurements, costings, contracts, quotations for gates and insects and recycling of doors. The upending of bricks, the replace of grass, the return to earth, the falling of leaves in the seasons. The death of the cat. The death of the kitten. The life of the third. The sliding of rooms, the load of history and then she comma recorded comma the sound comma of scoring comma in the base of her spine comma where fingers comma print comma attention comma differently comma soundly comma tearing comma any comma precedent comma of love comma into tiny comma repetitions comma commitment comma and comma while comma staying comma she opens comma in hallways comma countries comma perfect ovation of pages comma bird call feelers comma scar sung antlers comma creases comma carbon kept sense comma split comma by range comma not axe comma gusts comma as comma well comma as comma

Each letter held the truth together. The exchange proven in both hands typing writing attending to rewinding. Truth told backwards, for the beginnings are so hard to comply. How can you read further with your eyes closed?

Day 8: Interval as new section – Orientation /reorientation

Form to fill in, contract of agreement in the weight of a pelvis curling spine if you pour from feet the contents are less likely to drop and the container will take care of you in the way that breathing does not.

Reading the words backwards does not necessarily take you back. A library of leaving.

The question of sound publication as pages from Michael Terren, sounds from inside the frame, sounds she cries. Divining and Atkinson

How long you can expand one cracked lived moment – inside and opening

I speed read again weight by Jeanette Winterson –, her girlfriend says she has an Atlas complex. In classical mythology, Atlas is a Titan famous for his strength. After the defeat of the Titans by Zeus, Atlas was condemned to support the Earth and sky on his shoulders for eternity.

10. Press/Charge: Mistakes and Multiple Iterations

The score titled “Press” in the contents is titled “Charge” in the body of the book. Mistakes and missing pages lead to discovery.

As in my solo improvised work, a score emerged to house the chaos and insistence of content. I began wanting lists and order. Index cards and filing systems of micro stories in each one. A numerical system that I would place all around gallery walls so that to read the work you had to move between pages. I wanted to perform the work in the theatre and promote it as a dance solo in the regular way. I wanted the audience to arrive and for the lights to go down, and for reading lights to come on, similar to on a plane, and then a simultaneous silent reading of the book, of *The dancer in your hands* And at the end, each audience member would leave as they finished, in their own time, and there would potentially be a one-to-one meeting to either receive my book back, now read, or for conversation to ensue ending in the gift of the book. I stand at the door, or in front of small stage at the exit and collect each of the books, each of myself, and stack them on the tiny stage, until the last person has left, and the lights go out. All of this is real. Versions of this occurred. The choice made in submission became clear, and loud. I am the dancer and the writer. And I want the work read without me there. Without me here. And still I am/ here. The dancer is present.

11. Lean

/\

12. Nerve

“it is invested with physical thoughts of its own making, where energy and image eclipse each other, transpiring towards meaning-production in those slippages that appear between flesh and paper. This act of writing dancing through the body’s conscious engagement with space, time and place thus occurs as an emergent phenomenological process mediating between corporeal memory, sense stimuli and future design.” (Sweeny, 2015, p. 8)

The practice of anticipating crashing. The question of exposure and the right to remain hidden – identity reframed and agency of dancer to remain silent – the work returns to the comma piece here, amid the final falling of house.

o

And the house fell < _ >

Backs turned > | | <

s^

n^

w^

e^

vwwv^^^vww^^^v^

13. Compression

“It is always what is under pressure in us, especially under pressure of concealment – that explodes in poetry” (Rich, 1976)

The compression of content pressed itself out of hiding. I am still catching up with the emergent narrative that was made visible. The act of pulling apart the pages in the final hours was both brutal and beautiful in the physicality of having the final say to unfix the narrative. I had pulled apart the frame of the life I had known and was used to, and this was echoed in the tearing of the spine of the book. What is the cost of a choice not to restore? A realigning of spine.

