

**The Body-as-Data: Reimagining a Reality for Migrating
Bodies Beyond the Limits of Europe's Digital Borders
Through Performance**

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I, Sidonie Carey-Green, hereby confirm that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This thesis sits within a triangulation of the themes of bodies, borders, and data. It is written during, and born of, a time where bodies and digital technology have become closely intertwined. I draw from three distinct areas of discourse: considering the body-as-data phenomenon, technology and its effects on border control, and digital technology's relationship to dance and performance, in order to explore the various relationships between these three themes. The key concept that informs this research, the body-as-data, originates from Aneta Stojnić's writing on the burgeoning of cyborgs in the 21st Century (2017) and their relation to the human subject. Her research into the political implications of technologically centred bodies paves the way for my own interpretation of the body-as-data, which acts as a dominant critical theoretical framework across this research. The overall aim of this thesis is therefore to ask how dance and movement practice might create an intervention whereby bodies as moving data are removed from their problematic fixed identities to create new narratives. This question has been investigated using a practice as research model, in which I collaborated with artist and refugee Tom Tegento. This thesis therefore explores both the creation and an in-depth reflection of two works which resulted from this collaboration: *Uninvited* (2021) and *Contagion* (2021).

What follows in the written thesis is an analysis of these works through a specific lens which unpacks the digital and geographic recalibrations of the body in space which enable these works to become acts of choreographing evidence. The term 'choreographing evidence' advances the idea that performing bodies can produce evidence of perceived and alternative histories to consider how choreography which utilises new technologies can enable othered bodies to re-draw, re-claim and re-situate the self in culturally marked spaces through performative methods.

Significantly, this concept emphasises an ability for bodies-as-data to shift across multiple sites and access multiple narratives. This thesis therefore offers an approach for performance which mobilises bodies-as-data in a way that reduces the violations enacted upon othered bodies by systems of control.

This thesis forms the written element of my PhD submission. To view the practice element, please visit the following website or scan QR code below:

www.thebodyasdataproject.com



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The Body-As-Data: An Introduction

This research sits at the intersection of the themes of bodies, borders, and data. It draws from three distinct areas of discourse and practice: considering the body-as-data, technology and its effects on border control, and digital technology's relationship to dance, movement, and performance. These areas of research offer an understanding of the body in relation to technology, technology in relation to borders and borders in relation to the body in performance. This study considers and confronts harmful implications that current practices of identity marking have on minoritized bodies or bodies that are othered within regimes of surveillance, and aims to find a pathway for othered bodies to propose alternative realities within performance. It investigates the 'body-as-data' as a means of understanding the affective relationship between bodies and technology and uses this concept as a framework for both theoretical and choreographic enquiry. Ultimately, this research questions how dance and movement practice create an intervention whereby bodies as moving data are unlinked from their problematic fixed or marked identities and are enabled to create their own narratives and stories.

In order to investigate these concerns, I take a practice-as-research approach. As a movement artist, my practice revolves around the digital documentation of choreographed or found movement through film, audio visual, staged and site-specific performance. I engage with practice-as-research methods to create a series of performative outcomes, both live and mediated, which enable the development of embodied knowledge which I use to explore the problems set out above. The practice carried out for this project is developed in collaboration with Tom Tegento – an artist-refugee, born in Eritrea and now living in Kent. I met Tegento through the Kent Refugee Action network and for this project we developed two performative works: a site-specific performance and a performative mobile application.

Within the written thesis, I first provide a literature review of existing research within the fields of technology, migration and performance in relation to bodies-as-data, before moving on to an analysis of existing performance works which traverse these fields. Finally, I analyse the practice carried out by Tegento and myself in order to question what conditions must be met and what interventional techniques must be employed in

order for performance with new technologies to act as transformative spaces for bodies who have experienced forced migration. Interrogating this practice provides a rich framework from which to suggest an approach within the performances carried out to become acts of “choreographing evidence”. This thesis proposes that choreographing evidence is a concept which employs choreographic practices, focusing on the reorganisation of space and bodies in performance, to activate a rethinking and uncovering of the relationship between bodies-as-data and digital regimes of control.

The central concept informing this research, the body-as-data, originates from Aneta Stojnić’s writing on the burgeoning of cyborgs in the 21st Century and their relation to the human (2017). Stojnić describes the now ubiquitous cyborg of the 21st century as being based on privilege and acknowledges the effects of this ‘cyborgization’ on bodies that are othered. Specifically, she draws on the example of the refugee giving their digital fingerprint, or translating their body into data, at an EU digital border system which transfers this data to other European borders, which thus inhibits their movement. Stojnić proposes that ‘by translating a body into digital data (via fingerprint) the border is digitally inscribed into the body. This body is thus forced to carry the border within itself and, as such, is prevented from free movement.’ (Stojnić, 2017: 128) Throughout this thesis I refer to this two-way process of the body being inscribed into data and data inscribed into the body as the ‘body-as-data’. Stojnić’s research into the political implications of technologically centred bodies has been intrinsic to my initial research, and the concept of the body-as-data continues impacting the project as a dominant critical theoretical framework.

To provide a contextual framework, I firstly map out my position within the field for the reader. To provide a lineage for the main threads of enquiry, this thesis takes the perspective of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari on two accounts. Firstly, when referring to identity, I am influenced by Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988). Within this book, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of becoming as a method of dismantling hierarchical dualisms and identity markers. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari propose that everyone and everything is in a state of ‘becoming’ (1988: 342). Becoming occurs between the individual and their environment, in a process of constant transformation through a series of assemblages. In other words, becoming moves away from the idea of an identity imposed from “outside” or presents “inside” as an

essentialist trait and works as a flow through a nomadic mode of being which is influenced by interactions, relations and unfolding difference. Becoming surfaces from the process of shifting, rather than being an outcome of a hierarchical structure. Deleuze and Guattari write, 'to become is not to progress or regress along a series.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 277), but instead to shift within a rhizomial structure in which our sense of meaning adapts based on with whom and with what we interact.

There are multiple socio-political systems whose function affects lives in direct opposition to the nomadic idea of the subject, as mapped out by Rosi Braidotti (1994). Specifically, European and British governments impose identities from positions of authority that subjugate the individual. This is the norm for the refugee. At a political level, the refugee's identity is determined by the state. Those who have been displaced from their homes are assigned Refugee status and therefore assume the identity of the refugee, when they match criteria determined by the state, drawing from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Refugee Status Determination (or RSD) is a process which determines whether asylum seekers are eligible for refugee status. It is carried out by individual screening (or occasionally group-based, depending on circumstances). There is no universal procedure for assigning refugee status, except principles delineated in the 1951 Refugee Convention that many countries are signatories to, which means that procedure can vary from country to country and is based on their interpretation of the refugee convention, as well as on political interests or humanitarian commitments. Not only does refugee identification restrict the displaced person on a legal level (through restricted onward movement, reliance on handouts and access to healthcare if they are in camps), but it can also harm their own sense of self and negatively shape others' perceptions of them. If a human is prohibited from movement, and is unable to express themselves freely, then the process of 'becoming' for a refugee is one that is bereft of agency.

Secondly, due to a focus on surveillance technology within this thesis, it is necessary to touch briefly upon Deleuze's notion of freedom within digital regimes of control. A short paper *Postscript on the societies of control* (1992) outlines a shift from disciplinary society (analysed and proposed within Michel Foucault's work, 1975) in which there are clearly marked institutions of power, and knowledge and power is disciplinarian, to "societies of control" in which power appears as control diffused with the help of

surveillance technology, offering an illusion of freedom (1992). Of particular interest to this study is the paradoxical idea of freedom within a society of control and the importance of technology to this concept. Deleuze suggests that, as technology has evolved, the method by which power is enforced has shifted, and that 'this technological evolution must be, even more profoundly, a mutation of capitalism' (1992: 6). The individual is no longer directly coerced or disciplined through institutional training and is instead manipulated individually by invisible distributed structures - for example, surveillance technologies. Within societies of control, individual workers do not have to perform their labour at a factory or a shop: losing the disciplinary connection to sites of enforcement through normalisation, instead, contemporary workers have the illusion of freedom to work from home, communicate across the world and connect with the world through technology. However, this technology controls the individual at a molecular level and in effect they are individually monitored and optimised by the same digitized infrastructures that offer their supposed independence. Although there are more recent discussions across a variety of disciplines on surveillance biases and capitalism (Noble, 2018, Zuboff, 2019, Xerxes and Caelyn 2020, D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020), these Deleuzian models influence many of the scholars on whom I draw within this study and underpin the epistemological questions that I discuss hereafter.

As demonstrated within the following chapters, although there is a multitude of research surrounding new technology within performance and its effects on identity (Parker-Starbuck 2011, Popat 2011 Whatley 2019), on surveillance technology's impact on migrating bodies (Ponzanesi 2014, Lyon 2017, Franklin 2018) and on performance which deals with migrating bodies (Cox 2014, Mitra 2016, Piccirillo 2021), what distinguishes this research from current scholarship within the field is not only the intersection of these concepts but also the practice-based method by which the research is carried out, which helps forge a unique perspective. Much of the current scholarship within this field is not only theoretical, but also lacks practical methodologies to avoid the pitfalls so often experienced within performance on migration. What is needed, and what I aim to uncover within this thesis, is a practical, experiential understanding of *how* performance might be able to avoid some of the challenges presented by technology, performance and migration, rather than warnings, calls to action, 'what not to do's, et cetera. Expressly, I aim to discover how the body-as-data might be subverted and navigated in performance making practice.

Therefore, the objective of this practice-based research is to formulate an approach for digital performance practice that aims at reworking fixed identities and to explore possible ways out of the problems at the intersection of bodies, borders, and data.

With this thesis, I aim to answer the following questions:

How can dance and movement practice create an intervention whereby bodies as moving data are disentangled from their problematic fixed identities to create new narratives?

What forms of digital performance practice can be developed to enable a rethinking of the relationship between migrating bodies and digital regimes of control?

Which new concepts can be mobilised through performance to address issues surrounding bodies as moving data and reconceive the narrative of the migrating body?

To document the pertinence of this research and to anchor the progression of issues surrounding migration and continued control of refugee bodies, each section features a time-stamped introduction, in which I contextualise the political and wider situation at the original time of writing, with the aim of providing the reader with context which spans across the entirety of the project. During the four-year period of carrying out this research I have witnessed Brexit becoming a reality, technology misuse and data mining scandals, wars in Turkey, Syria and Ukraine with continued hostility towards displaced people; I have seen countless attempted and achieved crossings in small boats off the coast of my home county of Kent in the UK and have been witness to the aggressive policies against immigration introduced by a number of UK prime ministers, from Theresa May's 'hostile environment' to Boris Johnson's planned transfer of incoming refugees to Rwanda and the enduring attempts at implementation of this plan by Rishi Sunak's cabinet.

To answer the questions set out above, I engage in an approach that prioritises practice as a primary and significant mode of inquiry. Practice-as-research refers to a research inquiry which is 'beyond words', in which 'knowing-doing is inherent in the practice and practice is at the heart of the inquiry and evidences it.' (Nelson, 2022: 10). It provides legitimacy for creative practice to explore resolutions to ongoing epistemological questions and emphasises the production of knowledge through doing. Practice-as-research lends itself to performance inquiry in that it emphasis and values knowledge

of and within the body. It allows the artist-researcher to have an 'ongoing interaction with [their] environment' (Ingold, 2000: 16) and to participate in a production of knowledge which traverses both practice and theory. 'Materialising practices' as defined by Barbara Bolt (2004) offers the understanding that the materials and processes of a performance production have their own intelligence and that this knowledge is derived directly from doing. Coupled with contextual and analytical knowledge, this process has the scope to provide a much richer inquiry for performance than theoretical research alone. Advancing from the scientific method of inquiry that precedes it, practice-as-research within academia has opened the door to multiple kinds of knowledge being recognised as providing value and augmenting the dominant modes of truth-production.

The practice-as-research carried out within this work has been crucial in illuminating new embodied and critical knowledge, and in revealing new understandings of space, technology, and identity from an embodied perspective. By exploring practice in dialogue with the contextual framework set out in this work, the performative outcomes of this collaborative practice, in particular, reveal new understandings of moving bodies-as-data. Robin Nelson has developed a multi-mode approach to 'praxis' - theory imbricated with practice (2013: 37) - which outlines a method to anchor the validity and unique impact of practice-as-research methods through a combination of conceptual frameworks, tacit and embodied knowledge and critical reflection. This model is reflected in my own work, which provides grounds to contextualise practice and a reflection of the process and outcomes of this practical inquiry. As well as practice, documentation and site-based explorations, this project uses research methods which provide a framework to examine the questions above, including a literature review, a critique of performance case studies and an analysis of practice.

In Chapter 1, I begin with an interrogation of my understanding of the body-as-data, as drawn from Aneta Stojnić (2013). I offer a review of existing literature surrounding bodies-as-data, examining theoretical perspectives on bodies and technology, including the concept of cyborgs by Donna Haraway (1991) and Rosi Braidotti's posthumanities (2013), and moving on to an analysis of technology's impact on bodies at European borders, using Sandra Ponzanesi's understanding of the digital border (2014), Shoshana Magnet's considerations of the failings of biometrics (2011),

Prarthana Purkayastha's discussions of capture (2022) and others. To conclude, I discuss technology's potential within performance practices as explored within the work of Sita Popat (2011), Sarah Whatley (2019) and Scott Delahunta (2018). This literature suggests that the body-as-data is experienced differently in the distinctive contexts I map out, which can produce positive or negative effects based on the circumstances of the individual in relation to their place in society. This understanding forms the basis of the next parts of my analysis into the body-as-data.

Having provided a contextual framework which forms the basis of my continued examination into the body-as-data, Chapter 2 offers a detailed critical analysis of five contemporary performance works which use the body and/or technology to explore narratives of migration. Firstly, I discuss Crystal Pite's *Flight Pattern* (2019) in relation to Alison Jeffers' concept of the implications of 'giving a voice' (2012) and Andrei Lepecki's concept of 'choreopolitics' (2013) to situate the performance as an act of obedience without resistance and demonstrate the ethical implications of this on migrating bodies. Secondly, I analyse *Dancing with Strangers: From Calais to England* (2016) by Instant Dissidence from the perspective of presence and absence, signalling the absencing of refugee bodies within the work. Here I draw specifically from Emma Cox's work on theatre of migration (2014). I then move on to Be Another Lab's *The Machine to be Another* (2012) with reference to Jennifer Parker Starbuck's 'cyborg theatre' (2011) to analyse the unequal exchange created by a virtual reality that enables the privileged user to become a fractured altered subject leaving the refugee behind. I progress to Dritan Kastri's *How Not to Drown* (2019) as an act of reclaiming agency through autobiographical performance, and the potential for the work to become an act of liberation from identity stamping, as outlined by Arabella Stanger (2019). Finally, I discuss Caroline Williams and Reem Karsli's *Now is the Time to Say Nothing* (2019) as a practice of equal exchange which allows space for the artist-refugee's identity to shift across the project. My aim, within this analysis, is not to condemn or valorise some works, but to find an understanding of the potential ethical and representational implications of performance for migrating bodies. In doing so, the possibility for potential solutions and approaches begins to emerge for performance practice which navigates these problematic areas.

The final two chapters of this thesis present an analysis of my embodied practice as

research carried out in collaboration with Tegento. Our collaborative practice spanned one year of research and resulted in two outcomes: a site-specific performance on Margate beach in Kent and a performative mobile application. The focus of this practice as research was primarily on the process of collaborating with Tegento to create artistic works and on finding ways of working together in devising a process to produce outcomes that spoke to the aims of the project. A portion of this research and collaboration was carried out remotely because of restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this period, I kept a shared Google document and a private journal, I filmed our rehearsals and development periods and also captured the outcomes via film. The documentation of this practice sometimes relies on third person recounting of conversations with Tegento, and it should be noted that this is partly a result of our very limited time together due to the pandemic, but that further first person written input from Tegento can be found within the Google document. The process of collaborating with Tegento on devising each of the works and the outcomes themselves have also been documented as part of the practice submission, on a website www.thebodyasdataproject.com.

Both reflective practice chapters explore the process of creating the work, followed by a description of key elements and an analysis of findings in relation to the aims of the project. I make the claim for these works to be framed as acts of “choreographing evidence” and explore the various devices which contribute to this concept. Within Chapter 3, I discuss *Uninvited* (2021), our site-specific performance across Margate beach, which was captured by a drone and live streamed on the gaming app *Twitch*. I discuss the impact of drone capture and how a reconsideration of Tegento’s autonomous mapping of the space through his movement shifts this capture and challenges the dynamic between the body and the technology that captures it. I draw upon scholarship surrounding the insights and opportunities brought about by surveillance art from Elise Morrison (2016) to anchor this observation. In analysing the lingering impact of the work, the line drawn across the sand is explored in relation to scholarship by Rebecca Schneider (2001), Carol Martin (2006), Diana Taylor (2006), Jacqueline Shea Murphy (2009), Andrei Lepecki (2012), and Georgina Guy (2020) to situate this piece as ‘evidentiary’. I examine the concept of the ‘uninvited guest’ to unfold some of the challenges of the work and, finally, I discuss how the work reveals itself as a device to move and remain *between*, through a variety of techniques which frame the

work as an act of choreographing evidence.

Chapter 4, the final chapter of this thesis, focuses on *Contagion* (2021). This performative mobile application, part of my practical submission, introduces the voice of Tegento's digital alter-ego to its user to take them on a walking journey and collect their GPS data with the aim of spreading the contagion across multiple geographies. I investigate the digital alter-ego in detail, in relation to previous scholarship from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988), Steve Dixon (2005), and Aneta Stojnić (2015) and propose an alternative understanding of the digital alter-ego as a tool which encourages the individual to find ways of becoming full of agency and autonomy. I review the operation of the app from start to finish, focusing firstly on the glitch as a way of framing the voice as operating from outside of systemic norms, with reference to Legacy Russell's *Glitch Feminism* (2012) and Rosa Menkman's *Glitch moment(um)* (2011). The concept of choreographing evidence features here again, as I draw from Deirdre Heddon's 'autotopography' (2007) to consider the collective walking practice carried out by users, and Tegento in his various roles as narrator, glitching voice, and character from his novel, as a process of constructing and resituating place into multiple sites. Finally, I explore how the app functions using GPS data capture, offering a history of GPS technology and its now ubiquitous nature to become an invisible piece of infrastructure. I frame *Contagion* as an intervention in this infrastructure characterised by the process of gathering collective data from multiple bodies in multiple spaces to serve "one identity". My aim is to frame this practice as a process, which encourages affirmative becomings, shifts and development of identities in order for Tegento to transcend the limitations imposed upon him and to reclaim his body-as- data.

By framing these works as acts of choreographing evidence, I propose a concept for performance which can be mobilised to enable a recalibration of the relationship between migrating bodies and digital regimes of control. By re-drawing, re-mapping and re-writing the body-as-data into places outside of its problematic fixedness, these performance outcomes activate a more equal exchange between bodies and surveillance technologies and aim at reducing violence towards these bodies through the practice of performance. By viewing these works in this way, I aim to offer further epistemological and experiential insight into the intersection of bodies, borders and data.

Chapter 1: Multiple Perspectives on Transcribing Bodies into Data

Timestamped text:

August, 2019

[I write this chapter during a time when bodies and digital technology have become closely intertwined; when personal data can be taken from our online identity, often unknowingly, and used for other purposes. In 2018 it was widely reported that Cambridge Analytica, the company responsible for mining Facebook profiles to influence the US election campaign, had also allegedly interfered with the Brexit referendum campaign (Hern, 2019). More recently in 2019, 14 million Instagram users' profiles were 'scraped' and the information, including passwords, was found on an open access website. This sparked an ongoing public discussion on ethical standards for social media companies, on misinformation and propaganda. At the same time bodies experience technology at digital borders in increasing volume. Migration numbers in Europe remain high, with a particular sharp increase over the last 5 years. Germany took in 1.46 million foreign nationals in 2015 (Sturge, 2019: 20). The UK took just over 600,000. With Brexit around the corner, leaked internal government papers detail the 'chaos and confusion' a no deal Brexit would cause for border control and those with migrant status. (Mason, 2019) PM Boris Johnson has scrapped all plans of continuing free movement rules beyond a no-deal Brexit, and continued marches on parliament signal the UK's political unrest. In Kent, where I live, 61 migrants arrived onto the coast in small boats in the week of writing this chapter in August 2019, and more than 900 people have crossed the channel for Kent in small boats in that year. (BBC, 2019). During this time migrant narratives, as seen by those outside their immediate experience, are largely constructed and influenced by the media, governments, and those in places of political power].

1. Introducing Data to the Body

Chapter 1 investigates the key themes of this thesis in detail, to offer a theoretical framework from which to explore, through practice, the enmeshing of bodies, borders, and data. Firstly, it outlines the concept of the body-as-data in relation to writings on cyborgs from Donna Haraway (1991), Rosi Braidotti (2013), Gilles Deleuze (1992) and Aneta Stojnić (2017). It then focuses more specifically on technologies which frequent Britain and Europe's digital borders and their effects on migrating bodies and bodies-as-data, using scholarship from Sandra Ponzanesi (2014) and Myra Georgiou (2018), among others. Finally, it discusses the body-as-data in relation to performance and choreography with reference to scholarship from Sita Popat (2011), Sarah Whatley and Hetty Blades (2019) and others, before positioning the author within the work with reference to Gayatri Spivak (1988) and Radhika Gajjala (2013).

Although Chapter 1 addresses bodies-as-data in many contexts, this study is concerned with migrating bodies-as-data. In particular, it focuses on bodies whose migration forces them to experience some kind of othered-ness; those who might find

themselves in the category of the refugee. There are differing terms used to describe migrating bodies and it is important to highlight the different terms and their effects on identities. Often the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' are used interchangeably, especially in the media. However, according to the United Nations, refugees are defined as

'persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection.' (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019)

The term 'refugee' is therefore appropriate when referring to someone who has been proven to have left their country in search of sanctuary from man-made threat (war, for example) and is unable to return home. The status of 'refugee' is granted to a person by a governing body and therefore becomes a term placed upon someone, leaving them without agency. A refugee, once categorised, requires international protection which, although somewhat vague, does not allow the refugee to be sent back to situations where their life would be under threat. (UNHCR, 2019). Once a displaced person is recognised as having refugee status and is under international protection, they remain a refugee 'regardless of the particular route they travel in search of protection or opportunities to rebuild their life, and regardless of the various stages involved in that journey.' (UNHCR, 2019). In addition, anyone whose request for sanctuary has 'yet to be processed' is referred to as an 'asylum seeker'. (UNHCR, 2019). Asylum seekers in the UK can wait for months and sometimes years to be granted refugee status, with restrictions on their rights to work or study and living situation (UNHCR, 2019). This is also different from those with migrant status. The United Nations states that there is no legal definition for a migrant at international level, but outlines that

'an international migrant is someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status. Generally, a distinction is made between short-term or temporary migration, covering movements with a duration between three and 12 months, and long-term or permanent migration, referring to a change of country of residence for a duration of one year or more. (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019)

Reasons for migration are diverse and complex. When considering the increasingly volatile political relationships between countries across the globe and climate-change induced extreme weather, being displaced from one's home becomes a very real possibility for a large proportion of the world's population. The term 'forced migration' is

defined by International Organisation for Migration as ‘a migratory movement which, although the drivers can be diverse, involves force, compulsion, or coercion.’ (IOM, 2019) Forced migrants or those who have experienced forced migration are often on the edge of the societies into which they enter. To summarise, this work focuses specifically on the forced migrant, refugee, or asylum seeker who is oppressed by British and EU regimes and struggles to gain a place in the system, rather than on examples of elective migration.

This chapter provides the foundation for an investigation into the relationship between digital performance and surveillance technologies that rest on Europe’s borders. I draw on Robin Nelson’s model for practice-as-research, presented in the introduction, by providing solid conceptual theory to anchor collaborative practice so that it may offer a critical evaluation of uneven power relations within post-Brexit Britain and Europe through data and moving bodies. The following analysis acts as a framework for my practice through an engagement with a number of key philosophical and conceptual concerns. These concerns underpin an approach for digital performance practice that attempts to question fixed or marked identities and therefore subvert some of the issues that appear for migrating bodies within the crossing of bodies, borders, and data. As much of the research within this chapter surrounds the concept of bodies-as-data, which I develop from scholarship from Aneta Stojnić, it is important to reiterate that this work takes the perspective of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to understand that there is no one truth locking the body into a fixed identity; bodies are not unchanging and they are in a state of becoming as they experience the world. ‘The self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities.’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 291) Therefore, when bodies are confined to an assigned or marked identity, such as ‘refugee’ labelling, they are unable to take agency in this process of becoming and are, in the case of the refugee, oppressed.

This chapter addresses the implications of 21st century life in Britain and Europe as being heavily permeated with data. In western Europe, much day-to-day communication is made via technology, personal data is stored online and our lives can be reduced to a series of ones and zeros. This data affects bodies in a number of ways (as I map over the course of this chapter); it allows us to authenticate our identity through fingerprint or iris recognition, it enables us to interact in cyberspace as an alias of our

physical self and even analyses our digital interactions to influence us through advertising. However, for the purpose of this research, I am primarily concerned with data collected via, or used for purposes of, control within Europe and its borders. Later in this chapter I provide an analysis of Europe's digital borders, their reconfiguration from physical walls to digital zones, the data these zones collect and their effects on different bodies. Whilst it is important to note that this project sits firmly within the current cultural and political climate relating to post-Brexit Britain and Europe and their digitally controlled borders, it is necessary to begin with a wider philosophical understanding of our relationship to technology in society.

2. Cyborgean Qualities: A literature review

In her *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), which became the founding text of cyber feminism, Donna Haraway presents the image of a cyborg in order to provide a critique and solution for radical and socialist feminist theory, which, before this point, saw technology as an enemy of female empowerment at the service of patriarchy. The concept of Haraway's cyborg image acts as a rejection of dominant cultural boundaries and dualisms. The cyborg (short for cybernetic organism), she argues, is a creature that is part organism and part machine. Haraway draws, often ironically, on previous cyborg imagery and science fiction to illustrate how cyborgs are liminal beings, outsiders on the edge of society.

Haraway begins by addressing the fact that the cyborg is created by materialism and capitalism: systems she refutes. She states that 'illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential.' (Haraway, 1991: 151). For Haraway, the cyborg acts both as a metaphor and a physical being. She draws on science fiction to elucidate her framing of the cyborg and her claim that we are all cyborgs. At the time Haraway's work was written the cyborg in science fiction was portrayed as the enemy: (The Borg from *Star Trek* for example) a monster and an outsider. The suggestion that the cyborg is not born as an 'innocent whole' in the same way as people - rather it is created in a lab as was *Frankenstein's* monster, or from an explosion as in DC Comics' *Cyborg* or futuristic experimentation like *The Terminator* - is particularly important to this analysis of the cyborg. The image of the cyborg as a monster, Haraway writes, is useful in considering our own cyborg capabilities -

'monsters have always defined the limits of community in western imaginations.' (Haraway, 1991:180) The cyborg harnesses possibilities beyond human limits by being on the outside. Cyborgs in feminist science fiction in particular, outline the political possibilities that are beyond limits of standard fiction. They disrupt the status of man or woman, of bodies and races. Outlining the understanding that the cyborg can transcend the limits imposed by norms, Haraway argues that the cyborg also transcends gender boundaries:

'the cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity.' (Haraway, 1991, 150)

The boundary-transgressing cyborg is an image that Haraway uses to break down three dualisms. She argues that the human/animal boundary has already been breached. This can be seen from the acknowledgement of animal sentience, fighting for animal rights and through the acceptance of a connection between nature and culture. The second boundary of human/machine, Haraway argues, started to blur at the end of 20th century. (Haraway, 1991: 151). Machines began to be perceived as having the ability to self-develop, to think, to move without prompt and imitate biological organisms. She suggests that 'the certainty of what counts as nature – a source of insight and promise of innocence – is undermined, probably fatally.' (Haraway, 1991: 153). The third boundary outlined by Haraway stems directly from the second – the separation between physical/non-physical. Haraway argues that modern machines are ubiquitous and dangerous in their invisibility, whereas people are fundamentally opaque, thus reformulating the dualist distinction. Haraway proposes that the image of the cyborg transgresses the boundaries within these three dualisms, which are already seen as outdated by many socialists and feminists and offers a point of departure from the view of technology as a nemesis of feminism.

The *Cyborg Manifesto* paved the way for discounting problematic dualisms and supporting posthuman theory, allowing us to consider our bodies as assemblages and promoting a synthesis between machine and body; a synthesis that is not always oppressive and, even if partially produced by capitalist, military, patriarchal logic, has a reservoir of resistance and transgression. However, whilst the 1980's version of the cyborg, as it appeared in science fiction, was depicted as an outsider and a liminal

being, as we fast-forward thirty years we find that other kinds of cyborgean expressions are omnipresent. These new cyborgs are wholly artificial, yet 'living' cognitive entities, popularised under the banner of Artificial Intelligence, or assemblages that are part human, part technological and dependent on their functioning on complex infrastructures of interaction.

This can be seen in the work *Bureau of Meteoranxiety* (2018) by artists Alex Tate and Olivia Tartaglia, which offers a prime example of the cyborg's integration into life in the 21st century. This live art and virtual reality experience looks at ecoanxiety and climate change, aiming to address climate change fears using an artificially intelligent chatbot. This performance also critiques gender bias in AI technology, which has been designed by white men predominantly since its conception and given female characteristics to act in service for the user. The AI chatbot quotes the work of male poets, and even Donald Trump, when answering questions, to encourage a critical view of the biases that have gone into this technology's creation. The artists highlight this by asking their audience to 'beware of technical glitches and hyperbolic emotional responses – BoMa is in beta phase.' (Art.Base, 2019) Although those who created the AI cyborg are imprinted into its functioning, *Bureau of Meteoranxiety* not only promotes a blurring of machine and body but also offers a challenge to societal norms through highlighting the technology's biases.

Another performative example of the inclusion of the human capacities into the machine, and the fusion of the two, comes within William Forsythe's 2014 installation *Black Flags*. This performance installation presented mechanical flags dancing in a whirling choreographed sequence. The quality of the flag material encourages the viewer to focus on the air acting on the flags, rather than on the mechanical arms that operate the flags. The audience is thus prompted to see the flags acting through technology as well as through nature. The flags themselves were given choreography that Forsythe produced and performed; they were anthropomorphised, plucked from their role at a factory, given a creative task, and, upon completion, had to return to mundanity. These flags became the dancers, the subjects of the work, and were able to do so from the choices of a technologist, technology and choreographer that worked in collaboration. In this sense, Forsythe's choreography becomes a cyborg choreography bridging human creativity and machinic performance and embodies each

of Haraway's duality transgressions.

Understanding that the cyborg of the 21st century not only blurs boundaries between human and machine but also throws into question hierarchies, gender bias and othering of non-white bodies leads me to question what the consequences are of this constant becoming cyborg for different bodies? If all bodies are in some sense cyborgian, what happens when they adopt or are required to embrace this fusion with technology?

3. Bodies-As-Data

A key concept that informs this research - the body-as-data - originates from Aneta Stojnić's writing on the burgeoning of cyborgs in the 21st century and their relation to the human subject. Her research into the political implications of technologically centred bodies has been intrinsic to my initial research and continues impacting my project as a dominant critical theoretical framework. Stojnić draws on Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, primarily focusing on the concept of the body as a social construct. Stojnić offers a critical synthesis and continuation of the work, and examines the cyborg metaphor in 21st century theatrical and social performance. She draws almost directly from Haraway when Stojnić states, 'today, the topic of the body as a social construct seems more relevant than ever. Our ontology is cyborg ontology and it gives us our politics.' (Stojnić, 2013: 77) At the core of Stojnić's argument is her questioning of the performance subject or body. She argues that, as the way we recognise the body in relation to technology and cyberspace shifts, there must be a re-articulation of not only presence, embodiment and corporeality but also mediation of the body. Stojnić offers the cyborg metaphor as a critique of political treatment of technology by introducing the 'Roboroach'. The Roboroach was a live cockroach implanted with a minute piece of technology, which became the first commercial cyborg. It was produced by a company called Backyard Brains and was made publicly available in 2012. (Similar experiments were also produced by researchers the University of Michigan and the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency or DARPA around the same time, as cited in Stojnić, 2013). Originally intended as a toy, it is still marketed by Backyard Brains as a science experiment for young students. However, scientists (including DARPA) rapidly identified other potential uses for the Roboroach, including locating people in the wreckage of natural disasters and for military purposes such as deploying bombs.

Stojnić points out the immediate issue regarding ethics, animal rights and sentience and questions the implications of encouraging children to treat living things as tools or toys; of turning cockroaches into cyborgs.

Stojnić's research here is concerned primarily with the concept of the body as a social construct in relation to the cyborg. She makes reference to shifts made in society since Haraway's seminal paper was written implying that, at the time it was conceived, cyborgs were considered to be the outcasts of society, marginalised beings or in-between creatures, and were useful for deconstructing dominant dualisms of the western world. The cyborg, as it exists in 2022, is part of everyday life, embodied through plastic surgery and prosthetics or functioning as avatars on social networks, and it encourages the culture of self-design. Stojnić argues, however, that today's cyborg is based on class privilege. She states:

'in the symbolic place that once belonged to cyborgs as marginalized others, human subjects are now helplessly and hopelessly trapped in their unchangeable, bodily, biological, perishable, irreparable, deadly, exploited humanness.' (Stojnić, 2013: 126)

Stojnić offers a specific take on Haraway's work, emphasising a perspective with which my own work aligns. Entire 'classes' of humans who are precluded from 'becoming cyborgs' or 'post-human' are trapped in their own human bodies. Instead, these unprivileged, marginalised, racialised humans become subjects that Stojnić terms 'sub-human'. How the posthuman and subhuman might experience technology differently must now be considered.

Stojnić discusses the concept of the posthuman through scholarship by Rosi Braidotti. Braidotti's work, including her books *Nomadic Subjects* (2011) and *The Posthuman* (2013), is a critique of modernity in relation to advanced capitalism and adjacent power relations. In both texts she draws on ideas of subjectivity and the death of the 'universal subject' as the white masculine subject. Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology (1988), Braidotti suggests an abandonment of the universal subject in favour of a new kind of nomadic subjectivity which provides agency for othered bodies through a process of continuous movement across established categories of identity. According to Braidotti, the posthuman, or the deconstruction of the human condition (2013), moves beyond the restrictive and exclusive concept of humanism. It involves a de-centring of

man as the measure for all things, seeing this orientation as problematic for anyone who is not identified as a 'man' specifically constructed in such a discourse. Braidotti's influential considerations, including the suggestion that 'we need to devise new social, ethical and discursive schemes of subject formation to match the profound transformations we are undergoing,' and 'that means that we need to learn to think differently about ourselves', are key to this thesis. (Braidotti, 2013: 12) Therefore, as advancements in the fields of science and technology bring us closer to the non-human, and we engage in a blurring between natural and cultural and disruption of other constructed categories, we must think critically about the specificity of these processes, and the differentiations of and in such becomings. Much of Braidotti's work shares the Deleuzian view above, affirming transitory identities, and she considers the nomadic (decentred) subject to pass through occupied spaces and cross boundaries without any necessity for a permanent identity (Braidotti, 1994: 23). Braidotti strives to use the term 'posthuman' in order to develop new identities and subjectivities; to embrace posthuman ethics and construct affirmative posthuman politics. In doing so, she proposes that a sustainable alternative future could be produced, but also acknowledges the dangers of this advancement, suggesting that 'the postmodern predicament has more than its fair share of inhuman(e) moments.' (Braidotti, 2013: 9) Advanced capitalism, she argues, embraces the posthuman with more sinister aims, feeding the war machine with tele-thanatological machines that are themselves posthuman in their operation, simultaneously closely connected and removed from human operators.

Overall, Braidotti acknowledges possible inhumanness of the posthuman predicament and calls for a shift in values, ethics and discourse, based on a rethinking of subjectivity. She acknowledges that bodies of subjects who represent difference, such as woman, become disposable in the eyes of global economy and suggests that, while cyborgs have proliferated, so too has vulnerability for those not able to reach 'cyborg status'. Braidotti suggests that, although the posthuman does not get rid of the inhumane acts of humanity, it does enforce 'the necessity to think again and to think harder about the status of the human, the importance of recasting subjectivity accordingly, and the need to invent forms of ethical relations, norms and values worthy of the complexity of our times.' (Braidotti, 2013: 186)

With reference to Braidotti's *The Posthuman*, Stojnić argues that the historical human cannot be forgotten, just as modernity is not forgotten in the age of the postmodern. She offers a decolonial perspective to ask: who has the position to declare the human obsolete? Who turns the cockroach into a cyborg? Stojnić maintains that there are intense inequalities in the condition of the posthuman that separate those who are privileged from those who are considered 'other'. Her analysis of necropolitics places emphasis on the war machine produced by contemporary capitalism and the production and regulation of death. She states that 'the darker side of post-humanism is de-humanization.' (Stojnić, 2017: 126) This de-humanization refers to humans who are not privileged enough to become cyborgs who die or are killed. They may not have financial resources to receive a prosthetic arm or could be killed in asymmetrical wars by cyborgian post-humans (or automated warfare machines, such as drones). Such humans are reduced to disposable beings. In this condition animals too are manipulated, tortured, mistreated or genetically recombined for scientific experiments to continue the pursuit of the "post-human". The cyborg cockroach is played with, sent into war or used as a weapon. The de-humanization mapped by Stojnić plays out on the bodies of refugees, further othering and reducing their humanness.

Stojnić makes reference to Deleuze's notion of societies of control, highlighting the fusion of the post-human and human worlds. She states, 'this is not just about 'turning into cyborg' in the narrow sense of the word but also about how the digital is being inscribed into the body and how the body is inscribed into the digital regimes of control.' (Stojnić, 2017: 128) For example, refugees who arrive at a border are fingerprinted and their fingerprints are transmitted instantly to all EU border control systems so that their body is captured by digital control methods. Simultaneously, these control methods are inscribed into the human body and the body, prevented from free movement, carries the border with it. (2017, 128) What Stojnić describes here has become a key concept for my research. I refer to the body being inscribed into the digital as the 'body-as-data'. The body-as-data may be liberating for some, whilst, at the same time, oppressive for others.

If we are to understand the body-as-data in relation to surveillance, which encapsulates the majority of new technologies at digital borders, it is necessary to acknowledge

Deleuze's *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (1992). Societies of control present a shift from enclosed controlling structures of discipline, to a network of entangled systems that work by modulating personalised control. Deleuze argues that there has been a shift from the binaries of disciplinary societies (of the individual versus their position in a mass, a notion conceptualised by Foucault, 1991) towards a non-binary network of control. Enclosed disciplinary structures have been replaced with open and mutable systems of control. For example, money was once correlated to gold reserves locked inside a bank vault. Today, money is pure abstraction whose value is determined by the floating rates of exchange and guaranteed by the state and state institutions. As capitalism evolves away from production and geographically fixed spaces, 'corruption [thereby] gains a new power' (Deleuze, 1992: 6). Technology plays a major role in this shift, enabling control to exist remotely and ensuring that its users become entangled in never-ending personalised communication, which locks them into controllable positions. Deleuze proposes that, whilst living in a technologically advanced society can feel freeing at times, it comes with increased surveillance and near total control. Smartphones are freeing, in that they give access to the information superhighway, but they continuously gather data on the actions and interactions of their users in what Deleuze describes as a 'new system of domination.' (Deleuze, 1992: 7) Cambridge Analytica (discussed in the timestamped introduction to this chapter) is a prime example of how societies of control function. The company was able to use social media to access personal data and offer personally targeted advertising to potentially sway users' votes in the US election 2016 and UK Brexit referendum vote of the same year, in a system of subtle, personalised, but all-encompassing control and persuasion. (Hern, 2019)

Building on Stojnić's, Braidotti's, Haraway's and Deleuze's work, I explore, in this thesis, the force of data on marginalised bodies at borders: it is sometimes liberating, but is often oppressive. Stojnić discusses the problematic new ontology and politics that the figure of the cyborg brings about in detail, and notes that perhaps generating altered subjects through the liminality of cyberspace could provide the potential to articulate existing power relations differently. She asks, 'Can 'turning into' animal, cyborg, human, post-human or post-animal bring about some kind of emancipation project?' (Stojnić, 2013: 128) Stojnić's research encapsulates digital technology's potential to shape human existence, for better or for worse. This thesis aims to continue Stojnić's

questioning by investigating how the body-as-data might influence othered bodies at borders and by mapping out the possibilities of difference. Amongst positive and negative implications of cyborgisation, of bodies as digital data, this project attempts to address the implications of movement of bodies at and across border zones, becoming data and negotiating such new conditions.

4. Technology at Europe's Borders

The fields of migration and digital technologies are interconnected: they both refer to a shift of space and time, to the movement of people and to the movement of information. Having mapped the philosophical perspectives on digital bodies, we can now move closer to analysing how different bodies' experience of technology can be understood in the context of the European border. As discussed, this project explores Europe and its borders as a site of simultaneous liberation and oppression. Technology is embedded into Europe's borders in a variety of ways - through biometrics, CCTV, drones, and a plethora of other devices. These technologies quantify humans as they migrate across borders and their engagement is often based on how the technology categorises these bodies. Migration forces a shift in one's engagement with technologies. As the body passes through the border and shifts into data, the body becomes vulnerable to the ethics and political principles of those agents and institutions that create and maintain such technologies and to the affordances of the technologies themselves.

The mind conjures images of barbed wire spiralled 10-foot-high fences, boundary enforcing signs and gun-toting officers when we think of European border control. However, Europe's borders have been shifting from physical walls, wire fences and check points since the proliferation of digital technologies, to what Sandra Ponzanesi describes as a 'symbolic figuration', in which such physical manifestations of power no longer enforce the border (Ponzanesi, 2014: 4). The borders of Europe have instead become invisible, virtual, digital entities. These invisible borders, according to Ponzanesi, are still based on race, religion and other cultural markers but now exist in digital networks instead. Firewalls have been installed, biometric data capture methods instated and drones employed. Ponzanesi theorizes that digital technologies have changed the way we experience borders and asks how these new digital borders impact

the lives of migrants and their relationship to Europe. New technology, such as *Eurodac* (the fingerprint database identifying asylum seekers and 'illegal immigrants' within the EU), reduces humans to 'illegal immigrant' statistics in breach of security codes' (2014: 7), and contrasts with supposed EU policies on expansion and integration. These digital technologies surrounding digital Europe are far from a utopian alternative for migrants and refugees, who already use digital technology such as GPS and social media for communication. Ponzanesi argues that 'there is an obvious need to decolonize digital products, behaviour and activities' (2014: 11) at the border, indicating power asymmetry surrounding access, literacy and surveillance. Ponzanesi looks towards a new definition of Europe, suggesting a move away from the 'mobilization of ossified categories that hold on to the notion of Europe as the cradle of western civilization, and towards new ways of conceiving of movements and passages' (Ponzanesi, 2014: 6). This altered definition of European borders as entities which reduce the migrant to statistical data, reifies the impact of the body-as-data and anchors the need for an alternative understanding of identity in these spaces.