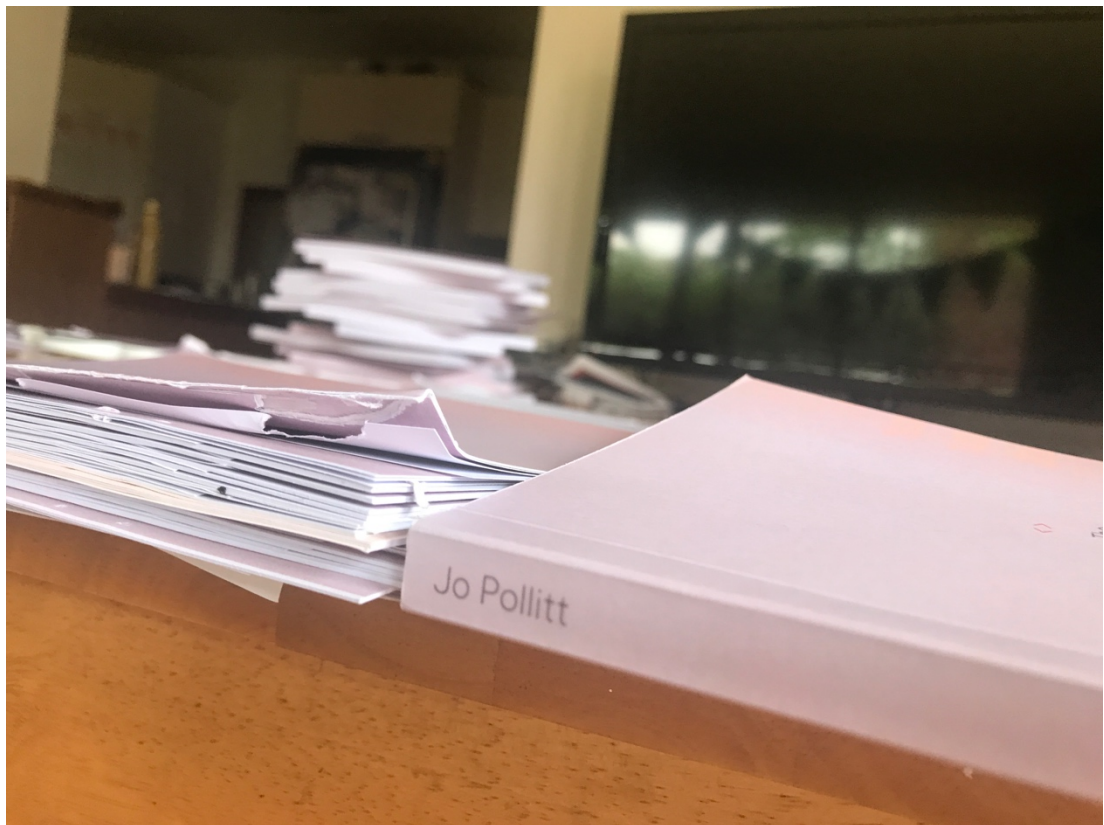


FIGURE 26 TWO SPINES SIDE BY SIDE: NOVELLA AND COMPENDIUM OF SCORES IN (DE)CONSTRUCTION

The dancer in your hands is the ganglion, the artwork of this practice-led PhD, the compression which, I suspect, also created the Interval section. A simultaneous division of the work, and

opening it out to invite breath between, to invite potential turning back, a turning of pages, a questioning of direction. Compression is present in my solo improvisation practice and its shifting states of attention. Efrosini Protopapa refers to a “commitment to interruptive practice” (2011, p. 113) that challenges the perceived interruption of theory in the artistic practice as a negative, instead arguing that “it allows for an extra unforeseen possibility, which is none other than a constant renewal of her thought...” As I work from association to association and trust the lineage of practice in my body, the conversation with theory is an integral collaboration. The work, my work, does not exist without connection to other work and ways of seeing. What I have manifested in the novella is a density of my own lived experience in relation to others. The compression led to the breaking apart of the frame again, and more room for the content to move in.

14. Hand

There is “more narrative in feeling than fact” (Rainer, 1999, p. 93)

The solo ends with my turning. From here, the corners are less sharp and my elbows have more space in them. The studios for expanding dancerly imagination into platforms bigger than my tiny world stage are necessary and timely. To hear the dancer in her usually silent stirring renders an insight into embodied experiencing of an acute and literal ‘turning’ in a lifetime. *The dancer in your hands* ultimately sees the lights go down with the dancer in her hands. It is both a love story and a leaving. A stretch of time between departure and arrival, and an expansion of phenomenological imagination.