5. Capturing Bodies

Looking in detail at the technologies which surround Europe's border and their capture of migrating bodies, Shoshana Magnet discusses biometric data capture from a feminist perspective in her article on biometric failures (2011). Her analysis moves from 'obvious' technological failures which provoke an abandonment or re-design of the technology and instead investigates failures that go unnoticed and thus continue to affect the bodies they have failed. Magnet points out the lack of objectivity produced by biometric technologies, which are more efficient when used on people with light-coloured skin or light-coloured eyes. Biometrics produce demographic failures - for example, they may fail to capture the fingerprints of Asian women. When cataracts are present in the eye, temporary failures may be produced when using iris recognition technology. Astonishingly, biometric scanners cannot identify whether a body whose data is captured is dead or alive. Overall, these technologies privilege certain ethnicities over others and 'do real damage to vulnerable people' (Magnet, 2011: 3). This form of digital surveillance therefore reduces humans to problematic, marked identities and treats racialised and gendered bodies inequitably. This further iterates the potential of such technologies to both assist and impinge movement across borders for differently

conceived and othered bodies and highlights the imbalance inherent within these processes. Magnet's argument is that in reality, 'human bodies are not biometrifiable' (Magnet, 2011: 2). Knowing this, it is necessary to question what happens to the identity of the human body when it is captured through biometrics into data - a process which does not allow for the uniqueness of the body to be fully captured.

Uncertainty surrounding the use of biometric technologies within border control and the bio-political implications of such practices is a subject discussed by many scholars to date. For example, Joseph Pugliese's discussion of the relationship between biometrics and biopolitical power (2010), Simone Browne's call for critical biometric consciousness (2010), and Giorgio Agamben, who famously declared a "no" stance to the political tattooing implemented by biometric surveillance technologies in his 2004 article of the same name. Agamben argues that electronic fingerprint scanning, which was originally imposed on criminals, reduces the citizen to a suspect or part of the 'dangerous classes' (2004) and suggests that these technologies normalise the transformation of biological life into a target for mechanisms of control by the state. More recently Agamben wrote a series of controversial posts on his blog positioning coronavirus lockdown measures alongside the Auschwitz concentration camp, claiming that state authorities were misleading the public about the severity of the virus in order to exercise new means of extreme social control. (Agamben, 2020). For migrating bodies, biometric technologies act as measures of control, and reduce the body to often inaccurate data sets which impinge their movement. To resist such control is (according to Agamben) to cease movement altogether.

Advancing the concept of human bodies as 'non-biometrifiable', Olga Goriunova states that biological identity is not fixed and suggests that during biometric data capture the concepts of scientific identification and social identification become intertwined. Non-biometric phenomena (such as symbolic expression and cultural tendencies) become layered onto biometric data procedures, resulting in a certain abstraction of the person being captured rather than their 'truthful' representation. Digital identities are thus different from their 'real world' counterparts, loaded with meaning. 'Identification, [...] is by no means a transparent or neutral process, and the truths it produces are constructed in a very specific and limited way.' (Goriunova, 2019: 24) This understanding of

identification technologies, as inscribing their own layer of meaning onto a body, is one that I am mindful of in practice. Biometric technologies provide their own, specific reading of the body and its identity as they translate bodies into data. A critical analysis of such processes is often missing. Goriunova suggests that 'the computational capturing of the world requires analyses that are as case-based, speculative, inventive, and dynamic as these technologies are' (2019: 25). My project provides one such analysis.

Refuting the 'objectivity' of capture methods and highlighting the challenges of such an assumption for othered bodies, affirms a reading of Europe's digital borders as spaces which control and manipulate the identity of the migrating body. Capturing othered bodies is therefore a process which affects their agency and identity. Prarthana Purkayastha discusses the implications of photographic capture of othered bodies in the British colonial period in her essay on 'Capturing Dance' (2023). Purkayastha analyses the documentation of Indian 'Nautch' dancers on photographic postcards in archival records. She posits that this documentation contributes to the invitation of a colonial gaze placed upon the dancers but also holds the ability to reveal moments where these bodies 'potentially exceed apparatuses of capture and surveillance' (Purkayastha, 2023: 1) Images Purkayastha analyses depict dancers in constructed poses which invite the colonial gaze; however, there are also some which seem to choreograph a refusal of the gaze. One dancer - Sushilasundari - is captured posing in a cage with Bengal tigers in a position resting upon the tigers' backs, displaying both bodily strength and mental bravery. The images Purkayastha analyses do not represent a dancer who exhibits fear or submission; instead these images display 'daring acts, active gestures and wilful bodies' (2023: 17) which speak of the dancers' resistance. Purkayastha highlights this colonial photography as a method of capture which is also resisted by a specific reading of these dancing bodies and their poses as archives of knowledge and acts of refusal and defiance. In revealing the conditions of capture that surround these images and the choreographic intent within the photographs, the works become a 'testament to dismissed or vanished histories that enunciate moments not only of subjection and terror but also of remarkable courage and refusal.' (Purkayastha, 2023: 2) Purkayastha's reading of these images offers a view of the Nautch dancers as resisting capture and the archival record as a sign of their agency. Examining the ways in which capture impacts migrating bodies, I

turn to a photographic series by Richard Mosse, an Irish photographer who uses infrared sensitive film (which was originally used as a form of surveillance technology in World War 2 to detect targets hiding in camouflage for aerial bombs) to critique the relatively 'unseen' conflict of the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and bring these images into vivid colourful vision. The project, titled *Infra* (2012), features many images of rebel fighters in poses directly staring at the camera lens, their weapons held taugt, with a bright hue of pink vegetation behind them. These images oppose the invisibility and inaccessibility of those involved in the conflict, instead meeting them head on.

In addition to photographic capture's direct impact on othered bodies and their ability or inability to resist such capture, the migrating body also faces capture by news and media outlets, which present their own implications in terms of agency and identity formation. The above analysis demonstrates the control that surveillance, data and visual capture technologies exhibit over migrants at Europe's borders. Within the sphere of the media, this control impacts heavily on identity formation through a choice to represent migrating bodies in a certain way and, as a result, often means that migrant voices, whether literal or symbolic, are not heard and agency is not accessed. Myria Georgiou helps to unpick the role of technology and politics within the migrant 'crisis' in her discussion of migrant voices in digital Europe (2018). Georgiou asks whether the migrant, as captured by European media outlets, becomes an agentive participant in the formation of their narratives within the media and in what mode this can happen. Looking to the source of migrant narrative voices offers an understanding of how governmental, national and independent bodies allow migrant voices to be framed against their own values. The refugee and migrant of digital Europe is often made to be 'hypervisible': seen but not heard, or even invisible in that they are heard but not seen. To explore this concept, I look to performance artist La Ribot. Her durational piece *Laughing Hole* (2006) depicts the hypervisibility that Georgiou maps out. In this performance three performers dressed in overalls sort through discarded placards and laugh continuously as they place the placards in disjointed phrases on the walls around them. The piece is inherently political; it is a reaction to Guantanamo prison and the dehumanizing effect of the mass media's brutality towards it. However, the subjects of this performance - the prisoners of Guantanamo Bay - are not represented by the performers and are only present in the words written on placards and the hysterical

sounds coming from the performers. The prisoners remain invisible to the audience. La Ribot's performance highlights the ability for voices to be heard without agency or visibility. This example anchors Georgiou's notion that whilst any appearance of genuine migrant voices and presence in media and in performance could be seen as having agency, this is not always the case.

Georgiou's analysis identifies complex power relations between migrant narratives and the media in which they are captured and displayed. She outlines the problematic framing of migrant voices from institutional perspectives, which regurgitates western narratives, but also considers grassroots migrant narratives to be problematic as well:

'The grassroots side of digital Europe uses voice to advance politics of solidarity, equality, and hospitality, against the reduced agency of suffering refugees or of exceptionally successful migrants, as in the institutional initiatives. Yet this side of digital Europe is not pure, and itself participates in bordering practices, partly by contesting and partly by reaffirming them.'
(Georgiou, 2018: 54)

Georgiou's analysis highlights the challenging and complex task of politicising migrant identities and voices in digital Europe. Although there is consensus in the failings of digital border technologies and capture methods, solutions are not always agreed on. It is clear from this research that technology is not neutral, that it contains 'global structures of inequality' (Ponzanesi, 2014: 11) and that digital Europe reiterates these inequalities in its borders and its representations of migrating bodies. How then might the body find an alternative experience of interacting with technology, an experience that goes some way to reimagining its narrative beyond this inequality?

6. Dancing into Data

In order to move forward with practice-based inquiry, it is imperative to consider the body-as-data through a performative lens. In the preceding sections the technological inequalities identified find their own implications when taken into performing spaces. How do these inequalities transfer onto performing bodies and what happens to the hidden knowledge of the body when it is transferred through data? Drawing again from Stojnić (2015), along with Sita Popat (2018), Sarah Whatley (2017) and others, I now consider how the body-as-data is articulated and understood through performance scholarship.

To understand how the tacit bodily knowledge of dance practice may be translated into digital technologies, it is necessary to determine what bodily knowledge means in the unique ontology of dance. According to Sarah Whatley and Hetty Blades, bodily knowledge, 'information about the way that the body comes into relationship with the world' (Whatley and Blades, 2019: 370), is typically not visible or translatable outside of one's own body and is instead generated and felt through movement in training, creating, and performing contexts. Digital technology, Whatley and Blades posit, is able to reveal hidden bodily knowledge, making the tacit explicit. It also causes us to question the relationship between human and machine, since relationality between bodies or performers is a fundamental feature of dance. They also suggest that 'bodily knowledge and embodied memory offer challenges to digital structures and processes that reveal new ways of thinking for both digital media and dance' (2019: 357) thus reinforcing performance as an appropriate lens through which to carry out this digital work.

Popat also argues for dance and performance as appropriate disciplines to analyse the exchange between the body and technology (2018). Performance practice can teach us a lot about human technology relationships, and because performance practice places importance on sensory perception and experience, practitioners can gain new awareness of presence, extended physicality and communication from the relationship between the real and the virtual. Popat's work highlights outdated views on technology and its influence on agency and impact to the user that is often held by lawmakers. Similarly to the way data capture technologies continue to leave migrating bodies bereft of agency at European borders, Popat suggests that prosthetics users are not granted agency in the process of developing and fitting their prostheses. Popat draws on DeLanda's writing on assemblages (2016) to analyse the effects of EU Law on identity and integrity in prosthetics users. She posits that the 'technology-entangled person' (Popat et al, 2018: 161) is a clear demonstration that the historical, and now outdated, Cartesian mind-body split is no longer helpful with less clear distinctions between body and technology. Popat's research draws from an acknowledgement that people are collections of the physical/psychological, material/mechanical in fluid relation to each other. She discusses prosthetics in relation to recent technological advances and states that 'prosthetic limbs can challenge our perception of what it means to be human, to be

a person' (Popat et al, 2018: 182) Prostheses can challenge binaries like self/other, human/non human, or nature/construct in everyday life.

Popat suggests that, for a prosthetics user, their identity and integrity are directly affected by the Law. Popat's analysis draws on examples from the NHS to highlight how little the user is involved in the process of creating, delivering and evaluating prostheses. The law is not concerned with identity and struggles to govern the technology-entangled person. Popat's argument indicates that prostheses are still seen as a tool or a medical aid by society rather than part of the user, fortifying the fact that bodily extensions are still viewed with vacillating and unsettled opinion. Popat argues for a change in the way society views body extensions and prosthetics in particular, to view them as we view race and gender, as 'profound elements of identity' (Popat et al, 2018: 183) and that 'there is a need for a fair and holistic landscape for multi-faceted decision-making regarding extensions to the person.' (Popat et al, 2018: 183) If this is the case for those who engage with bodily extensions, perhaps there is also scope for change in the way that knowledge created by surveillance technologies is viewed in relation to the bodies that are affected by these devices, in order to rethink their problematic marked identities.

In continuing to examine technological extensions of the physical self through performance, scholarship parallels can be drawn between bodies-as-data and how the physical space these bodies inhabit is understood in the digital realm. Stojnić is once again useful to note; she celebrates cyberspace as something that has redefined our understanding of the potential spaces we can inhabit beyond the physical, and at the same time cyberspace becomes a continuation and extension of the physical space we engage with (2015). She questions the corporeal body and avatar relationship, asking whether the avatar is a representation of the human performer, or a performer itself acting in cyberspace. Stojnić makes reference to the cyber-performance *Hello Hi There* (Annie Dorsen, 2010) which consists of a conversation between two chat bots. Stojnić suggests the bots are actors in the performance, making the corporeal body superfluous, and that the 'live presence of a performer, once considered paradigmatic for performance practices, has been replaced by digital technology.' (Stojnić, 2015: 71). This realisation comes with the acknowledgement that the differentiation between real

body and avatar is increasingly blurred. She offers an image of the real self and external mask in constant oscillation or in a continuous loop, proposing an ambiguity between the two, that perhaps the avatar is an alter-ego of the human subject. (Stojnić, 2015: 18) If it is possible to understand avatars as alter-egos of physical performances, I would argue that perhaps the body as transformed into data through surveillance technologies can also be understood as an alter-ego of the physical body standing in front of the machine. Furthermore, if this is indeed the case, what is our relationship with these alter-egos? How do we engage with them, police them and be mindful of their existence?

This reading of digital alter-egos elicits a questioning of how new technologies carry data bodies through space and how their physical counterparts are affected by digital experiences. With an understanding that bodies are imprinted into data and sent across multiple border control systems, it might also be possible to understand bodies imprinted into data in performance as being able to travel across physical spaces and, most importantly, as experiencing the ramifications of this within the physical body. The sensational, physical and cognitive experience of having one's body transferred into data in any context must therefore be discussed, and I will remain within the realms of performance as a useful analytical tool. When the physical body is presented with either a virtual environment or their data self in avatar form, they are connected with their virtual body. As the body is transformed into data, this data body does not remain separate from the physical one, they are closely connected through proprioceptive awareness. During a virtual reality performance or experience, the user is often cited to physically react to their virtual visual surroundings and to claim their avatar's actions as their own. This contrasts with the data body at borders which is invisible to its physical form. Popat, opposing Josephine Machon's view that immersive theatre is a reaction to the distancing effect of new media and virtual reality, advocates that emphasis on experience and interaction will let us 'relocate ourselves as embodied beings rather than distancing us from our bodies' (Popat, 2016: 359). This idea of dissociation between virtual reality and the body stems not only from the idea that in cyberspace one is free from bodily constraints, but also from 1980s and 90s science fiction and theory on early virtual reality in which it was proposed by some that the body would become obsolete. (William Gibson, 1984) Contrastingly, Popat suggests that, because virtual reality allows us to begin to question embodiment through our own bodies, our bodies are at once both present and absent: for example, by the ability to experience

physical sensational reactions despite the lack of fleshly contact to the visual virtual world. Virtual reality can also allow us to explore impossible situations - blindness or being at war for example - and to feel in our physical bodies the proprioceptive reactions to those situations whilst being transported there visually, through an avatar or virtual environment. In this way, the physical body is not obsolete, but is closely connected to and affected by the virtual world.

7. Re-shaping Choreography in the Digital

In the same way that these technologies allow the user to re-imagine and re-situate their environment, new technologies have also enabled a rethinking of the medium, reading and format of performance and choreography. They have galvanized the creation of platforms that allow users to view choreography not just in the live moment but from many alternative locations online. They also enable choreographers to give work a virtual afterlife, which I would argue offers similarities to the digital alter-ego created from the performer and its own virtual 'after'-life. If it is possible to use technology to reimagine how choreography is viewed, how a narrative is engaged with and to find alternative ways into the work, then perhaps it is also possible to use technology within choreography to reimagine and provide alternative bodily and identificatory narratives.

An example of this lies in the form of 'choreographic objects' (Whatley, 2017). A choreographic object gives audience-access to material outside the realms of a singular performance moment. These objects can promote legacy, offer new meaning, or give an 'intangible dancework a tangible second life' (Whatley, 2017: 93) Choreographic objects which encourage a new reading of choreographic work through digital media include William Forsythe's *Motionbank* (2010). Forsythe's intention for *Motionbank* was to enable audiences to see the complex choreographic structure of professional dance works through audio visual materials. However, it also poses important questions about the act of transferring choreographic practice into data. How are choreographies reconfigured in the transfer process? How do we navigate ownership, ethics and privacy? The *Motionbank* project endeavoured to analyse how computer-aided design might aid the publication of choreographic ideas from a wide range of dance artists with different choreographic methods. Deborah Hay, an invited dance artist, brought with

her a unique process of making. She used written scores with questions and images that were practiced by the dancers for multiple days individually, sometimes away from the studio. The movement and timing of the material varied each time they performed making it difficult to capture digitally and, as a result, many versions of the performance were captured. There were 21 video recordings, silhouettes and 3D pathways, scores and annotations. All of this amounted to Hay's 'dance data'. Whatley asserts that *Motionbank* promotes choreographic intelligence, that 'new languages, vocabularies, paradigms and literacies are emerging through choreographic objects.' (Whatley, 2017: 94) This is a clear indication of the capabilities of digital technology to promote understandings of dance as more than just a singular, intangible, live performance moment in time. As Whatley and Blades state, 'when dancing bodies are extended into and constructed from data, they generate new ontologies for dance and reveal features of the form.' (2019: 379) If data is able to shift the ontology of dance as a form, it is possible to ask, what else does it have the power to change within the dance?

Within contemporary performance that deals with technology, bodies and data intertwine in collaborative practices between the choreographer and technologist. Wayne McGregor's *Choreographic Language Agent* (2004) is an intelligent software agent which was able to explore variations in choreographic instruction and decision making inspired by visual imagery. It functioned like a sketching tool, creating moving ideas with which the dancers worked. It was unpredictable, like an improvising partner, but did not possess a visual body. The aim of the *Choreographic Language Agent* was to generate an understanding of the cognitive and physical processes which comprise dance, and consequently helped to break McGregor's habits as a choreographer. As part of this project, McGregor worked with Scott DeLahunta to create artificially intelligent interactive object titled *Becoming*. *Becoming* was a physical presence (it had a virtual body made of lines and shapes that was displayed in the same scale as the human body on a 3D screen), and it encouraged a kinaesthetic response from the dancers to create new movement material in the studio (DeLahunta, 2018). Interestingly, the source material for this object was the film *Blade Runner*, one of the most well-known cyborg-based science fiction films of the 20th century. Both of these software tools 'were inspired by diverse modes of thinking about the body.' (DeLahunta, 2018: 342) They allowed DeLahunta and McGregor to investigate embodied dance processes on an interdisciplinary level and deepened their understanding of the

relationship between dance and data. The *Choreographic Language Agent*, I would argue, reduces the body to a tool rather than subject of this project. The dancing body is the means by which the software is able to function, but the dancer does not get ownership of the resulting product. This leads me to ask, at what point does movement cease to belong to the dancer or choreographer and to belong to the software that captures it? Also, if this movement data is used in performance, is the original dancer's identity present through the technology?

Blades argues that we must view projects such as the *Choreographic Language Agent* and *Motionbank* as evidence of the way a dance work's ontology spans more than just a moment of live performance (2012). This not only challenges liveness as a defining ontological feature of dance, but it also disputes the primary importance of the human body as many of these projects place importance and emphasis on shapes rather than bodies. Therefore, transcribing the body into data and data into the body can not only serve as a method to analyse movement practice but also as a tool for the artist to find innovative ways of moving and creating. It can allow the artist a freedom from their own habits, enabling them to move through and beyond their bodily practices.

However, despite performance's ability to benefit from the body-as-data in this way, there are also more sinister side-effects that must be considered.

I am drawn to Popat's analysis of the virtual performance *Telematic Dreaming* (Sermon 1992, Kozel 1994), in which two beds were placed in different locations, their images projected into each space of the other so that bodies could interact through virtual space. Using an example from Susan Kozel's *Telematic Dreaming* performance in which her virtual body was assaulted by two participants, Popat offers questions around ethics in virtual spaces (which she claims were non-existent at the time of writing in 2016) and the consideration that virtual and physical interaction happens in a unique space where bodies are not so separate (Popat, 2016: 361). She goes on to discuss the implications of actions to virtual bodies on their physical counterparts, suggesting that while the physical body feels no direct pain, acts on the virtual body can be 'experienced as being shades of the physical experience, affecting the body physically as well as emotionally.' (Popat, 2016: 377) Through proprioceptive touch and sense of embodiment, it can be understood that virtual interactions or exchanges can affect the physical body, and thus

ethical considerations should be enforced. Popat suggests that the problematic ‘proprioceptive mismatch’ between the embodied self and the disembodied “other” presents an ‘ethical asymmetry’ (Popat, 2016: 377) and suggests that a new ethics of embodiment should recognise the virtual “other” as being connected with the physical “other”. Kozel described being shaken from her experience, despite the assault happening to a virtual representation of her rather than her physical body, proposing the question: How far do we push the ethics of embodiment in VR encounters? (Popat, 2016) Until recently, there has been a distinct lack of ethics for this experience where bodies are translated into data, which raises questions regarding standards of care toward bodies who exist within this space, voluntarily or involuntarily, with or without their knowledge. Sermon’s version of the project, which featured a male body, did not experience the same trauma as Kozel, showing that issues of gender are still at force within the digital realm. So, how are ethics in virtual spaces enforced, if at all? And, if they are not does this also denote a lack of care to the body-as-data? The body-as-data in performance is at once useful, transformative and dangerous. Ethics for digital bodies and digital realms have only recently made their way into discourse, and they are needed more than ever. Although Popat’s argument pre-dates some more recent discussion on ethics in virtual spaces (Madary and Metzinger 2016, Gray et al. 2021, Fung et al. 2022), it demonstrates directly through performance practice the implications of a lack of care towards virtual bodies. This reifies the potential for new technology within performance to disrupt identities, to harm even, and place western assumptions on bodies. Up to this point, this chapter has attempted to consider the body-as-data and the consequences thereof from different scholarly perspectives but now it is necessary to introduce and perhaps scrutinise my own positioning within this work. As a white, British, middle-class, female, scholar, what place do I have in discussing migrating bodies in relation to digital border control methods? Is this work leaning towards an exoticism of the migrating body-as-data and an attempt at westernising it? How do I avoid exploiting the afflictions of the migrating body for my own artistic gain?

8. Acknowledging the Author’s Position

When tackling this topic from the perspective of the British scholar, it is important to consider the postcolonial concept of the subaltern. Gayatri Spivak defines the subaltern

to be those who are placed in the category of other, on the margins of society with limited or no access to cultural centrality, who are oppressed by the dominant archetype to the point where they do not have a voice. To boil down her approach to one exemplary sentence, she writes, 'white men protect brown women from brown men'. (Spivak, 1988: 92). The opinion of the subaltern, and subaltern woman in particular, is not considered. The subaltern is spoken for by the capitalist hegemonic powers in order to accumulate value for the capitalist system. Spivak's argument, which she offers as a critique of French post-structuralist theory, and in alignment with Marxist ideas of subjectivity, aims to show how the subaltern experiences a complete loss of voice - politically and symbolically speaking - whilst demonstrating that often, in an attempt to "give voice", the dominant hegemony simply places Western assumptions onto the subaltern, pushing them further towards invisibility and into the shadow of the Eurocentric subject. Spivak refers to the 'ventriloquism of the speaking subaltern' (1988: 27) to suggest that in an attempt to speak for, or give voice to, the subaltern the Westerner is only transmitting their own views. Instead, there should be a shifting of power relations to rebuke the subaltern status.

Radhika Gajjala reveals the myopic boundaries of virtual and real, global and local, online and offline in *Cyberculture and the Subaltern* (2013) in which she asks what happens to the subaltern when they are brought online. She examines the presence and absence of agency for internet users with subaltern status. Gajjala argues that imagining the existence of a completely offline body is in itself 'an act of producing the subaltern. Yet it is only through a production of the subaltern that we garner assistance and commitment for the actual material empowerment of the underprivileged of the world.' (Gajjala, 2013: 24). This is a state that is difficult but important to navigate as it may provide the foundation on which, through practice, we can try to move beyond the problematic labelling within capitalist regimes of capture. After all, it must be remembered that art is a powerful tool for change.

A common thread from this chapter- the eradication of binaries - sits firmly within Gajjala's research. She offers an analysis of 'intersections' between these binaries, stating that 'these online/offline intersections are changing the way we need to respond to situations around us.' (2013: 155) Gajjala calls into question the lens with which we look at the world online and offline, bringing attention to how unseen areas of

technology which have been seemingly separate from our use of it (technical aspects, such as coding), hide inequalities which protect the status quo. Navigating my own positionality within the context of the body-as-data is important to the ethical considerations of this project, and it is important that this project is not an attempt to 'give voice' to the subaltern migrating body crossing digital borders. As a practicing artist, I will make a case for an approach which choreographs a space that may allow for new narratives to be crafted by migrating bodies in an open way. Through this approach choreography could become a form of digital or physical spatial design in which the choreographer makes space for alternate worlds. I will explore this concept and its influences in the following chapters.

9. Concluding Thoughts and Next Steps

This chapter provides a contextual framework for practice concerning bodies at borders and their relationship to digital technologies and surveillance. The concept of the body-as-data, drawn from Stojnić's cyborg writings, Braidotti's posthumanities and Haraway's feminist viewpoints, depicts a process wherein bodies are inscribed into the data that captures them and vice versa. I have introduced cyborg and posthuman theory highlighting the fact that, in Western Europe we have often made a successful transformation from the human to the posthuman. This is not the case for all humans and, according to Stojnić, those who do not have the ability to access cyborgian upgrades are deemed 'sub-human'. The cyborg today is based on privilege.

In the context of digital Europe, the oppressive nature of technologies employed at the border points to structures of inequality for those who experience it, and to a Western approach in their construction which is neither inclusive nor open to change. This is evident in Theresa May's 'hostile environment' policy which evolved from a policy designed to make remaining in the UK as difficult as possible. This is a reflection on the British government's attitude towards migrants (Grierson, 2018) which is evident in the aggressive policies that have followed from Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak. This approach to European borders is hugely significant, not only in that it reaffirms Stojnić's statement regarding data being inscribed into migrating bodies, but also in that it allows us to question the consequences of Eurocentric data being inscribed into 'othered'

bodies. Goriunova and Magnet highlight the impact of biometric data capture on identity, offering a need to rethink how identity is viewed from within the context of computational methods and digital security. Yet, rather than rethinking and relabelling these identities, this study aims to find new approaches that could allow oppressed bodies to craft their own identities and remove themselves from oppressive, marked identity of the refugee.

Examining the dancing body's relationship to data has also been useful in emphasising the double-edged sword of transcribing bodies into data and vice versa in a performance context. On one hand, abstracting the body-as-data can reveal hidden knowledge but it also raises questions regarding ethics and, in the elimination of bodily limits in digital spaces, new limits are found. This feeds directly into my next chapter which analyses performance practices and new technology as potential approaches or frameworks for practice in more detail.

Within subsequent chapters, I discuss choreographic works and explorations in relation to bodies and borders, analysing their approach to both the migrating body and the body-as-data. I examine the works of Crystal Pite (2019), *Instant Dissidence* (2016), *Be Another Lab* (2012), Dritan Kastrati (2019), and Caroline Williams and Reem Karssli (2019) in order to establish how migrant narratives are navigated within different performance contexts. I draw on scholars, including Andre Lepecki, Alison Jeffers, Emma Cox, Royona Mitra and Nicolas Bourriaud, to analyse these performance works and highlight their challenges and opportunities in navigating othered bodies. Importantly, these performances have all been presented to UK audiences principally and I acknowledge the inherent privilege associated with this. By engaging with these works I ask whether presenting a refugee's narrative in this way is a form of surveillance - of voyeurism - validated through the aesthetic of dance. I also discuss in depth the differing concepts of narrative, identity and positionality, using scholarship from Jennifer Parker-Starbuck and Arabella Stanger.

This chapter seeks to provide a contextual framework for my practice-as-research. Through practice, I uncover an approach that navigates the complexities of identity marking for those oppressed by technologies at European borders. Using the scholarship above, I explore the body-as-data in practice with an understanding of its potential to become both a liberating experience and a method of pushing migrating

bodies into othered-ness. As this thesis unfolds it uncovers an alternative organisation of space for oppressed bodies through performance, whether that is through the lens of the technological alter-ego or the cyborg. There are positives and negatives to the body-as-data: different bodies in different places within society experience this concept differently. What could happen if these lines were deliberately crossed so that migrating bodies which are oppressed by data capture are taken into performance practices where the body-as-data can offer transcendence from bodily and identificatory limits?

Chapter 2: An analysis of existing practice on performance and migration

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[This project comes from a place of concern. In Britain where I currently live a Brexit deal is being negotiated, and it is very possible that the UK will leave the EU without a deal in 7 days' time. The UK is in political turmoil, no-deal horror stories about increased food prices, border delays and an end to the free movement of people saturate the media. (O'Carroll, 2019). In Syria and Turkey civil war wages on, with more citizens expected to flee as fighting continues. Soon there could be many more refugees attempting to cross the border into Greece, Germany, France and the UK looking for safe passage.

In the news this year, Covid 19 continues to dominate headlines, as well unrest in the US with Trump supporters storming the Capitol building in Washington DC, and Black Lives Matter protests, ignited by the death of George Floyd, which continue throughout the world, often accompanied by police violence (Amnesty International, 2020). These protests mark the systemic racism which still permeates western culture. In the UK it has been reported that police officers are four times more likely to use force against black people than white people (Jouavel, 2020). The events of the last year have made it clearer than ever that bodies of othered-ness and their identities are continuously marked by systems of control.]

In this chapter I discuss and analyse a selection of contemporary dance and physical theatre performances that feature narratives of human migration. The overarching aim is to gather evidence of contemporary performance practices that attempt to engage with migrant subjects, particularly the racialized identities of migrants considered to be Other in Britain and Europe. Specifically, I will aim to address my second research question:

What forms of digital performance practice can be developed to enable a rethinking of the relationship between migrating bodies and digital regimes of control?

I explore this question by critically examining five recent performance works that will inform the methods for my own practice, with the aim of reworking certain fixed and essentialised identities attached to migrant bodies. In order to arrive at these methods, I will provide a critical analysis of the working practices and representational processes that inform these performances, using specific theoretical frameworks that expose the potential and limits of aestheticizing migration.

It is important to acknowledge that whilst this chapter offers a critical mapping of existing performance practices that navigate the narratives of forced migration, it is not a criticism of the transformative potential of such performances in general. Artistic practice is an essential tool for engagement with forms of activism, anger or upset in

society and is sometimes an effective mirror reflecting collective human behaviour. Dance practice in particular offers a focus on movement and space and as Paul Scolieri states, "choreography"—the arrangement of bodily movement in time and space—might serve as an ideal critical lens for understanding experiences of migration' (Scolieri, 2012: vi). There are, however, a plethora of important factors to consider in the appreciation and analysis of performances on migration, including the positionality of migrant bodies, the crafting of migrant narratives, the effects of artistic choices around form and content, and spectatorial desire. What follows is an analysis of a small group of performance-based artworks in relation to how they feature or corporealize the migrating body. Each of these performances or events represents, in some way, migrating bodies, with differing modes and results, and I closely examine the ethical pitfalls of these well-intentioned practices. I have included a variety of different forms of performances – concert dance, participatory dance, physical theatre, and mixed-media installation - that navigate identity, subjectivity and the act of voicing minoritarian narratives through choreography.

1. *Flight Pattern* and Stolen Embodiment

On a mild evening in May 2019 I took my seat at the Royal Opera House to see Crystal Pite's *Flight Pattern*, having heard many before me sing its praises as a moving piece of dance performance exploring the refugee 'crisis'. The performance opened with thirty-six dancers in perfect unison, one mass of bodies, dressed in grey, moving slowly. Repetitive movements dominated the stage, dancers packed tightly together as they moved to music from Górecki's 'Symphony of Sorrowful Songs' (ROH.org.uk, 2019). Pite's dancers presented us with a series of iconic images, embodying the visual images that have been plastered on news programmes and in mainstream media for many years since the refugee crisis came to light in the British media. There were bodies sleeping rough, huddling under their battered coats and being ignored by passers-by. A boat scene emerged early into the piece, with the entire ensemble crammed into one small space which represented the treacherous journey across seas. Perhaps the most recognisable visual imagery was that of the dancers walking in a line to an unknown border, using begging and pleading gestures, with a distinctly sad, sombre tone. The performance ended with an emotionally driven pas de deux, as one dancer was driven

to insanity by her experience and those around her tried to intervene to prevent her descent to madness. Snow fell from the ceiling as each grey figure passed through a gradually decreasing gap into the back of the stage, with the final dancer facing an internal struggle as to whether they should pass through. This image offered an ambiguous end to the tale, by asking the audience to question whether these characters were granted refuge in a safe environment or whether they fell victim to the harsh realities of their perilous journey and died in transit.

Pite's choreography is narrative and emotionally driven, tugging on the heart strings of her audience. The work is branded as a 'moving exploration of the refugee crisis, from the plight of millions of displaced people to individual human relationships.' (ROH.org.uk, 2019). The dancers within the piece represented a community of refugees, giving the Royal Opera House audience a harrowing insight into the extremely emotional and painful experience of those who are forced into fleeing their homes. Yet, there are a number of aesthetic decisions to consider, which keep Pite, her dancers and their audiences in a position far removed from the refugee crisis and firmly place them in the category of 'observer'. Firstly, it is important to consider the culture and society which typically creates and views this type of performance – ballet is a largely white, upper and middle-class art form, often viewed by wealthy audiences and generally danced by people from affluent backgrounds, considering the high costs associated with ballet training. The Royal Opera House is also situated in London UK, which is a predominantly wealthy and privileged area in general, and specifically for cultural capital. Secondly, the creation of this piece of work, although probably thoroughly researched, was a reaction to images presented by mainstream media. It would be difficult for Pite and her cast of 36 dancers to visit any of the spaces represented within the performance, or to speak to those whom they portrayed on stage. Pite states that this performance was her 'way of coping with the world at the moment' (Pite in ROH, 2019), which points towards her consumption of these images, obtained from media or other secondary sources, and the resulting performance potentially being a depiction of her own perspective. This is cemented in an interview with Royal Opera House Senior Producer Emma Southworth, in which Pite points to the fact that she researched the journey and aesthetic of the refugee by 'looking at pictures' and 'imagining' their difficult situations. (Royal Opera House, 2017). Lastly, the figure of the refugee upon which *Flight Pattern* is based is very much absent. There

are no images of real refugees who have experienced perilous journeys, and instead, their stories are translated through moving bodies and movement scores which represent them to an audience. The Royal Opera House dancers use their trained, privileged bodies to convey the story of the abject refugee to a largely white audience in order to raise awareness of a troubling situation and, for the white choreographer, to find a method of 'coping' with it. This act of representing the absent refugee through a centring of white guilt/pain and a privileged dancing body can be associated with the act of 'giving a voice'. Alison Jeffers discusses this phrase in relation to refugee advocacy, commenting that it is often used as a phrase within politics and fraught with ethical issues. Jeffers states:

'it is a common trope in refugee advocacy to speak of 'giving voice' to refugees and, while this might sometimes be politically expedient, a more considered view of the ethical implications of giving and taking generally might provide a useful pause for advocates of this approach.' (Jeffers, 2012:83)

Performances like Crystal Pite's *Flight Pattern* are an attempt to speak about the refugee crisis without involving refugee subjects in its creation. I argue that this can be seen as stolen embodiment, which attempts to speak for the refugee's embodied experiences through white privilege. The postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discusses in her ground-breaking essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak' the implications of the 'native informant' representing minoritarian or subaltern subjects and speaking for them (Spivak, 1988: 28). Following Spivak, I argue that Pite and her dancers play the role of informants, and their act of trying to give voice to a refugee is one that pushes the refugee subject further into silence and invisibility. Alison Jeffers states:

'when refugees are 'given a voice', they must usually accept that which non-refugees have deemed they *might* want or need and, more importantly, that which they are prepared to give them. This is, more often than not, a temporary voice in a temporary space.' (Jeffers, 2012: 84)

Therefore, in using their bodies to speak of and for the refugees in question, Pite's dancers cement the hierarchy and status of the white, privileged middle-class British person as above the refugee. While works like *Flight Pattern* intend to bring awareness to harrowing situations and draw the general public's attention to the refugee crisis, I pose that these performances, which are presented to an audience far removed from the refugee crisis, ultimately expands forms of surveillance and mobilize a voyeurism validated through the aesthetic of dance.

At first glance, *Flight Pattern* may be viewed as a political piece of dance work. It comments on the refugee crisis and throws a series of images in the faces of middle-class audiences who may have previously disregarded them as events far removed from their lives. However, when understood in the context of Andre Lepecki's *choreopolitics* (2013: 14) this view becomes discredited. Lepecki refers to choreopolitics as the dancer's enacting of a politics of movement, and of finding a way to move freely in an increasingly controlled environment. This is not something that is a given, but something that is produced and discovered, i.e. choreopolitics is rooted in experimentation and resistance. Lepecki draws on Hannah Arendt's concept of politics as bound to freedom (2005), together with writings on the concept of policing from Jacques Rancière (2010), and societies of control from Gilles Deleuze (1995) to discuss politics in relation to movement in dance and in life¹. Lepecki sets choreopolitics in opposition to *choreopolicing*, which he then uses as a way to set free choreography from its previous normative definition of composition of movement. Using examples of policing movement within political spaces (such as restricting human movement at protests, for example), he offers the following definition of choreopoliced movement as

'[...] any movement incapable of breaking the endless reproduction of an imposed circulation of consensual subjectivity, where to be is to fit a prechoreographed pattern of circulation, corporeality, and belonging.'
(Lepecki, 2013: 20)

This allows for an understanding of movements of the police as choreographic and in opposition to political movement, essentially outlining two opposing methods of kinetic

¹ Lepecki draws from three distinct theories on politics and freedom in his discussion of choreopolicing and choreopolitics:

1. Hannah Arendt argues in *the promise of politics* (2005) that previous political thought fails to account for human action. Her argument stems from understanding that the concept of freedom should be considered as political before we consider it as the execution of free will. She poses that when freedom is achieved or created using force, the principles of politics are disbanded. Her original contributions were written in German, and Lepecki utilises the open translation of Arendt's binding of politics to freedom to consider that the inability to move politically results in the inability to move freely.
2. French philosopher Jacques Rancière describes the police as being in distinct opposition from politics (2011). He describes the police not as we understand them today but as a symbolic method of distributing, organising, and maintaining social order, or in other words a function of power. He draws a distinction between politics and the police by establishing politics as only functioning with equality, something which is not present for the police, thus anchoring their separation.
3. As discussed in Chapter 1, Deleuze's *Societies of Control* (1992) aimed to update ideas on discipline and punishment from Foucault, suggesting that structures of discipline have developed from separate visible entities, such as a prison guard, to invisible and networked systems such as CCTV and electronic tagging as a direct result of technological developments. Important to Lepecki's thoughts here is Deleuze's notion that people within societies of control are given the illusion of freedom of movement, yet they are more controlled than ever.

action. Lepecki furthers this idea by moving away from actual movements of the police and using this abstracted concept as a framework from which choreographic practice and dance performance can be analysed. He argues that choreography produces systems of obedience and control, as it is generally brought into existence through an exchange of commanding and obeying (through choreographic scores, tasks, instructions given to the dancer). *Flight Pattern* demonstrates conformity in both the hierarchical dynamic between choreographer and dancer, and in the traditional convention of middle-class audiences viewing difficult subject matter as passive spectators. Dancers are given commands to evoke emotion in order to entertain an audience. So the question remains – do the dancers in *Flight Pattern* move politically?

Lepecki's concept of choreopolitics suggests that it arises through experimentation (although not without some pre-established plan); an open ability to express creativity and a rejection of compliance. He suggests that the task of the dancer is to move politically and that they have the potential to activate the political in controlled spaces. In Lepecki's own words:

'I propose the notion of the choreopolitical as the formation of collective plans emerging at the edges between open creativity, daring initiative, and a persistent—even stubborn—iteration of the desire to live away from policed conformity.' (Lepecki, 2013: 23)

As a traditional, proscenium arch dance performance, *Flight Pattern* does not incorporate Lepecki's notion of choreopolitics. There is no obvious desire here to propose a way to 'live away from policed conformity'. The choreographed movements do not require a level of intense persistence to the point of exhaustion as within a political act, and the dancers' devotion to execute choreography is instead replaced with intent to move an audience through a display of skill and impressive technical ability. As such, *Flight Pattern* remains as a representation of not only stolen embodied realities of refugees but also appears to be situated within the practice of command and obey without resistance - actions that Lepecki deems opposite or far removed from choreopolitical action. This reifies migrant narratives in their fixed identities, rather than moving against such essentialisms in a political act of defiance. How then can movement-based performance avoid such dubious ethics of dealing with migrant narratives? Is it possible to navigate themes which explore othered and politically silenced bodies without further imposing white privilege onto them? I explore this

question in the next section within the context of a participatory dance project.

2. Possessing the Refugee in *Dancing with Strangers: From Calais to England*

Rita Marcolo, artistic director of Instant Dissidence performance company, sits in a chair on the streets of Bristol with arms outstretched, wearing a t-shirt that reads 'dance with me'. The concept of *Dancing with Strangers* (2016) is for members of the public to share a dance duet with refugees living in the Calais Jungle² through Marcolo's body. To research this piece, Marcolo travelled to the Calais Jungle and provided a movement workshop, developing four 'duets' with refugees, whose movement she then brought back to England and translated through her own body. The performance event is therefore framed as an invitation to make connections across borders through dance. For passers-by the draw is (according to the event's website) to 'perform a duet with one of those refugees' (Tumblr, 2016). Participants are encouraged to sit opposite Marcolo and are given headphones which tell stories from one of four refugees involved in the project. Marcolo subsequently performs the movement taken from one of the duets, which is replicated or mirrored by the participant sitting opposite her. At times they mirror each other, at other points they hold hands, embrace, or are otherwise in contact. After the recording and sharing of movement ends, they part ways.

Dancing with Strangers has been performed in several locations including Bristol and Leicester in the UK, and Finland (2016). The project, and the duets with participants, are described as 'an act of hope' (Tumblr, 2016), which points to an expectation that this performance might provide some advantage to the refugees involved and potentially offer some building of awareness within local communities where the participatory dance is performed. It is defined as activist in nature. By aiming to bring

² Here I refer to The Calais Jungle - an encampment of displaced vulnerable people, an unofficial refugee camp on the flat lands just outside the Calais border, which grew immense media attention in 2016 at the height of the refugee crisis. At its peak the jungle acted as a waiting area and makeshift home for nearly 8000 men, women and children, often unaccompanied, who were looking for safe passage into the UK after escaping their war-torn home countries. (IBtimes, 2016) They lived in tents, with little to no resources and dangerous living conditions. Although the Jungle was officially demolished in October 2016, (Mould, 2017) many boats of migrants attempt the journey from Calais to the Kent coast each year, with more living in the Calais area. (BBC, 2020) Recently my local news published a video of thousands of new migrant boats being kept in a holding facility in Dover, a boat graveyard of sorts, which points of the severity and sheer volume of attempted crossings into the port.

four refugees' stories and movement material back to England, *Dancing with Strangers* adopts the task of sharing their narratives, and their identities, with people who would otherwise be far removed from this minoritarian society. Marcalo creates connections between these two different sets of people, to allow refugee bodies to express themselves through movement and to offer privileged bodies some insight into how they found themselves in the situation of being a refugee. The project aims to situate this shared language in privileged spaces far from the Calais Jungle in an attempt to allow some element of the refugee to pass into this space, which, on an abstract level, could enable the migrant's transgressing of oppressive borders and restrictions in some way. But real transgression certainly remains impossible in this performance. Marcalo acts as a vehicle for transgressive movements, performing opposite and with the participants, taking on a role that her chosen refugees cannot. Her body is privileged in that it is able to travel between European countries, unfixed to one space. If this performance does act as a method of connection, and as an embodiment of personal migration stories, then it must also navigate the complex intertwining of self and other that shifts the power dynamic as a privileged body takes on the movement of a restricted one.