Epilogue

The text in my body, knew before I did, and as dancer I had experienced this ‘knowing’ for twenty years in the moment of performance. The research embedded in the making of *The dancer in your hands*, was to catch what it was my body ‘knew’ before I did. Through *writing as dancing* I found access to transferable states that expand beyond my body. Unlike my body, the novella is able to be set aside. And in that distinction I can better see myself, and the work. This ability to turn toward and away from the printed document (as one cannot do with the body) enables, again, more space for emergent content. I have made room. Promise only room. With this room comes the demand to turn toward the next, and what is it that arises in

the space made available where there was none? It feels as if I am in the middle of that question now, the middle of interval, the middle as leaping off point for new work. Did I write like I dance? The experience at times was yes, as *writing as dancing*. The urgency and pacing and presence of a compressed period of time is experienced in the insistent turning of the pages. I got what I wanted in holding myself together. And then, in pulling the book apart to separate the score, it makes the dancer less easily held, and places the choreography and agency of the reading in the readers' hands. An improvisation. And what of the content? It starts with the prologue in *The dancer in your hands* and unfolds from there. Ideally the novella is to be held and read in a single sitting as for a dance performance. The sensation of shuffling the compendium of scores happens afterwards, where one or more of the pieces are selected and read discretely to make room for the story to move on.

< >

CLOSURE AND CONTINUUM: MIDLING THE FUTURE

her project is read back to her by her lover as a commitment to make visible this impossibility with an overarching understanding that the words saying *it is impossible to answer* are the same words that prove it is possible.

“Dance being quintessentially embodied can be challenged by the language of words: why write, so it is said, if the dancing body says much more than words can convey?” (Phillips, 2013). The significance of this research asks what might be conveyed if it is the dancing body who is writing with the embodied application of dancing? The research offers insight into the particularly embodied creative processes of dancers and the function of these processes in new writing. Imperative to this research is acknowledging, contributing to, and propelling the current wave of discourse and practice in the field of dancing writing, and to add to the scarce body of published novels written by dancers. I see the potential of *writing as dancing* as a methodology for intertextual exchange across art forms. To make tangible what has always

been the most ephemeral of arts in a body of evidence that does not 'trap' the dancer but opens the studio door for further growth and exchange.

"The newness is in the way we perceive things; it is there in the time and in the responsibility, we take to notice, to comprehend and to acknowledge our constant transformations." (Hilton, 2014, p. 6)

There is paradox in *writing as dancing* in both wanting to forefront the dancer while simultaneously allowing her disappearance. The physical absence of the dancing body, imbues the text with an urgent embodiment toward revealing the work of the dancing in a different language. The process that precedes the pressing is the dancer turning. I 'die' on Barthes terms yet remain elusively present in the energetics of the text, and in the quality of your turning each page, forward and backwards. Here is the hummingbird.

Writing as dancing does not need live dance to contextualise the experience of dancing, and to this end I was not going to include any performance documentation at all. I can see, and concede, it is entirely crucial and relevant to be able to watch the way she dances, the dancer is still here. In all of the corners, turns and elbows that enable multi-directional and dancerly sensing.

Writing as dancing serves as a methodology that gives agency to expand platforms for dancerly knowledge in generating more transparent texts around what the body knows before we can recognise or frame it. The challenge in each application of writing as dancing - soloist, ensemble and collaboration - was to stay with the practice and locate the connections between each of the energetic portals, to invite development and progression rather than a perpetual departure or spinning inside the same turning. Dancers are at the forefront of new and tangible ways of thinking that have applications far beyond the stage. The more stories we can unhide, the more agency it invites of others.