There are important considerations here in terms of identity, which require further scrutiny to understand whether *Dancing with Strangers* mobilises a progressive politics beneficial to refugees in the Calais Jungle. I am primarily interested in identity here, as defined in the introduction to this thesis, in relation to Deleuze and Guattari, Braidotti, and Foucault's notion of identity in relation to power, but I shall turn to this further into this chapter. Referring again to Rosi Braidotti who draws on Deleuze and Guattari, the concept of nomadic subjectivity is a useful tool here to understand the processes of identity marking at play within the work. As discussed in chapter 1, Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity calls for a challenge to the 'universal' idea of the subject from which difference ripples out from and in reference to. Despite their association with movement, the migrant condition does not automatically reflect a nomadic subjectivity, Braidotti posits that

'the nomadism in question here refers to the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour [...] It is the subversion of conventions that define the nomadic state, not the literal act of travelling. (Braidotti, 1994: 5)

Thus, it is through resistance to the megastructures of invisible power controlling digital borders and European states that the migrant or refugee would be able to enter the nomadic state, or in other words, by refuting the problematic identity marker of 'refugee'. I have already mapped out the constraints against such a resistance, which is prohibited by systems of control which seek to maintain a specific categorizing of these bodies. Therefore, those continuously assigned to the identity of 'refugee' might find themselves restricted from any positive state of becoming or nomadic subjectivity of their own, rather experiencing identity thrust upon them by systems of control, pushing them further into a reductive state. In *Dancing with Strangers* I argue that the bodies of those whom Marcalo receives movement material from- the refugees in the Calais Jungle - are not in a position to resist their labelling in favour of a nomadic condition. By contrast, as the audience/participants and Marcalo experience the narrative and movement of each refugee, their identity takes on this experience, allowing them to take on temporary possession of an-other body. For the refugee subject who created this movement, their identity remains unchanged from the perspective of those involved in the work since it is always cemented as 'refugee'. These refugees do not reciprocally take on the possession of other bodies; it is only their body, their self, their identity that is taken on by another. Although their stories are told, the emphasis is placed on their category of being a refugee, their journeys that lead to their emplacement in this category, and their continued location in the Calais jungle, inhibited from movement by the state. As a result, each time their movement is performed, they continue to be marked and inscribed with a non-nomadic identity.

If this is the case, the migrant body within *Dancing with Strangers* could also be seen as a figure of exclusion, the *homo sacer*. The *homo sacer*, as elucidated by Giorgio Agamben (1998), describes a life which is depoliticized. In Agamben's work, which draws on Foucault's earlier notions of biopolitics (2008), the concept of the *homo sacer* is paradoxical. He describes the double meaning of the *homo sacer* as someone who (according to ancient Roman law) was prohibited from being sacrificed yet at the same time, because their body holds no sacrificial value, is ostracized and given no value upon their life (1998: 71). In Agamben's definition the *homo sacer* is killable without implication to the one who kills. For the *homo sacer* in sovereign states, Agamben suggests that they are held as both a necessary component of the system, whilst their life is also devoid of value in that they can be taken out of this system with no

consequence; they become disposable. Therefore, those who have their citizenship or their rights taken are reduced to a 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998: 138). The homo sacer is completely excluded from political life whilst at the same time 'in a continuous relationship with the power that banished him.' (Agamben, 1998: 138). According to Agamben (and other more recent scholarship which draws directly from his work – Diken 2004, Darling 2009), the refugee within a camp is particularly excluded and thus reduced to the 'bare life' of the homo sacer. He posits that the camp, 'the state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the rule of law on the basis of a factual state of danger, is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order.' (Agamben, 1998: 169). Through this zone of permanent exclusion, where sovereign law does not operate, refugees within the camp are excluded from the rules of the state and their rights are non-existent. Within the Calais jungle in particular, the refugee embodies Agamben's concept of the homo sacer in that they expected to inhabit this space to follow the legal process to claim asylum but also abandoned by the law and stripped of their human rights and basic needs such as sanitation and adequate sustenance. The camp is set up to exist on the margins of the town so that the refugee is both visible and invisible, included and excluded.

By travelling to the Calais Jungle, a zone of exclusion where the refugee is reduced to a bare life, Marcalo engages with the depoliticized body of the refugee. Her translation of the refugee's movement into her own body in a space outside of this zone of exclusion reifies the spatial arrangement of the camp. And, if we are to understand the refugee as homo sacer, their body is already considered to be disposable, and Marcalo's absenting of their body in favour of their movement material does not resist this condition, rather leaving the refugee in the position of otherness and marking their identity as such. It is important to acknowledge the absence which is highlighted through Marcalo's body as a vehicle for representing the identity of these four refugee bodies. By translating the movements of a person who is absolutely unable to occupy the same space as her, Marcalo firstly brings our attention to their absence, which could be a well-intentioned strategic device to build awareness of the Calais Jungle situation for her audience. Through this representation of bodies who are missing from the current picture, she also creates distance between ourselves (privileged citizens) and the four refugees (underprivileged non-citizens) who are the 'subjects' of this performance. This can be

seen most distinctly in the framing of the work – Marcalo wears a tee-shirt with “dance with me” written in large letters and begins the performance by asking passers-by “would you like to dance with me?”, cementing the fact that this duet is in fact with her, and that her identity is very much involved in the representation of the refugees she dances as. This, coupled with the fact that the participant is given headphones to listen to the voice of the refugee, emphasises the refugee’s status as both visible and invisible, included and excluded. By foregrounding the continuing confinement of these four people to the Calais Jungle, *Dancing with Strangers* potentially highlights the state of exception Agamben describes of the homo sacer. The absence felt within this work is how we have come to understand the position of the refugee. We are used to this. We are used to not seeing refugee bodies occupy our social and cultural spaces. We are used to seeing them on our screens, represented as something other than us, far removed.

Within performance, representation is a common trope (in the creation of characters for example) yet within performance that deals with migration this is a more difficult field to address for the artist. In Emma Cox’s book *Theatre and Migration* (2014), she offers an analysis of performances that engage with migration and suggests that ‘theatre of migration can both shape and reflect a society’s imaginings of its ‘others’’ (Cox, 2014: 9) She discusses migrant narratives as being often entangled with myth, they are imagined, not witnessed and theatre of migration is categorised by audiences and artists as either about/by “us” or “them”. Cox describes this as a ‘politics of position’ in which power directly affects authorship and directorship. (Cox, 2014: 22). Looking into the relationships between artist, audience (and subject) in theatre of migration, Cox suggests that the ‘mythologising’ of migrating bodies is often cemented in creative work by an artistic interest in difference. These relationships ‘instantiate the wider structural imbalances of power and status between migrants and those who enjoy the economic, historico-legal, social and linguistic benefits of being ‘at home.’ (Cox, 2014: 27) In offering a representation of an absent migrating body through a privileged body at home instead of allowing space for these real bodies and real movements to present themselves, *Dancing with Strangers* reifies this construction of refugees as ‘others’ and reflects our society’s view with little contradiction. In representing the refugees’ absent bodies, *Dancing with Strangers* cements a politics of position in which the refugee is presented as elsewhere, silent and imagined, categorising them through an embodied

language of difference and absence.

Rosi Braidotti also argues fiercely that ‘the bodies of the empirical subjects who signify difference (woman/native/earth or natural others) have become the disposable bodies of the global economy.’ (Braidotti, 2013: 111) The othered body as disposable body raises issues, not just for *Dancing with Strangers*, but for any performance which engages with migration that may use privileged white actors to represent the absent and othered body of the refugee. As Stefano Harney and Fred Moten state in their discussion of the political surrounding and control of black bodies ‘we cannot represent ourselves. We can’t be represented.’ (Harney and Moten, 2013 :20) Pointing to the falsehoods of representation of blackness within political and social spaces, that representation is a threat to the revolution of black and othered bodies. Accepting this fixing of identity and absencing of the othered body within this piece allows us to recognize that an artist travelling to Calais, for example, and engaging in some physical exchange with refugees does not automatically exclude them from the pitfalls of an ultimately unequal collaboration. Marcalo’s piece is well-intentioned and serves to bring people together through shared movement. Yet it also causes the migrant and refugee bodies to disappear; to become abstract ideas in this exchange through Marcalo’s body which pushes these bodies further into invisibility and becoming- exclusion. Their already othered bodies remain as ‘other’.

I will now consider performance practice which explores new technology, as this practice deals with bodies in different ways and might shed further light onto the artist’s relation to othered bodies in practice. Although choreographic practice is at the core of my exploration, it is important to return to the triangulation outlined at the start of this thesis; bodies, borders, and data. I will now turn my focus to performances that are rooted in new technologies, virtual reality and immersion, which address migrant narratives.

3. Imbalanced Transformations and *The Machine to be Another*

At the forefront of my analysis is a consideration of technology in relation to the moving body and the construction of self. One form of technology that attempts to shift both of these concepts is virtual reality. Becoming popular in the 1990s, and having a

resurgence in the last ten years, virtual reality has made its way into many performance practices and theatrical experiences with varying degrees of success. *The Machine to Be Another* (2012) is an 'embodied virtual reality system' (Beanotherlab, 2019: Online) created by Be Another Lab³ which places experience and empathy at the forefront of its exploration of subjectivity. The system is designed to allow the user to experience a shift in selfhood, to experience the world visually and kinaesthetically through someone else. The composition of this experience involves bodies with virtual reality headsets in a space they can interact in, with tactile feedback provided by the Be Another Lab team in a way that feels realistic with what the user is experiencing. Be Another Lab state that their goal is to 'use technoscientific knowledge critically to promote human integration instead of alienation' (Beanotherlab, 2019: Online), which suggests that they wish to use this system as a means of artistic activism, or at least as a way of promoting empathy within the communities they reach.

There are two 'set ups' for the *Machine to Be Another* system - body swap and embodied narratives. Body swap is an installation which involves mutual interaction between two users and aims to allow different genders to 'exchange bodies and perspectives' (beanotherlab, 2019: online). Embodied narratives works similarly to the body swap installation in that it encourages empathy between different bodies, however, it is framed as a performance in which the user experiences a story told by someone from a different community. The story is told from a first-person perspective, to promote empathy and a 'shared identity' (beanotherlab, 2019: online) for those involved. The applications for *The Machine to be Another* have been extensive, and in a variety of contexts, including science exhibitions and film festivals, and it is important to note that many of these applications offer a two-way body swap. However, I am examining a specific instance of the embodied narratives element of this experience, which was showcased at Somerset House, London in 2016 as a part of performance company Good Chance Encampment's involvement in *Encampment at Somerset* (2016). During this festival Be Another Lab used embodied narratives to give users an experience of refugees across Europe, from the perspective of a refugee. This

³ Be Another Lab is an interdisciplinary lab located in Barcelona, Spain. Its core team of co-founders and researchers are Daniel González, Philippe Bertrand, Arthur Tres, Marte Roel, Christian Cherene, Norma Deseke, Daanish Masood, Christian Betánzos, and Daniëlle Hooijmans. (Beanotherlab, 2019). Their work is rooted in artistic practice with virtual reality as a dominant medium, and their research often focuses on 'understanding the relationship between identity and empathy from an embodied perspective' (2019).

embodied storytelling experience aimed to allow users to feel themselves inside the narrative and body of another, allowing people from the corners of the globe to share an element of their personal narrative. One example of a life that was shared through this experience is that of Hassan Abdulla Adam, in Holot detention centre Israel, who is a Sudanese hip hop singer and asylum seeker. He provided an account of a moment in his past where his village was attacked and his father was killed. He told his story of staying in Tel Aviv as a refugee until he was given an ultimatum of returning to Sudan or going to jail. As the user hears this narrative, they can see Hassan's arms moving as their own, his legs under them as they shift their focus. Be Another Lab's website states that during this experience the user embodies the body of the storyteller and 'has control over the agency of his [the user's] body' (beanotherlab, 2019: Online). The implication of this kind of one-sided exchange, in which the user feels empathy and shared identity with the storyteller, is that the storyteller does not get to experience this same shifting. The refugee subject shares their story, and has agency in how they tell it, but they do not have the choice to transcend their own body in the same way that the user does. They are not offered the same experience of moving beyond and between one's bodily limits of identity through technology.

An interesting research aim of Be Another Lab's project is the desire for people who offer their narrative to appropriate the technology in order to use it in a way that the storyteller deems suitable for their own context. This promotion of an egalitarian experience between the technologist and the storyteller nods to the fact that perhaps Be Another Lab are attempting to make space for forced migrants to tell their own stories, rather than giving them a voice through privileged bodies. Having said this, it is important to consider how the body becomes data. As I have stated previously, bodies that are inscribed into data at borders are subject to a form of oppression by these technologies. Even for privileged bodies that find this transformative experience of becoming data liberating, there are ethical issues to be considered. For the forced migrant who has previously been oppressed by data, what happens when their body is inscribed into data in the name of art, to tell their own story to the privileged subject? In other words, how does the aesthetic act of performance expand and function as extensions of surveillance of abject bodies?

Although Be Another Lab is a performative experience in the way it is staged and

received, it does not consider the body from a choreographic perspective. Is there a difference, in the way that dance approaches identity, for the bodies and subjectivities of those considered 'other'? Ann Cooper Albright, when discussing women, gay men, people of colour and the disenfranchised, suggests that these identities have 'historically been tied to the material conditions of their bodies, structuring an identity that has repeatedly been constructed as oppressively and basely physical, as a lack of selfhood – a lack of moral, spiritual, and so called social agency.' (1997: 7) Cooper Albright questions what happens to people considered as other when they enter an artform that is positioned as physical such as dance. I would like to further this question by introducing technology and referring back the triangulation of bodies, data and borders. What happens to othered bodies – in this instance the bodies of refugees - when they enter a physical form which is also mediated through new technologies?

Although her analysis is directed primarily at theatre rather than dance or movement-based performance, Jennifer Parker Starbuck is useful in analysing this project in relation to the body as data and subjectivity within performative spaces. In *Cyborg Theatre* (2011) Parker-Starbuck proposes that Cyborg Theatre is composed of performance that explores technology and multimedia, not just as a tool but by dealing with the visual and metaphorical interlacing of human and technology. According to Parker Starbuck, this form of performance can initiate a shift in the concept of subjecthood. She looks to the cyborg as a way of addressing issues within technology and theatre alike, stating that 'the cyborg form appears during times in need of balance, times of chaos and confusion, and so, perhaps coincidentally, concurrent with waves of feminism, yet it also appears as a means of addressing disappearing, augmented, or controlled bodies in society.' (Parker-Starbuck, 2011: 32) Her analysis arises from a feminist perspective, addressing problems regarding women's representation. However the analysis is also useful in addressing and rethinking problems for a multitude of bodies that identify as 'other' and therefore 'object' or even 'abject' – including the refugee.

Parker-Starbuck suggests that Cyborg Theatre, i.e. the interweaving of bodies and technology, allows for a new imagining of the problematic groupings of abject, object and subject in performance. The universal subject that Parker-Starbuck refers to is that of the middle-class white male. Representation of women's bodies are seen as object,

and abject refers to other bodies such as the monster or robot. Importantly, the historical view was for white male subjects to have control in some capacity, and any destabilisation of this control was seen as a threat. In traditional theatre models, this can be seen in the way that women and monsters are represented, and the ubiquitous plot of man saving woman from monster. Parker-Starbuck suggests that the interweaving of technology and theatre causes a shift in these traditional labels. Her model, which is shaped like a DNA strand, suggests that as the processual relationship between bodies and technology shifts, abject-object-subject bodies in performance become intertwined and, whilst none of these are erased, they form alliances to rid themselves of problematic labelling. This means the subject (as we knew it previously to be white middle-class male) is disrupted. The Universal subject is no longer possible with cyborg performances – the new universal is inclusive, altered, in which particular bodies are not overlooked; instead they become active and interconnected. Consequentially the material of these subjects, the bodies, are fractured - they become different subjects which seek agency through different identifications. In the case of *Be Another Lab*, the altered subjects are those bodies intertwining with technology, those who take on the identity of another through empathetic virtual reality - namely, the user. This transformative experience allows the user to become a fractured body - one that is both their own and that of the body they are experiencing through the embodied narratives installation.

Parker-Starbuck promotes a cyborg world which allows bodies to experiment with technology in order to become strengthened and empowered, in which the technology might teach them new things. She states:

‘cyborg theatre is processual, becoming through its integrations; it illuminates and projects bodies as they shape-shift through current trends, transforming them into potential entities that combat and highlight fixed notions of what “human” can mean in relationship to embodied technology.’ (Parker-Starbuck, 2011: 39)

She does, however, note that this relationship cannot be afforded by all and that the subaltern or oppressed human may not have access and control over technology in the same way as the racially or economically privileged body. This can be seen in *The Machine to Be Another* as the refugee storyteller does not get to experience this same intertwining of technology and therefore fractured and altered subject. However, if cyborg theatre promotes a fracturing of the problematic labels which form fixed

identities, then perhaps there is a method by which access and control can be granted in some form to enable the shifting of identities for oppressed bodies. I consider this in greater detail in Chapter 3. The need for alternative subjectivities (nomadic, non-unitary, hybrid, cyborgian), reflects 'a need for radical rethinking about human positioning in the world.' (Parker-Starbuck, 2011 :13) I would argue that this is absolutely the case for refugee bodies considered as other, affirming the potential for performance with new technologies as a means of such a rethinking.

From this analysis it is possible to, optimistically, see the potential for othered bodies to be given space to tell their own story through new technologies. If I take a more pessimistic view, this analysis highlights the fixing of identities for the refugee, who is not able to transverse different bodies in the way that the (largely) white middle class London based user of the Somerset House installation can. Technology, even in performative contexts, still confines them. So the question remains – is there an approach for performance making that might be conceived, to rethink the crafting of migrant narratives?

In Chapter 1 I used Aneta Stojnić's writing on avatars as alter-egos of the human subject to suggest that the body-as-data through biometric technologies could be understood as an alter-ego of the physical body standing in front of the machine. This understanding of the alter-ego⁴ is as useful as ever in recognising the consequences of performance that shifts identities through new technologies. During *The Machine to be Another*, virtual avatars of the storyteller are presented to the user to transcend their real-life body in a process that is incredibly one-sided and therefore imbalanced. Perhaps this digital alter-ego of migrant bodies can serve as a reminder of the need to be ethically conscious of the ability or inability for different identities to shift. Perhaps we can learn to embrace it, work with it, and eventually shift its effects from oppressive to

⁴ Alter-egos within performance allow the performer to step outside of their real-life identity, they often act as an extension of the self or an exaggeration, and 'can act as a liberating force for the real-life individual' (Aboujaoude, 2011: 20). Alter-egos can draw on anything outside of the performer's identity to transcend their perceived limits or offer a critique of gender, class and power relations. For example, artist and scholar Dr Prarthana Purkayastha has an alter-ego called *Devi the Divine Dancer* (2014), which she presents in a film located in Calcutta. Devi the Divine dancer is traditionally dressed in a colourful Sari and jewellery, traditionally named (Devi is Sanskrit for goddess), yet at no point does she perform any traditional classical Indian dance, she actively invites her audience to look at her yet she does not give them the satisfaction of ever performing the act that is expected of her. This acts as a resistance to generalisations based on Purkayastha's cultural identity as both a dancer and Indian.

transformative.

4. Taking Control in *How Not To Drown*

Up to this point, the performances I have discussed have all been conceived by practitioners of privilege, as they have never identified as refugees or forced migrants, and they have access to free movement. Two pieces featured a form of collaboration with refugees, or drew from their narratives, yet in this exchange the refugee does not have a directorial or decision-making role. The following performance, created by Dritan Kastrati, breaks this trend. Kastrati was smuggled to the UK, without his family, as an eleven-year-old asylum seeker to escape the Kosovan war. *How Not To Drown* (2019) is an emotionally driven account of his solo journey, written and performed by Kastrati amongst a small co-cast from Thickskin Theatre. Having performed with Frantic Assembly as an ensemble dancer from 2009 and with Wayne McGregor's *Random Dance* for a short period, Kastrati's dance and physical theatre background heavily influences the aesthetic of the work. Movement and physical theatre are at the core of this piece which moves through Kastrati's crossing in a small boat with a group of people smugglers, his experience of making it across the border and the foster homes he encountered in the British care system. *How Not to Drown* draws parallels between the lack of freedom in war-torn countries and the metaphorical prison Kastrati faced in social care systems on arriving in the UK.

The analysis of this performance and its reflections on identity and agency draws on Sophie Nield's discussion of the theatricality of the European border (2006). Nield's analysis focuses on the importance of appearance, and how border spaces navigate appearance in a similar way to the theatre in that they make possible a 'double exposure' in which the person who appears at the border 'must simultaneously be present and represented' (Nield, 2006: 65). She lists the many forms of this representation including passports, documents, compelling stories, and narratives of suffering. In the same way that theatre gives multiple answers to the question of "who" is appearing – actor, character, performer, body – the border deconstructs a person into both their self and the representation of who they are trying to be, where their identity is doubled. Nield suggests that, just as the person produces a representation

of the self at the border, so too is the border produced, whenever an encounter takes place. Borders can be moved, expanded, or repositioned to appear at the moment of encounter. In addition to this, those at the heart of the encounter are subject to judgement and point of view, just as a theatrical character playing a role would be. This conditional production compromises and exposes the ways in which we are all located and rooted as citizens (or non-citizens) and highlights the ways in which identity is performed within these spaces. Nield states, 'As you move from one state to another, you 'play' yourself, and hope you are convincing' (Nield, 2006: 65). If someone is not convincing enough to their audience (whoever is passing judgement on their representational performance), if they fail, they are usually not granted passage. Nield discusses the moments in which refugees and asylum seekers try to avoid these failures of representation by attempting instead to be invisible or disappear – lying in wait outside the Calais border, hiding under trains, or in the backs of lorries. This invisibility is often the only way to grant movement and avoid becoming stuck in the 'permanent temporariness' (Nield, 2006: 69) of refugee camps.

Whilst this performative encounter does take place at the border, I argue that the more recent introduction of biometric technologies (and thus the production of the body-as-data) diminishes the possibility of the failure to 'represent yourself effectively' (Nield 2006: 65) or to disappear, as border technology instead relies on biometric data to determine the identity of the individual (which of course has its own failures as discussed in chapter 1). Therefore, instead of just "you" being produced, a different production takes place in the body-as-data – meaning that self-representation gives way to digital determination. Even the act of 'disappearing' is challenged within the digital border zone. However, as Kastrati's journey to the UK was in 2002, he would arguably not have faced the same digital borders and plethora of surveillance technologies as refugees do today.

If Kastrati's representation of himself, and his visibility, were compromised when he was smuggled across European borders and arrived in the UK, how is this re-found on the stage during *How Not To Drown?* It could be argued that Kastrati reproduces the encounter of the border within this production, acting alongside his small co-cast to re-tell the story of his journey to the UK and subsequent journey through the turbulent British care system. The mode in which Kastrati tells this story is confronting,

energetic, expansive, and heavily driven in high impact physical theatre showcasing strength and power. Crowd barriers are used as props, often thrown into the air, or leapt over and the performers frequently throw their bodies across the stage and each other, and out towards the audience. Remembering back to the idea of the border encounter as a theatrical construction, in performing his autobiographical narrative of being 'not-British' to a British audience Kastrati finds himself at the encounter of judgement being passed on not only the character he portrays on stage but also himself as the actor and refugee. How then, can Kastrati's representation of self and the ways in which it appears to various audiences be understood in this re-staging?

In 'Dance and Identity' (2019), Prarthana Purkayastha proposes that the act of dancing can counteract this effect on bodies and their agency. Her analysis specifically explores identity in relation to dance in Britain, considering how performing bodies belonging to minority groups might refute their cultural categorising and stereotyping from British audiences. She states:

'any person, of any cultural background, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, class or ability, is vulnerable to acts of identity stamping, although persons belonging to minority groups are more vulnerable to stereotypes of identity than others.' (Purkayastha, 2019: 176)

Kastrati opens himself up to this identity stamping and stereotyping from his audience by laying bare his autobiographical narrative, yet his navigation of movement potentially refutes essentialism through an embodied resistance. Purkayastha argues that the act of dancing has the ability to 'construct new meanings for identities' (2019: 176)

Kastrati's choice to perform his act of disappearance, namely the traumatic experience of being sent alone as a child to cross borders at the hands of people smugglers, to British audiences, becomes a way of taking control of his representation. On stage he produces an act of self-liberation, clawing back from the powers of the state the identity that was decided for him. In the moment that Kastrati chooses to use his craft to become the narrator of his own story, he takes back control. This echoes Arabella Stanger's analysis of Sondra Perry's installation *Typhoon Coming On* (2018), in which Stanger outlines the embodied experiences that the artist creates to disperse her audiences' individual positioning. The installation features carefully choreographed immersive experiences and digital images which directly draw from JMW Turner's nineteenth

century abolitionist painting depicting the Zong massacre⁵ (2019). Stanger discusses the artist's successful dispersal of her audience's position in relation to the work, which are 'thrown into relief and so are brought into mutuality with all others there – a poetics of relation made up of voices of the past and bodies in the present.' (Stanger, 2019: 18) The artist removed the bodies from the painting, instead drawing the audience in to become the bodies, and allowing for an acute awareness of fellow audience members around them within the painting as it came to life. This embodiment and dispersal of bodies, according to Stanger, is an act of anti-racism. Stanger suggests that Perry's work 'makes the Black bodies immersed in the histories of the Middle Passage into fleeting but deeply material forms of agility who by various means elude the capture of the liberal cosmopolitan gaze.' (Stanger, 2019: 16) Stanger's consideration of embodiment and relational experiences as a means of liberation anchor my own consideration of Kastrati's performance method of reclaiming agency. As a naturalised citizen who entered the UK almost 20 years ago as an asylum seeker, Kastrati potentially no longer holds typical identity markers that might make him particularly vulnerable to 'refugee' stereotyping, and his arguable whiteness positions him with a certain amount of privilege in comparison. However, Kastrati may still be victim to prejudice and discrimination based on his 'non-Englishness', having not been born in Britain, or by his methods of arriving here. Embodying his narrative in performance could be considered as an exercise which allows him to revisualize and control the narrative of these identity markers.

It is important to note that Kastrati's integration into British society and theatre networks, which has potentially allowed him to reach the position of writing a show around his story and accessing large funding pots for wide audiences, situates him in a position of relative privilege over a present-day refugee or asylum seeker. Entering the UK as a child places Kastrati in a different arc in terms of access to mobility to someone who entered the UK as an adult more recently. The latter is still branded with the terminology of being a refugee, asylum seeker or similar and this ultimately keeps them in a space bereft of civil liberties. Although Kastrati may have made claim to his individual agency, it is through an integration with the state that he was able to do so.

⁵ The zong massacre was a mass killing of more than 130 African slaves by the crew of the British ship 'zong' in 1781. The enslaved people were deemed unfit for the Atlantic slave trade and therefore had no value as commodities for the British slave trading syndicate that owned them. (Krikler, 2012)

5. Equal Exchange in *Now is the Time to Say Nothing*

The final performance event that I will discuss within this chapter is an immersive film installation entitled *Now is the Time to Say Nothing* by Caroline Williams and Reem Karssli (2019). I saw this performance in August 2019 at the Battersea Arts Centre in London at the end of its national tour. It is the product of a four-year collaboration between independent British artist Williams and Syrian artist Karssli, in which their conversations-turned-collaboration is documented through a selection of video calls and framed through an immersive multi-media installation using video, binaural sound and audience participation which is encouraged through a series of instructions.

The audience was welcomed into a darkened room, filled only with approximately nine or ten assorted armchairs facing outwards into a circle of old analogue televisions with attached headphones. I selected a comfortable-looking armchair and sat, aware of the passivity associated with sitting in such a chair and of the detachment it brings. Wearing headphones, the audience watched the small screens flicker with pixels, images of Syria and teenagers in a Skype conversation with Reem Karssli in Damascus. The images flickered back and forth with Reem's voice and scenes of her family, the landscape of her home country, bombs and falling snow. At this point, the audience was instructed to get out of their chairs and to walk to the centre of the room, facing the other participants. Through their headphones half of the room was instructed to walk into the centre, to close their eyes and turn slowly. The other half was encouraged to hold out their hands as paper snow began falling over the group. I opened my eyes as I turned and became aware of the other audience members watching me, covered with snow. The room was quiet and the audience-turned- performers in the middle of the room had become the main focus. This moment connected directly to the previous images of Syria covered in snow, acting as a blanket over the conflict, and was highly emotive. The image of snow was evocative of both a childlike enjoyment and of ash falling from the sky. Suddenly a projected video at the front of the room began and Reem's voice was heard again. The smaller screens displayed images of bombs going off and it was unclear if this was news footage or footage from civilians. The voice told the audience to sit down in the middle of the snow-covered room and that we were going on a journey. Reem described her journey from Syria, of how she found herself in a

small boat with dozens of others and the audience was asked to sit tighter together. She described her journey from Greece as the videos around us showed corresponding footage. The audience exchanged awkward moments of eye contact and accidental touch. After a short pause, we were instructed to sit back in our armchairs and watch conversations with both artists three years on, with Reem now living in Germany. Now the starting pixel image multiplied infinitely on the screens and at this point the installation ended.

This performance navigated the narrative of a refugee without absencing their body. The narrative of the performance *felt* as if it was very much within Reem's control - she felt present in the piece and her story came directly from her own perspective and method of articulation. The space itself was a juxtaposition of passivity and action. The armchairs served to remind us how far removed we were from the centre of the refugee crisis, whilst the video screens and narrative voice placed us in the centre of the action, provoking empathy towards Reem and her family. The piece was performative, but not in a way that used privileged bodies as vehicles for othered bodies. Instead the audience was turned into performers upon instruction from the narrative voice, taking away our power as passive observers of othered bodies. The immersive quality of the piece forced the audience to become active; they were no longer able to consume this simulacrum of images of the crisis as they usually would.

Josephine Machon uses the 'scale of immersivity' to state that, rather than being a catch-all term, in immersive performance 'the physical insertion and direct participation of the audience member in the work *must* be a vital component and is a defining feature of this particular strand of visceral practice.' (Machon, 2013: 57). She also reiterates traditional performance's ability to envelop audiences into the world of the performance in a state of embodied attention, without being considered immersive. This may differ to digital disciplines in which 'immersive' is used to describe platforms that are designed to virtually surround the user, such as virtual reality. In performance, Machon suggests that immersive performance is an 'all encompassing artistic experience' (2013: 58), which places emphasis on visceral and embodied presence, multiply engaged senses, and some element of transformation or absorption (Machon, 2013: 62).

Royona Mitra discusses immersion from a decolonial perspective, and uses the

concept of *rasa*⁶ (as laid out in ancient Indian dramaturgical treatise *Natyashastra*) to argue that audiences are able to experience immersion through alternative means to what is traditionally considered as immersion by theorists such as Machon. Mitra reframes immersion and decolonises it by translating contemporary British dance practice under the principle of *rasa*. She suggests that traditional immersion, as an experience that places the spectator close to or within the action, does not allow audiences to separate themselves and be critical. She suggests that:

‘It is in this space between empathy and criticality that an audience member experiences immersion, absorbed, critically heightened and always active. Immersion, reframed in this manner, reasserts the importance of embodied sight and an audience’s critical point of view within discourses of spectatorship.’ (Mitra, 2016: 99)

Now is the Time to Say Nothing demonstrates immersive qualities in that it engages several senses through multi-media, transports its audience to another place (specifically, into a boat in the Mediterranean Sea), and allows its audience to be both empathetic and critically aware as they shift between passive armchair user and active twirling performer beneath paper snow.

The framing of *Now is the Time to Say Nothing* also contributes to its navigation of identity. Within the programme note, Caroline Williams calls out her own whiteness, stating:

‘in 2014 I was asked to do a performance project with a group of young Londoners looking at the Syrian conflict. As a white non-Arabic speaking artist, who’d never been to the Middle East I was trying to work out how, or if, I should do the project.’ (Williams, 2019a)

Williams goes on to discuss her discovery of Reem Karssli’s film *Everyday, Everyday* (2013), which led her to ask Karssli to speak to the young people Williams was working with and which, ultimately, led to their four-year long collaboration. Williams identified her own lack of proximity to the topic and instead found content from, and made space for, someone who had the expertise and right to comment. I spoke with Caroline Williams after seeing this performance, who described the process of making

⁶ Rasa (Sanskrit for essence or ‘juice’) relates to aesthetics and translates from Indian discourse. The concept of *rasa* refers to the formation of an embodied emotive state within multiple art forms such as theatre, poetry and dance. (Pollock, 2016: 18) There are multiple and differing theories on *rasa*, notably Bharata outlined the eight *rasas* which refer to different states of emotion. (Pollock, 2016: 50)

collaborative work across borders whilst one of the contributors was subjected to violence in her home country and subsequent forced migration. Their creative process is useful to analyse for this project as it might offer some fertile ground for approaches within my own work. Williams outlined their process step by step during our conversation, describing her experience. Towards the beginning of the project Williams was working with a collaborator and investigative journalist who spoke Arabic and dealt more directly with Karssli. Williams noted how this relationship became problematic when another collaborator asked difficult questions, causing Karssli to drop out of the project – Williams noted here that she had not taken care of her and decided to reach out independently, just to talk, without making art. It was here that Williams learnt about Karssli's family life. She stated "this is not an art project anymore this is a real person" (Williams, 2019b).

After some time and not hearing anything from Karssli, it transpired that she had moved to Germany. Williams went to meet her in Berlin and it was Karssli's decision to finish the project to tell the story of her journey across borders. Their working methodology became a series of conversations where Karssli would speak and Williams would edit and theatricalise, in cycles. Williams then returned home to edit and sculpt the piece, keeping in communication. Their collaboration evolved around an understanding of roles divided into form and content. Williams provided a very clear form that allowed space for Karssli to build the content and shape her narrative.

Discovering the artists' process to create this piece of work might also allow me to situate it as a performance under the umbrella of process art and relational aesthetics. The process of creating the work was a platform of interaction. Nicolas Bourriaud refers to relational aesthetics as a set of artistic practices which focus on the role of human relations and social interactions, where artists are seen as facilitators of information exchange. Bourriaud suggests that the artist gives audiences access to power and the means to 'change the world' (2002: 131). Bourriaud's theory is inspired by the descriptive language of the 1990s internet boom, and the changing space of the internet. He sees the artist as a catalyst for creating relationships, rather than the centre of the project. In this context, relational artwork creates a social environment in which people come together to participate in a shared activity. Bourriaud claims 'the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of

living and models of action within the existing real, whatever scale chosen by the artist.’ (Bourriaud, 2002: 132) The emphasis on interactive situations, or environments where people come together to participate in shared activities, allows relational artworks to open up ‘life possibilities’ rather than fictional ones.

Now is the Time to Say Nothing could be framed as relational art in its process, in that the social interaction between Williams and Karssli is a key driver and indeed the subject of this work. It could be framed as relational art in the performance event as audience members are forced to shift between observation and performance for other participants and ultimately forming social interactions within the group as they sit in their imaginary boat in the middle of a dark room. Framing the performance in this way allows us to place emphasis on the role of the artist, as a catalyst for social interaction and potentially as a crafter of open space for shifting identities.

Looking back to my previous discussion on identity, and more importantly the problematic marking of identity that faces refugee bodies, it is clear that this was not the case for *Now is the Time to Say Nothing*. In unpicking their process, a series of identities can be attributed to both contributors; artist, communicator, daughter, friend. Although Reem is framed as a refugee she also has the open space to express to audiences, and to Williams, the many other aspects that construct her identity. These shifting identities transfer into each live moment of performance and into a virtual afterlife given by the performance event. Reem’s identity may have shifted into that of a refugee in the eyes of governmental bodies, but it could be argued that her identity remains broad, shifting and nuanced to those who have seen this piece of work, and within the video documentation that constructs it. Is this a possible way of moving away from the fixed identities faced by othered bodies such as refugees and migrants?

It is important to recognise the particularity of this piece of work and the unique positioning it offers. Williams and Karssli’s exchanges happened simultaneously with Karssli’s forced migration, which makes the work not only poignant as a reflection on British attitudes towards refugees but also as a process that would be incredibly difficult to replicate. For those who are far removed from the refugee crisis and in a position of privilege (such as myself) but who feel compelled to make work that offers a reflection on such topics, can they make work that does not fall into the traps of ventriloquism

discussed above? Or, should their contributions to this area be rethought and relocated into acts of making space for othered bodies through an oscillating division of form and content? I believe it is important to explore this concept further, to determine whether it is possible to create an approach where artists make space in the same way, within differing circumstances, for othered bodies to rid themselves of fixed identities in a performative and virtual afterlife.

6. Moving into Practice: Pillars of Commitment

Understanding the potential ethical and representational implications of the works analysed above opens the gate to find potential solutions and approaches for new work which navigates these problematic areas. As I have discussed, there are some works which go some way to avoid these implications and this analysis should not be taken as a condemnation of any performance which explores migrant narratives. Instead, this analysis has offered a lens through which to understand identity and agency within performance and paves the way for practice which holds an awareness of these factors. Regardless of the artist's intention, stance or level of activism, the forced migrant's identity can be ratified as immovable by attempting to give voice, unconscious absenting, or by a lack of compassion towards the body as data's digital alter-ego. It is also very clear that each performance is unique and there may not be a 'one size fits all' formula for performance making of this kind, but enough similarities have been found that an approach can start to be formed.

As this research develops, I need to ask questions about how I, as a white, female, British artist, should traverse performance on migration myself and how I might navigate a commitment to such work. In order to do so, I must engage with my positionality and my whiteness. For migrants, even after citizenship status is granted, systemic racism is still an oppressive force and therefore understanding my position as a white person fighting against this systemic racism is crucial. My whiteness puts me in a position of privilege. It is the model to identify all 'others'. However, I believe it is possible to 'own your mistakes and de-center yourself' (Lamont, 2020) in order to realign values as an artist and scholar. This involves hard work. Although I have already spoken about the ventriloquism of some performances which explore

migration, and the risk of white privileged bodies *speaking for* othered bodies, that is not a plea for any of these bodies to remain silent. Silence is just as dangerous.

Azeezat Johnson offers the following points:

“... witnessing means testifying against the ways in which whiteness is neutralised and protected, and the ways in which darker-skinned bodies are Othered, objectified and killed. It means aligning one’s work and practice to unequivocally challenge the logics of racial violence wherever we see it perpetuate itself Yet even as I am aware of the costs attached to speaking up, I think of Audre Lorde’s (1984: 41)

words: at the end of the day, ‘my silence will not protect me’. And ‘your silence will not protect you’.” (Johnson, 2018)

In order to carry out this work and to find new patterns, ways of being, ways of navigating my position in the world and my work, I must actively perform white allyship, and be critical of my own whiteness. Frances Kendall discusses allyship for people of privilege (2003), outlining thirteen points on what makes a successful ally. She states that ‘allies know that, in the most empowered and genuine ally relationships, the persons with privilege initiate the change toward personal, institutional, and societal justice and equality’ (Kendall, 2013)

It is now more pressing than ever to consider the space that I occupy and how I might strive to create environments where people feel heard. In a workshop on anti-racist dance practices and the whiteness of contemporary dance with Royona Mitra, Cristina Fernandes Rosa, Arabella Stanger and Simon Ellis (2019), I was asked two important yet difficult questions: ‘What are you prepared to give up? What are you prepared to do?’ (Mitra et al, 2019)

I attempt within this thesis, not only to unpack how artists navigate migrant identities and bodies, but also, potentially, to find an understanding of how this relates to my own practice. Acknowledging the potential ventriloquism and voyeurism that surrounds performance of migration and resulting negative processes of becoming might enable an approach for my own practice and the practice of those working with performance and new technologies to actively choreograph space for the narratives of refugees. This chapter has marked out some of the challenges and opportunities associated with performance and migration which enables me to adhere to pillars of commitment within my own practice. These pillars include: holding an awareness and commitment to the ethical implications of turning othered and privileged bodies into data, critiquing my own

position of privilege at all times, actively performing white allyship, supporting an egalitarian relationship between myself and my refugee collaborator Tom Tegento as researcher and researched, and acknowledging and avoiding any unconscious absenting of migrating bodies, speaking for, or aestheticizing refugees within performative practice or associated writing. I hope that my practice will ultimately serve to find common ethics and a responsibility to move forward. The following two chapters are a documentation and analysis of this practice, with the objective of discovering new approaches that offer a reframing and reworking of performance practice in relation to migrating bodies. What follows will not be a direct confrontation, this will not help. As Halberstam writes:

‘we must change things or die. All of us. We must all change things that are fucked up and change cannot come in the form we think of as “revolutionary” – not as a masculinist surge or an armed confrontation. Revolution will come in a form we cannot yet imagine.’ (Halberstam, 2013: 11)

Maybe, change will begin with space, space for new technologies within movement and performance to become a parallel to their oppressing border counterparts.

Chapter 3: Re-mapping the Border Within *Uninvited*

1. Introduction

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[I finish this chapter in a time when war floods media headlines once again. In February, Russia invaded Ukraine. The media is saturated with images of destroyed buildings, crying children, and displaced families headed for the border. Social media has played a major role in the representation of this conflict too. The war has been branded by some as the ‘tik-tok war’ (Paul, 2022) as Ukraine content and Russian propaganda rages across the platform and debates surrounding misinformation and disinformation saturate conversation. Ukrainian refugees have been seeking refuge with families and loved ones across the continent, including the UK. Britain was criticised for its lack of support towards Ukrainian refugees at the start of the war and has since offered a £350 incentive to anyone wishing to open their homes (Riley-Smith, 2022). It is hard not to wonder where this incentive was for those seeking asylum before this point, and why it is not more. There seems to be a gap between the ‘welcoming arms’ of the UK government and the aggressive procedures to keep people away from its shores. At the beginning of the year, I witnessed for myself the ‘Tekever’ drone which patrols the Kent coast, at Lydd airport. Its vast size was a stark reminder of the role that drone technology plays in the military operation in effect across the area to keep people away from Britain’s shores. The events of the past year are proof that technology continues to permeate political action in multifaceted ways - in the same period, data misuse continues across the globe, as it was reported that Geofencing software was used during Donald Trump’s latest political campaign in the US to target churchgoers with pro-Trump messages without notification or consent. (Lai, 2022)]

As part of this research into the body-as-data, I have explored the themes outlined within the previous two chapters through practice. This practice has been split into two substantial pieces of practical work – *Uninvited* and *Contagion*. Both works emerged from my collaboration with artist/refugee Tom Tegento. They share a common aim to find solutions to the absencing that is often induced by performance work featuring refugee bodies and to explore the complexity of creating performance with moving bodies-as-data. These works have been documented into a website – which I invite the reader to visit at www.thebodyasdataproject.com - to find information on each performance, artist biographies, resources for allyship and a detailed breakdown of the process of creating each work, which includes journal entries, photographic gallery and video pieces.

Both pieces of practical work are considered to be inherently resistive in nature, particularly in the ways they push against dominant modes of capture, as discussed in Chapter 1. However, the analysis in this and the following chapter will address these

performance works as acts of “choreographing evidence”. To arrive at this concept, I draw from existing scholarship from Rebecca Schneider (2001), Philip Auslander (2006), Carol Martin (2006), Diana Taylor (2006), Jacqueline Shea Murphy (2009), and Andrei Lepecki (2012), among others, on archive, bodies of evidence and documentary theatre which re-produces evidence of histories through bodies on stage and brings additional bodily knowledge to the realm of the archive through performance works. I provide a review of scholarship on dance as a form of evidencing cultural histories within the main body of this chapter to help ground the concept of choreographing evidence through an analysis of practice.