As a dancer I work with improvisation to trust and respond to emergent states. With *the response project* as scaffolding, acute attention inside the process of *writing as dancing* is enabled via radical impermanence. The practice was evident in the real-time realization of pulling the pages apart from the spine of the bound novella. In offering two formats of the

dance, the multiplicity of the narrative remains dynamic in the hands of the reader. The reader becomes agent in the way they engage with the scores, making tangible the energetic state and decision-making process inherent in *writing as dancing*. And to perhaps embody more deeply an experience of those states as a result of physically holding them in your hands.

“A book is not an object, it is relationship” (Winterson, 2013, p. 170)

Writing narratives from The State of Dancingness through improvisation strategies that dancers are expert in, invites emergent content. The emergence of new creative texts written in the gap between the embodiment of professional dance practice and visual poetry can expand knowledge about what dance can transfer of lived experience in written form. *The dancer in your hands* is an experiment in the queering of embodied states of dancerness embedded in printed pages. In writing like I dance, the compression and attention of lived experience tended to with the mantle of dancerly intelligence enabled an ‘outing’ of hidden narratives of the body. The body that knew before I did.

In future thinking, I am interested in developing intertextual applications of *writing as dancing* that work in the developed praxis to expand further into writing fiction and creative non-fiction. I am interested in working with the State of Dancingness in the portals of physical imagination that are less translatable. Potentially a more abstract way into fiction, a way in through the body-making decisions of content that paradoxically takes us closer to the unstable narrative of the imagination.

And what of the content? The titles of the scores are states of embodied experience I was navigating at the time. When I pulled apart the chapters to create discrete scores, the narrative shifted and each score became its own state. No longer progressively narrative but scores of energetic states that see *writing as dancing* become visible in a new form. Energetic scores that pocket the experience of the body in the middle of living. I made an early decision not to perform the final iterations as it felt like an undermining of my own premise, this dance needed to be read. This project, and the emergent content, took me by surprise and I envisage a conference for professional dancers who are writers to investigate and deepen what I am proposing as an expansion of choreographic thinking.

I have drawn together the overarching concept of *writing as dancing* and its relationship to the queering of dance in a broader context. In bringing in current theoretical philosophy and discussion in dance here I suggest that the current understanding of the ‘academy’ as the best training platform needs re-thinking. The world has changed, dance training is slow to catch up. Issues raised in the Turning Pointe report (2018)²⁴ point to endemic problems within the institution. I propose that the strategy of *writing as dancing* has implications to challenge the status quo and create more relevant avenues for dancers beyond their training.

These claims are worthy of devoted research which the scope of my paper did not permit, however it is vital these challenges are raised, particularly in Australian systems of university dance training. Like Katie Duck points out in her 2009 essay “What is the Point” I am suggesting that improvisation is implicit in the three major streams of dance training – technique, composition and theory and should be further incorporated in terms of its capacity for enabling critical thinking strategies and developing dancers of agency in responding to the current world they are entering and the discourse they will be contributing to.

Questions about the application of such expanded thinking look to the current systems of professional dance training in Australia and suggest a bridge between contemporary dance and contemporary literature that might help make sense of our experience in the world through the embodiment and critical thinking of dancers as applied to a wider readership. Expanded applications of choreographic thinking has implications wider than dance and literature, it questions ingrained ideologies of the silo-ing of arts training and disciplines. I am not suggesting a reduction of specialisation, but I am suggesting that specialisation is ambioned within our contemporary context.

“To let go of the need for secure identities, living with and enjoying the ensuing chaos of meanings requires effort- physical work- risk-taking and a plentiful imagination.” (Claid, 2006)

Dance is at the forefront of embodied knowledge and only at the beginning of recognizing the potential of that contribution. Emerging Indigenous dancer turned playwright Henrietta Baird

²⁴ Andrew Westle’s 2018 research and report into gender disparity in contemporary dance in Australia coincided with the #MeToo campaign beginning a new conversation in dance in this area.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: *This book has elbows*, prototype artist book (artefact from *writing as dancing as a soloist*)

Appendix B: Program of Co3 Dance Makers Season featuring In Lore Act II (artefact from *writing as dancing* for the ensemble)

Appendix C: 'Human' – BIG Kids Magazine Issue #10 (artefact from *writing as dancing* in collaboration)

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