This chapter offers a critical analysis and discussion of *Uninvited*. I first explore the process of creating the work and the live performance itself, outlining important factors which highlight the insights, opportunities and challenges brought up during the research process. I subsequently discuss the key findings of this practical work and examine how the findings address the overarching research questions of this project. Since this thesis opens with my research questions, which set in motion the working methodology for our practice as collaborators, it is useful to repeat them here:

1. How can dance and movement practice create an intervention whereby bodies as moving data are disentangled from their problematic fixed identities to create new narratives?
2. What forms of digital performance practice can be developed to enable a rethinking of the relationship between migrating bodies and digital regimes of control?
3. Which new concepts can be mobilised through performance to address issues surrounding bodies as moving data and reconceive the narrative of the migrating body?

At the start of this process, the research questions of this project were centred on the ‘re’ prefixes such as ‘rethinking’ and ‘reconceiving’. However, after carrying out practical research, a new series of ‘re’ prefix concepts have emerged from my analysis: re-mapping, re-situating, re-writing, and re-claiming. These new words shift the emphasis of this analysis from a process of thought to a process of action and, considering that the prefix ‘re’ refers to ‘back’ or ‘again’ (Raskinski et al, 2011), they become a more appropriate model to allow us to go back, to undo and actively avoid the harmful tropes

of migration offered by some performance works, and to try again in new and more ethical ways.

This chapter begins with a breakdown of the process and live performance of *Uninvited*, followed by an analysis of key findings in relation to existing scholarly research from Ronak Kapadia (2016), Elise Morrison (2016), Georgina Guy (2019) and Arabella Stanger (2021). It then analyses these key findings in relation to the research questions in order to elucidate how this work contributes to the choreography of evidence. The chapter discusses our choice of technology and how this contributes to the potential reclaiming of images for othered bodies. It then discusses the choreographic decisions made within the work to focus on notions of drawing/marking, capture and evidence in relation to the body-as-data. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of the migrant's othered body and its lack of acceptance within existing institutions and how choreographic practice helps interrogate the position of migrants in Britain as 'uninvited guests'.

2. The Process

In early 2020 I was introduced to Tom Tegento through the Kent Refugee Action Network and the Gulbenkian Theatre in Canterbury. Tegento, originally from Eritrea, arrived as a refugee in the UK in 2016 and is a theatre student at the University of Kent. Tegento agreed to collaborate with me on a series of performance objects based on the concept of the body-as-data. His theatrical interests include performance of the self and he expressed a specific interest in creating work that explored his identity as a refugee living in Kent. We worked remotely, in the studio and on location, between December 2020 and October 2021. Tegento is a collaborator in the practice of this project and our work together was designed from the start as non-hierarchical and process driven. The performances we produced are not to be considered as final, polished works but as ongoing explorations of performed identities through the idea of body-as-data.

2.1 Initial explorations

At the start of our process I was conscious of the possibility of falling into many pitfalls

of performance and migration practice that I have previously discussed, including speaking for, absencing, aestheticizing or otherwise undermining the power and agency of the person with whom I was working. Finding a process wherein both parties had equal footing presented challenges for us within our roles as researcher and participant, since my career in facilitating performance had already begun, whilst Tegento was at the start of his 3rd year as a BA student. However, it was clear that we needed to democratise the research process and to keep it open to change. Most of our initial conversations were formed over video call due to Covid-19 restrictions, but this allowed us to develop our working relationship and to form a level of trust between us to navigate difficult and traumatic topics. To promote an egalitarian working relationship between myself as ‘the researcher’ and Tegento as ‘the researched’ we brought ideas to scheduled calls that we then discussed and developed together. In our discussions I outlined a rough division of form and content. In dialogue with Tegento I then found physical spaces for the site-specific performance to take place, developed a series of provocations for Tegento to explore the body-as-data, and space for his alter ego to develop.

As well as discussing content from Tegento’s autobiographical novel, his experiences, and potential forms for the work, we discussed at length the concept of the body-as-data. It was important that the body-as-data was considered at conceptual stages of performance making as it would form the basis of our approach for working with new technologies within the performance. During conversation with Tegento I also discussed the concept of alter-egos (as discussed in previous chapters) and the possibility of refugees acquiring a digital alter-ego at digital border control systems. This discussion evolved to consider whether the alter-ego could be harnessed to claim space, where Tegento’s fleshly body could not. From this initial point Tegento began developing his alter-ego, building information on his characteristics. It was understood that the alter-ego was born between digital and physical spaces and had the ability to travel between borders without the same restrictions as Tegento’s physical body. Tegento selected the name ‘Rasselas’, inspired by Samuel Johnson’s *Prince of Abyssinia* (1887) which tells the story of the Prince Rasselas who escapes from confinement in the palace in search of adventure and to find answers in his quest to understand true happiness. Tegento chose this name as it resonated with the alter-ego’s ability to escape, to shift between spaces, and as a figure of emancipation. The choice to explore the use of an alter-ego within this practice arose from Aneta Stojnić’s

writing on avatars as digital alter-egos (Stojnić, 2015: 71). The consideration that the body-as-data could be an alter-ego of the self standing in front of the machine allowed me to begin to explore how an alter-ego might be useful within our process as a way of going beyond the limits of the self, extending the self or otherwise offering a critique of biopower and the political management of humans. The digital alter-ego will be explored in further detail within Chapter 4.

From our conversations, two important considerations arose that shaped the content of our performance works: the potential of movement as a non-verbal language to carry meaning, and the potential of non-visual communication in resituating the self into new spaces, which is evident in *Contagion*. During our initial conversations we also began to develop a script for the mobile application *Contagion*, which I will also discuss in detail in Chapter 4. For *Uninvited*, movement and visual representation of key images became the form we explored.

During our studio sessions Tegento and I discussed the presence of Rasselas. At first this alter-ego felt like an extension of Tegento's self. However, as we developed the piece and attempted to find an embodiment within the alter-ego we had created, the purpose of our creation shifted. Building an understanding of Rasselas was an important component of the development process for this work. We began to build a series of states that Rasselas moved between. These were:

- softness and resistance
- arrival and presence
- digital and physical
- Ethiopia/Eritrea and Britain
- movement and stillness

The oscillation between these states- the in-between-ness of Rasselas - allowed us to find a way for Tegento to embody the alter-ego, to understand what Rasselas had the capacity to express, and how we might use this alter-ego to reframe the figure of the migrant.

After a rehearsal on location in Margate, Tegento spoke about how Rasselas, his alter-ego, empowered him. The following is an extract of a journal kept throughout the

process, which logs a conversation with Tegento:

‘We got an ice cream after rehearsals and discussed Tom’s future (he’s just been accepted onto the MA course at Kent). He said something that really struck a chord with me. He said “there’s a really small part of me that when I perform, I switch to being “British” Tom than “refugee” Tom”. He said it helps him with his confidence, that British Tom has the right to be on the stage and command his audience, whereas refugee Tom is below his audience, a second-class citizen. He said that within this piece he feels like he is beginning to present both Toms now...’ (Appendix A)

The ability to present ‘both Toms’ reflects the capacity of the alter-ego to be an in-between, a space for multiple identities to emerge. Tegento expressed that Rasselas permitted him to take space, to share his home, and his identity, in a way that he had not experienced before. The alter-ego at this point became a tool for expression, rather than a mask. In this moment, the alter-ego became a document to hold Tegento’s multi-faceted identity, and a space in which he could explore beyond the limitations imposed upon him. In understanding the alter-ego in such a way, connections can be made to the archive, and its function to hold within it historical or personal information. Rasselas, as I will continue to explore, becomes such a space.

3. Collaboration and Ethics

After a few months of virtual conversations, Tegento and I met for three studio practice intensives, as well as for rehearsals on location. During our first studio session we created a code of practice (Appendix B) for us to sign, to ensure that we both upheld respect and consideration for our work together. I drew inspiration for this code of practice after attending an *Antiracist Dance Practices* workshop at Independent Dance in London led by Royona Mitra, Cristina Fernandes Rosa, Arabella Stanger and Simon Ellis (2019). Having a code of practice placed responsibility on us both, as artists, to find a brave and safe space to work and acted as a code of ethics for our behaviour.

In developing the live work I strived to create a methodology that was non-hierarchical. In order for this research to be successful it was imperative that we acted as collaborators and moved away from a sense of authority aligned to our positions as researcher and participant as much as possible. I was inspired by Annalisa Piccirillo’s

discussion of the performance piece *Migrating Bodies Moving Borders* workshop (Italy, 2018) in which the artists discussed methods of setting something in motion within the studio without imposing each individual's intentions, ways of working or preferred structure. The artists suggest that in order to work without hierarchy it is important to pool together knowledge for a common goal, to 'combine forces from different and non-dominant positions, in order to hold something in the centre'. (Piccirillo, 2021: 188). Tegento and I shared our respective practices in the studio, either in warming up or just to experience the embodiment that would connect us through movement. We found that in order to work from 'non-dominant positions of difference' as the artists from Piccirillo's discussion suggest, we had to map each other's movement in our bodies. Sharing movement with each other also helped build our trust and working relationship. The most important aspect of this sharing, however, was the common goal. In allowing access to each other's movement vocabularies, we then held a responsibility with what we did with this language. We mapped our practice onto each other's bodies. For example, it was not my responsibility to validate Tegento's presence with my own body performing his movement alongside him; it was just my responsibility to find an understanding of how his body moved and the practice he was drawing from. This responsibility is present with any sharing of practice that is given from another body. This is an ethical responsibility (Pickering and Kara, 2017) – and I argue that it should form part of any consideration of ethics especially when working with migrating bodies or moving across difference.

It is also important to note that as well as fleshly bodies, there must be ethical consideration when working with bodies in digital spaces or indeed the body-as-data. Currently there is a distinct lack of ethics for cyber performance and virtual bodies (as discussed by Sita Popat, Chapter 1), but to have any hope in moving away from the pitfalls of performance and migration and towards a transformative experience for migrating bodies, such ethics must be accounted for and understood. Knowing the implications of data capture on bodies within each space they inhabit is imperative. For those working with new technologies in performance, mapping out how bodies are captured into digital spaces, having an awareness of the body-as-data and understanding the hierarchies of privilege in regard to technology use should be the first step in their process.

4. Carrying the border

The concept of carrying the border arose from Aneta Stojnić's writings on the body-as-data (2017). The body that is stopped at a border and turned into data carries the border with it. In the studio with Tegento we questioned how this impacted the body, as well as what this might translate to in performance. We spent an afternoon embodying this concept, attempting to find some form of physicality. One of the key images that arose from our practical explorations then became the image of 'carrying the border'. We agreed that this image could be illustrated with clarity and intention, drawing on the emotional quality of carrying something extremely heavy and the pressure that is placed on the body in this moment. Tegento presented this image after discussions of Stojnić's work – embodying the heavy virtual impact of this concept. He stood, with bent knees, his arms holding something wide above his shoulders, shuffling slowly with one foot at a time; there was tension throughout his body. The force of this movement state on the body allowed Tegento to internalise the body-as-data in his physical body.

We planned for this movement to be durational with Tegento walking the entirety of the beach in Margate in this heavy embodied state. At this point we speculated how long this would take, what impression would be left in the sand and whether people would be on the beach to interrupt Tegento's journey. We held one rehearsal on location for this walk and it was in this moment, as the movement was transferred from studio to location, that the line drawn across the sand began to gain significance.

5. Performance: *Uninvited*

Uninvited is a durational site-specific performance which travelled through Margate in June 2021 with Rasselas, Tegento's alter-ego, formed through the body-as-data. The solo performance began on the Nayland Rock Shelter, a small shelter facing out across the beach which holds a plaque commemorating TS Eliot's penning of *The Waste Land, Part III* (1921). After leaving the shelter the performance moved across the sand, from one end of the beach to the other, before finishing on the terrace at the Turner Contemporary Art Gallery (named after the artist JMW Turner who visited Margate and was inspired by the landscape of the area). The performance was live streamed and captured via an unmanned aerial vehicle (drone). It presented a series of images

which make up parts of Tegento's identity and shared fragments of his narrative as a refugee, centring on the concept of arrival. The performance was framed into three parts: The Nayland Rock Shelter (prologue), The Walk, and The Terrace (epilogue).

The Nayland Rock Shelter prologue began in Tigrinyan language, followed by a movement sequence and a series of provocations voiced by Tegento, including the questions 'would you judge me if you knew where I came from?' and 'have you ever had to flee your home?' Although movement was our main non-verbal language of choice, we also explored moments of speech in Tigrinyan, to deny passing audiences the privilege of understanding. The Victorian shelter he stood on looks directly out to sea and there was a plaque behind Tegento depicting how TS Eliot had written part of his seminal poem whilst looking at the same view (Historic England, 2022). This first section of *Uninvited* served the purpose of contextualising the walk and establishing Tegento's presence within this site-specific space. He spoke in both English and Tigrinyan throughout, performing movement which explored Ethiopian dance and physical theatre practice in twisting, contorting movements that often exploded out towards unsuspecting spectators.

The main section of this live piece - The Walk - took place on Margate beach. The piece travelled down the steps from Nayland Rock Shelter walking across the sand to the terrace at Turner Contemporary Gallery. The Walk took roughly 50 minutes to complete and left a line in the sand which could only just be seen from the road above. The movement state within this section embodied the idea of 'carrying the border'. It was a slow, sustained walk with Tegento's hips low and his arms above his shoulders, which appeared as though he was carrying something. As Tegento's feet dragged through the sand he left a visible trace. This was something we had not anticipated before rehearsing on the sand, however by the final performance the line became the focal point of the piece. The Walk was captured by a drone, which flew high and low across the sand above Tegento, sometimes sweeping close to him and sometimes capturing him from hundreds of metres above. On the day of the performance there had been a sewage spill at a nearby beach, and the water was off limits to beachgoers. This was enforced at intervals by a beach patrol unit with a tannoy system which bellowed routinely 'please stay out of the water, it is contaminated'. This sound became a part of the soundscape of the walk.

The final part of the performance, The Terrace epilogue, included a musical performance played on a Masinko (an Eritrean instrument with horsehair strings), a series of images with fragmented speech, and a sharing of Ethiopian dance. This section took place on the Terrace of the Turner Contemporary Gallery to accidental audiences and those who had followed Tegento from the sand. The Terrace section was upbeat and playful, ending with music to accompany Tegento's celebration dance – a dance which is usually reserved for the arrival of a new-born baby in Eritrea and Ethiopia. During our rehearsal period Tegento disclosed that the word for refugee is the same as the word for guest in Tigrinyan. This prompted us to discuss the idea of the 'uninvited guest'. We framed this piece around the concept of arrival, and ultimately the arrival of uninvited guests into spaces which do not permit them or mark them as outsiders.

I now discuss two key findings which emerged from *Uninvited* - the use of the drone in reclaiming Tegento's image, and the application of this image as a re-mapping of the border, which contributes to the idea of choreographing evidence.

6. Reclaiming the Image Through Drone Intervention

For *Uninvited* to be an exercise in reclaiming space and resisting a frame, the audience could not remain passive consumers of Tegento's body-as-data as it presented the narrative of a refugee; they had to be implicated in some way. The act of placing Tegento's body in public performance spaces had the potential of turning him into an object to be watched by privileged audiences, which would negate our aim of allowing his embodiment to thrive and ensure that Tegento was not objectified as an 'othered' body. To disrupt this logic, the work was live-streamed online on the Twitch mobile application with a significant reversal: instead of streaming the performance from the audience's perspective, I stood behind Tegento with the camera facing outwards and captured audiences as they passed as their gaze was fixed on Tegento and their faces visible to online audiences. The live stream was watched by approximately 50 people in 4 different countries. This addition allowed us to remove the passivity of the live audience as consumers of Tegento's refugee body, instead creating multiple levels of subjectivity as live audiences became part of the performance for our online consumers,

denying them the privilege of the spectatorial gaze upon Tegento as they noticed the phone camera pointing towards them and shifted their bodies with unease. They too became objects for consumption.

In addition to the live stream and photographer, we flew a drone over Tegento's sand journey to capture the work for documentation. When the drone was in the air during rehearsal I realised the implications of this image - of Tegento's body being captured by an abstract machine that is predominantly reserved for warfare, violence, and border control. Significantly, drones were originally designed for military use⁷, and since their invention they have been responsible for countless fatalities in war. According to Grégoire Chamayou, since the invention of drone technology, 'combat is converted into a campaign of what is, quite simply, slaughter.' (2015:8) Similarly, at border zones, drones are used for surveillance, capturing images and data, to push back and prolong the arrival of migrants.

In *Up in the Air and on the Skin: Drone Warfare and the Queer Calculus of Pain* (2016), Ronak Kapadia discusses the work of artist Wafaa Bilal and its potential to access untold histories lost in the Iraq war through the concept of a 'queer calculus' (2016: 361) in which queer bodies in pain reveal knowledge through tactile, non-visual methods. In his initial contextual discussion he states that 'vision, knowledge and warfare are all interlinked, the power to see [is] equated with the power to know and to dominate.' (Kapadia, 2016: 365) This is exemplified in border control and control of bodies by the state. Visual images are directly linked to power and control within modern warfare, and it has been suggested that modern warfare and the war machine have become a struggle over the control of the global image and data worlds (McIntock, 2009: 57). Modern warfare could therefore be characterised as being mainly image and data driven, but there is also a less visible, remote form of violence unleashed by drones. They are unmanned, so the pilot remains invisible on-site, and is not present first-hand to witness the destruction these drones cause when bombs are dropped from their machinic arms and not there to look into the eyes of bodies captured through the

⁷ Although the fact that they are now widely available for public consumption as toys and video aids normalises their deployment history, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles or drones have a wide-spanning history of military application, from the deployment of drones in the 1973 Israeli war (Gordon, 2015) to George W Bush's American programme which placed hundreds of drones over Iraq (Satia, 2014)

drone's camera lens. Instead, their operators take a mediated view, hundreds or thousands of miles away. Watching these acts take place on a screen removes the operator from the situation, as if they are playing a video game, leaving the drone as the only direct witness. Sometimes drones are even completely automated, controlled by robotic means with no human pilot at all. In dealing with drones, it is therefore important to have an awareness that we are dealing with technology implicated in directly visible and remote acts of control and violence, of warfare, and of surveillance.

Balancing the genealogy of drone technology against the development of other tactics and practices of drone use, within *Uninvited* we employed the drone to explore its artistic potential and to challenge the power dynamic between moving body-as-data and the machine. In the work the video footage captured from the drone showed the vastness of Tegento's journey. It provided a sinister undertone as in-person and online audiences watched the machine hovering, following Tegento's movement, and created a secondary perspective and additional narrative layer for the performance. As Tegento walked, his feet drew a thick line of sand which divided the beach in two, into land and sea, with Tegento in the liminal space between. This could only be seen from above, from the perspective of the abstract machine, and yet it presented an image loaded with heavy connotations of difficult, traumatic human journeys. It was evocative of an aerial view of paths created by migrants trying to find safe passage, of border fences which prohibit movement from one place to another, or of lines on a map. In this moment the drone demonstrated an inhuman view of this migrating body. It captured these 'borderline' images for us to see and on which to reflect. By engaging with the drone in this way, *Uninvited* attempted to highlight the aesthetics of the power of the drone, to critique this power, and to repurpose its capture into a performative act. I return to the drone as a performative device later in this chapter.

Using military or surveillance equipment against its intended purpose has been employed by artists for many years under the umbrella of 'surveillance art'. This form of art practice seeks to reimagine the destructive, violent and coercive uses of surveillance technologies for artistic practice. According to Elise Morrison, 'surveillance art generates creative and critical alternatives to dominant, mainstream applications of surveillance technologies rather than simply reacting against them'. (Morrison, 2016: 5) Often, surveillance art seeks to comment on methods of

surveillance techniques and the de-humanising effect they can have on the bodies they capture. This can be said for Richard Mosse's *Incoming* (2017) which uses thermographic military imaging technology to chart human displacement in Europe and the Sahel region. The camera Mosse used would have been originally deployed for extreme long range border surveillance to uncover refugees hiding in border zones by tracking the heat from their bodies, but he instead used it as an artistic device to document the lives of the refugees he encountered, 'allowing the viewer to meditate on the profoundly difficult and frequently tragic journeys of refugees' (Mosse, 2017).

Similarly, *Uninvited* reimagines an interaction with drone technologies, offering an alternative application and thus becoming a critique of the 'political landscape of contemporary surveillance' (Morrison, 2016: 6). In drawing the line across the sand and having the drone capture this new division of the space, *Uninvited* reimagines the potential of the drone. Although in *Uninvited* we chose for Tegento's image to be captured (we did not resist capture), in doing so we highlighted the tension between the drone as an instrument of coercion and the image that was captured as a demonstration of embodied freedom. Through this action, the project revealed one of the possibilities of the critical application of drone technologies, enabling audiences to reflect on the human act of walking, migrating, and arriving. In contrast to the aesthetic of the drone as an apparatus which prohibits arrival for so many migrating bodies, in *Uninvited* the drone specifically captures Tegento's arrival and thus calls attention to the juxtaposition between embodied freedom and machinic constraint. Although drone capture at border spaces and in warfare is primarily about implementing existing borders and coercion, in *Uninvited* the drone captured a walk without restriction by highlighting, from a bird's eye view, Tegento's capacity to dictate the terms of his journey with his movement and his body. Although his body is captured by the drone and translated into data through digital means, this transformation exists within a significantly different space which attempts to reposition this capture through a critical lens. The-body-as-data exhibits here not arrest - but freedom.

However, simply using surveillance or military technology in alternative ways does not always negate the potential for performances of migration to induce traumas, as I have described in previous chapters. *Uninvited* reclaims Tegento's image through the distinct positioning of Tegento's body as a controller of movement despite the capture of

technology, and he exhibits the freedom to *draw* this new border in whichever direction he desires. The presence of the tannoy system and its controlling commands to stay away from the water also anchored this act of autonomy as Tegento ignored the warnings and continued his journey. Since the rise of technology in border surveillance spaces, it has been suggested that what were once border 'lines' have now expanded to border 'zones' (Balibar 2009, Bigo 2011, Squire 2010). State authorities sought to 'create an enlarged borderzone, still territorialised' (Squire 2010: 37) in which migratory activity could be surveyed and enforced from afar using various technologies, and it has been suggested that 'migrants experience the most extreme effects of othering and abjection in the borderzone space.' (Topak, 2014: 818) Borderzones represent state controlled hostile spaces in which national boundaries are enforced, and encapsulate the forbidding access, prolonging of arrival and other violent acts on migrating bodies as described throughout this research. In using the drone to capture a distinct line in the sand, Tegento's walk became a choreography which manipulated and re-organised the space from a borderzone back to a borderline, cemented by the drone. His autonomy was solidified and aided by the abstract machine above him.

7. Choreographing Evidence by Re-Mapping Borderlines

The use of the drone not only contributed to reclaiming Tegento's image, but it also facilitated a form of recalibrating the body-as-data which enabled traces to be left, for "proof" to be laid down, and a cementing of both personal and collective histories through Tegento's movement. It is through drone capture that the body-as-data was able to draw and legitimize a borderline that, unlike the line on the sand, cannot be undone or washed away. Considering the role of the body, technology, and the performance itself as sites of potential archiving, enables a reading of this work as an act of "choreographing evidence". This concept, as I now demonstrate, involves a drawing, mapping, or otherwise active re-organisation of space (as a choreographic device), which is activated by technology, to reveal an alternative narrative or positioning for Tegento's body-as-data. It is important to note my wider interpretation of choreography as the *organisation* of space, time, and bodies (Klien 2007, Stanger 2013) in order to continue with this concept.

Many scholars have explored the role of the body as the site of archival material. Carol

Martin's *Bodies of Evidence* (2006) explores the value of documentary theatre in providing multiple perspectives on historical events in a method which reveals the flaws and subjectivity of the original source. She suggests that documentary theatre, which uses archival material, offers the opportunity to re-examine this evidence and re-tell historical stories. Her research offers legitimacy to bodies on stage as a historical source, as part of the archive. Similarly, Diana Taylor considers the relationship between performance and history (2006), claiming that, in certain conditions, performance may 'reactivate issues or scenarios from the past by staging them in the present.' (Taylor, 2006: 68) To arrive at this theory, Taylor analyses the Fiesta of *Tezpoteco* in Tepoztlan, Mexico, which takes place each year enacting a history of the town which differs from official historical accounts. In the story told at the fiesta, the town was never conquered or converted to Christianity. The annual enactment of this history, according to Taylor, creates a culture of resistance. The story and the fiesta contain diverse and sometimes contradictory elements, which shift each year and highlight the 'constructedness' of the history of the town. The performance gained so much significance that it was also used historically in court by the community to gain rights over their land from the Mexican government. In certain conditions, such as this, performed history has the same, if not more, validity than 'official' history. Using this example, Taylor proposes that the repetition of the fiesta each year, and therefore the concept of the repertoire as continued repetition of performance, can offer a different mode of thinking about histories. She claims that 'performances reactivate historical scenarios that provide contemporary solutions.' (Taylor, 2006: 72) Andre Lepecki also demonstrates the value of the repertoire in *The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances* (2012), suggesting that re-enacting a dance work can actualise a work's potential for creativity, to ultimately draw more from the work. During the act of archiving, returning, and repeating, the dancer creates difference. Most importantly, Lepecki proposes that the body itself should be understood as a 'system of formation, transformation, incorporation, and dispersion' (Lepecki, 2012: 43) so embodied practice becomes a legitimate mode to explore both historicity and new possibilities. Understanding the potential for performance as, or using, archival material to produce new knowledge allows me to question how Tegento's performance of *Uninvited* might work at revealing personal and collective histories through choreography.

Performance as archive is a concept explored by Jacqueline Shea Murphy who, in

Mobilising the Archive (2009), discusses the power that dance performance has to re-frame the archive and destabilise the primacy of the traditional archival object. She analyses a dance performance titled *Kaha:wi* by choreographer Santee Smith, which was performed at the National Museum of the American Indian theatre in Washington, USA. This work features both contemporary and Haudenosaunee dance styles to depict the lifecycle of Haudenosaunee people according to their own understanding of the world. The performance, Shea Murphy states, 'is both a Haudenosaunee creation story, and also a historical document of the persistence of ritual and performance that continued despite colonization.' (2009: 40) She considers how this performance provides a model for rethinking 'worlding dance' [sic] practices, which have most often been collected and contained for consumption within museum spaces. Shea Murphy proposes the concept of 'choreographing the archive' (2009: 40) whereby the tools of creating dance (the choreography) shift the methods of collecting and documenting knowledge. She suggests that the nuances which make up this performance, and the merging of indigenous and contemporary dance movements and patterns, shift the audience's attention from the objects in the museum to the moving bodies frequenting it, and that their movements contain historical information. Her analysis positions the contemporary dance performance 'as itself archival, chronicling ways of being and knowing that might not be recorded in historical documents.' (Shea Murphy, 2009: 41) The museum itself also framed the dance piece as part of a 'collection' on its programme and website, describing the work as an artifact and 'displaying' it together with the other artifacts in glass boxes that surrounded the performance. This further legitimises the live work as a piece of archival material in which embodied ways of knowing generated through choreography and performance are given the same archival value as traditional historical documents.

Not unlike Lepecki's consideration of the body and repeated movement as a system of knowledge transformation, and Shea Murphy's consideration of how choreography as and within the archive can mobilise against colonialist practices, I demonstrate within my work how "choreographing evidence" can help construct and reveal alternative narratives. Shea Murphy's consideration of choreographing the archive deals specifically with performance which situates itself next to and against archival material that already exists, for example, within museum spaces. In contradistinction to that, within *Uninvited* and *Contagion*, I argue for a method of choreographing evidence in

multiple sites which reveals evidence of bodies-as-data accessing multiple different states and narratives within which they have been erased or denied, via an embodied manipulation of space, activated by technology. Within *Uninvited*, these spaces include the shores of the Kent Coast, which erase narratives of migrating bodies on a daily basis, and the Turner Contemporary Gallery which itself is a space of archive and memory. Sharing the view that performance and performing bodies can produce or become archival material, I will continue from this acknowledgement to discuss how *Uninvited* is choreographed through a particular shaping of space, time, technology, and bodies, in order to evidence Tegento's body-as-data taking space in a site that would not normally grant arrival or accepted presence.

There are a number of choreographic devices which contribute to the choreography of evidence within *Uninvited*. The act of walking, for example, generates both an affective experience for the audience, and a tactile shift of landscape which re-maps the performance space. Looking at the embodied movement within this piece, the act of walking, and the physicality of Tegento's performing body, it can be said that this work was also a performance of endurance. It took an hour for him to cross the beach. Holding his hands above his shoulders for this amount of time built lactic acid in his muscles - it was difficult; it was laborious. Tegento's work here takes on representational value, a mere micro dose of the material labour of the forced migrant, and therefore becomes an aesthetic act of labour. I refer here to aestheticization defined by Boris Groys in his discussion of activist art, as a method of revealing existing failures and the death of the status quo. Groys suggests that:

Using the lessons of modern and contemporary art, we are able to totally aestheticize the world - i.e., to see it as being already a corpse - without being necessarily situated at the end of history or at the end of our vital forces. One can aestheticize the world - and at the same time act within it.' (Groys, 2014: 13)

If we draw from Groys, positioning the walk in this way allows us to reveal and defunctionalize the labour of walking, so that this aesthetic act of labour becomes an affective exercise. Thinking of his shoulders aching and his feet dragging through the sand was an experience felt by his audience, rather than a solely visual one. Audiences watching this piece were able to make an embodied connection to the collective journeys of refugees – which is not just a storytelling or affective device for performance but also a means of Tegento's body and movement becoming a site for the histories and

collective stories of movement and migration, as he carried the border with him. Returning to Ronak Kapadia's discussion of the queer calculus – of non-visual means of accessing accounts of feeling - this affective relation, as Kapadia states, is how the tactile (or non-visual) provides affective relationality and makes possible 'new ways of conceptualizing the self and others' (Kapadia, 2016: 368). Understanding embodied connection within performance in this way creates opportunity and space for othered bodies to be represented in performance in a way that highlights the invisible violence acting upon them.

The ability for non-visual art practices to become evidence is also explored by Georgina Guy in her discussion of verbal images within Lawrence Abu Hamdan's *Earwitness Theatre* (2017). This sound installation is based on a Damascus prison where detainees are held in darkness and enforced silence and draws from verbal accounts of people who have only ever heard the space, never seen it. This acts as 'acoustic proof' of the acts that occurred within the prison and of the prison itself. (Guy, 2020: 110) The piece focuses on alternative modes of visibility, and the aural representation of a place which has never been seen within the performance of *Earwitness Theatre*, becomes 'a means of making legible disappeared sites, sounds and bodies.' (Guy, 2020: 110). This understanding of art as a means of evidencing non-visual violence, as happened within the prison in Damascus, allows for the possibility of finding ways in which art can evidence other acts of violence that are often invisible to the eye, such as the body-as-data phenomenon and drone flight in military and surveillance spaces. *Earwitness Theatre* evidences a space that has been rendered invisible and the exhibition serves to 'conjure modes of representation that avoid pictorial re-enactments of violence.' (Guy, 2020: 115) This relates directly to the intentions of my collaborative project with Tegento, and to our hope that we can avoid re-enacting the violent or traumatic experience placed onto refugee bodies within performance and migration. Although *Uninvited* exists within a visual mode of performance, it is both the tactile affect of landscape and representation of the body- as-data that I believe to be evidentiary. Tegento's journey, which itself produced a sandy depiction of the collective histories of migrating bodies in the present, I suggest, also choreographed evidence.

By affecting the geography of the space in which he performed, through leaving traces with his body in the sand, Tegento's journey, as well as a wider journey of migrating

bodies before him and after him within the body-as-data, remained on the beach as evidence. I argue that *Uninvited* consciously choreographs evidence to reimagine the body-as-data away from violence by re-mapping Tegento's body-as-data into a newly re-organised space in which he performs. By returning to Ronak Kapadia and his discussion of cartography and Jonathan Flatley's notion of Affective Mapping (2009), I begin to frame my own consideration of how evidence is choreographed within this piece. Kapadia suggests that we need to look closely at ambiguities and particularities of the visual experience produced by diasporic and racialised subjects, as they reveal alternative clues for knowing and mapping the world. His understanding of mapping draws specifically from Jonathan Flatley's concept of 'affective mapping' - the way we connect to, react to, and move through environments using affective values and attachments in relation to those around us and their shared experiences. (Flatley, 2009). Affective mapping follows a rhizomatic structure, which suggests that affective mapping is revisable; that it shifts as our experiences shift. Although dealing primarily with loss, the key consideration that we map spaces according to our shared experience is intrinsic to both Kapadia's and my own work. Rather than carving out border territories and describing terrain, affective mapping points to paths of those who came before, and a view of shared terrain in the present. Affective mapping is about bodies, identities, and histories as well as geography.

Similarly, Doreen Massey's notion of maps as instruments which operate as technologies of power in *For Space* (2005) points to the representational quality of maps. She highlights the past rigidity of maps, and their historical depictions of space as a surface to be conquered from which the observer is positioned outside and above, and the more recent potentiality of deconstructing 'traditional' western maps in favour of those who are erased. Massey challenges this further, calling for a reconsideration of space in relation to chance, chaos, and multiplicity, as always being under construction. This notion of space 'is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed' (Massey, 2005: 9). In the same way that Massey condemns the traditional map as a fixed representation, Tegento's embodiment holds the potential of challenging this fixity of space, of offering a way out of the fixed map points which hold colonial or Eurocentric notions of power. Just as we mapped our practice onto each other's bodies in the rehearsal studio, Tegento produced an embodied re-mapping of space on the beach. Sharing this understanding of mapping as a process which

continuously develops based on shared terrain and construction, allows us to see Tegento's journey as a way of re-mapping the world around him, and indeed the performance space, to hold evidence of his history and the collective histories of refugees. The space in which he performed, along the shores of the Kent coast where there are consistently significant numbers of refugees arriving by boat, train, and other means, only to be detained or turned around, was not a space that invited him. This space actively contributes to the narrative of the uninvited guest, and often attempts to erase any presence of these bodies. However, using his body, Tegento drew a new line, and in doing so mapped out a space for refugee bodies on that terrain. The space between land and sea was inhabited and evidenced by a refugee body that created its own path and cemented it there for all to see. Previously, Tegento's body-as-data prohibited his movement and forced him to carry the border in a way that inhibited his freedom. Within *Uninvited*, Tegento, and his digital alter-ego Rasselas, drew a new map in the sand in which his refugee body and the collective histories of other refugee bodies-as-data were able to arrive and to claim space in a site which was otherwise not open to them. So, in fact, *Uninvited* has not been an exercise in unfixing 'fixed' narratives but has been both a political and affective process of evidencing alternative narratives, and of alternative mappings, of othered bodies in loaded coastal spaces of disallowed arrival.

This process of revealing the body-as-data acts in opposition to migrating bodies as reported in the media. For those far removed from processes of displacement, the refugee 'crisis' is not permanent; it comes and goes as media outlets choose whether to bring it into public consciousness, and thus refugee identities continue to oscillate between visibility and invisibility. Many scholars would argue that Tegento's live performance was ephemeral. Ontologically, dance practice or performance is often considered by scholars (including Peggy Phelan, and Herbert Blau, who maintains that performance is 'always at the vanishing point' (Blau 1982: 28)) to exist only in the moment it is performed. However, I argue that *Uninvited* remains beyond the performance itself through embodied repetition and drone capture. The ways in which performance can 'remain' in spaces (in opposition to the views of Blau) is explored by Rebecca Schneider, who discusses the problems associated with aligning performance with ephemerality which reifies singular historical knowledge production within the western archive. Instead, Schneider points to a rethinking of history from events which

occur, to a series of ritual actions and documents which are inherently aligned with ‘the ritual repetitions that mark performance as simultaneously indiscreet, non-original, relentlessly citational, and remaining.’ (Schneider, 2001: 103) Considering the ways in which performance can remain in echoes, rituals, and repetitions in opposition to traditional notions of the archive (as a guardian of ‘traditional’ historical knowledge), Schneider invites us to ‘think performance as a medium in which disappearance negotiates, perhaps becomes, materiality.’ (2001: 106). Ritualistic, embodied movement, such as Tegento’s repetitive footsteps pushing through the sand therefore activate a material form of remaining. If we are to consider performance as an act of remaining through ritual, repetition, and difference, as Schneider suggests, then mobilising an approach for performance-making whereby the migrant subject can turn to memory and difference to transcend forced disappearances, becomes all the more possible. Schneider’s perspective can also be employed when we consider the inclusion of Rasselas in Tegento’s performance, as the alter-ego itself becomes archival, holding within it bodily memory and digital information.

Tegento’s performance also shifts into permanence through using drone capture, which embeds the work into the digital sphere. The drone, deployed partly as a form of documentation, becomes a device through which to activate the re-organisation of space and embodied-remaining that Tegento choreographs within *Uninvited*. Philip Auslander discusses the performativity of documentation in performance through an analysis of Vito Acconci’s *Photo-Piece* (1969) in which the artist photographed himself walking a straight line down a street, taking photographs each time he blinked. The performance had no invited audience and was only framed as a performative act by the text above the photographs on display which explained his methods, so that, in the moment of performance, passers-by would not know what Acconci was doing as he walked down the street. Auslander suggests that, although the photographs Acconci took acted as documentation of the work, they did not document him carrying out the work from outside the performance, and instead the photographs became the performance. Auslander refers to this concept as ‘the performativity of documentation’ (Auslander, 2006 :5). He suggests that ‘documentation does not simply generate image/statements that describe an autonomous performance and state that it occurred: it produces an event as a performance’ (Auslander, 2006: 5)

In addition, Auslander posits that the act of documentation within performance favours a secondary audience over the initial audience witnessing the live event. He suggests that 'when artists decide to document their performances, they assume responsibility to an audience other than the initial one, a gesture that ultimately obviates the need for an initial audience' (Auslander, 2006: 7) Thus, an audience's perception of the documented work gains greater importance than the perception of the live work that precedes it. As Auslander suggests, it is the documentation of the performance which allows an audience to interpret and evaluate the actions as a performance. The documentation is itself performative. As I have mapped above, the drone and the live stream were fundamental components of *Uninvited* and, I argue, are essential to the activation of the work as an act of choreographing evidence. Considering Auslander's theory, I further argue that the digital documentation of *Uninvited* becomes a performative device, helping to solidify the alternative affective and political narratives of the work. As stated previously, without drone capture audiences would not have the perspective to view Tegento's line drawing as a new borderline separating land and sea. The drone therefore becomes more than mere documentation, but is an activator in the choreographic re-organisation of space within the work as evidence of alternative narratives.

To navigate the problematic landscape that is performance and migration, *Uninvited* choreographs evidence through an embodied re-mapping of borderlines under the umbrella of surveillance art practice which reclaims and documents Tegento's autonomous image through the drone. However, there are questions which linger and conditions that remain unmet to allow this othered body of the migrant refugee to fully claim space and control his own narrative within these loaded spaces. In the following section, I discuss the final portion of *Uninvited*, and issues that arose.

8. The Uninvited Guest: Issues Arising

The performance of *Uninvited* culminated on the terrace of the Turner Contemporary Gallery. Tegento presented a song on his Masinko, with a choreography of images to represent the many facets of his identity, and finally a sharing of Ethiopian dance. Tegento sought specifically to share dance and song from Ethiopian culture as he felt he did not have a space to do this within his current practice as a student at university.

He expressed that he was usually encouraged to perform under the genre of British performing arts within his undergraduate studies as a drama student, which brings into focus the Eurocentric curriculum that refugees like Tegento often find themselves having to fit into. This is something that we discussed at length during the process of developing *Uninvited*, since I was conscious not to validate Tegento's embodied movement with the presence of my European body or practice. We agreed that this sharing should be his, and that he should be able to take the space to perform this movement by himself.

However, when we arrived from the walk, our intentions were not met entirely. Tegento was to perform outside on the Terrace, next to the café (not inside the gallery space). When watching this final part of the piece with other audience members who had followed us on our walk, and with the many patrons of Turner Contemporary's café space, I had an overwhelming sense that we were not fully accepted into the space at the Turner. Tegento's performance was directed to those on the terrace eating their lunch and it felt uncomfortable rather than empowering. The work took on almost minstrel-like associations. Tegento was performing for people eating their lunch outside the gallery, and although he danced right up to the doors, he was not granted access into the hallowed space of art exhibition. His body was not permitted all the way into this artistic space - he was an uninvited guest.

This image of Tegento's body performing Ethiopian dance *outside* the gallery walls threw up myriad concerns and questions around the types of movement and the types of bodies that are truly allowed into these spaces. Since this event took place, the Turner Contemporary Gallery has expressed an interest in screening the drone footage in the gallery with a Q&A or similar intervention with us both. However, this has not happened, and their enthusiasm appears to have waned. This raises further questions on the conditions that must be met for this body to be allowed inside a space which is validated as an art institution. Receiving an offer to put our footage within the gallery space, but not Tegento's live performance of Ethiopian dance, prompts me to consider that Tegento's image is allowed inside, but his body is not. When I pushed for a physical intervention within the gallery, the conversation went cold. This indicates that a high-quality, aesthetically driven, contemporary film with Tegento's image gains access, but that his physical embodiment of Ethiopian dance does not, which echoes Tegento's

previous feelings that he did not have a space to share this movement in the UK.

To understand the significance of this moment, it is useful to look to Arabella Stanger (2021), who considers the conditions of entry to, and liberation within, spaces that hold hidden violence or white idealist hierarchies. Analysing Euro-American dance practices which often erase histories of violence by failing to account for identities other than the European/British/American artists themselves, she considers the consequences of such an erasure. Part of her analysis focuses on Boris Charmatz's *Adrénaline: A Dance Floor for Everyone* (2015) in which a disco was created at the Tate Modern in London with the purpose of encouraging everyone, including audiences and dancers alike, to dance together in an act of self-proclaimed emancipation and liberation. Audiences were invited to 'take ownership' of their movement and to dance with the artists under a disco ball in the Tate's Turbine Hall. When reflecting on this invitation to take part in an act of 'freedom' Stanger asks, 'what are the institutional mechanisms that must be negotiated for these invitations to be accepted?' (Stanger, 2021: 166), referring to the timetable marked by the lowering and raising of disco balls which reifies the fact that the audience's freedom was strictly managed by the Tate Modern, prompting Stanger to question the power hierarchies at play within the piece. Stanger refers to the Tate Modern's colonial (and thus violent) history to suggest that the political nature of Charmatz's work as a liberation of hierarchy erases the colonial foundations upon which the institution that controls the work was created. She states that 'it is left untested in some Euro-American dance practices and scholarship, that dances imagining liberty, democracy, and equality are then also liberatory, democratic, or egalitarian.' (Stanger, 2021: 175) What Stanger lays out eloquently in her writing is the need for 'critical negativity' (176) - a conscious awareness that invisible acts of violence towards othered bodies exists in spaces, such as the Tate Modern, and that performance (particularly that which deals with oppositional politics) has the power to both expose and cover up these violent acts.

Looking back at *Uninvited* I argue that, similarly to the Tate Modern governing the freedom proposed within Charmatz's disco, the Turner Contemporary, too, controlled the conditions under which they allowed Tegenito to occupy their performing space. His arrival was firstly prolonged by the framing of the work being outside the gallery walls, and secondly it was impeded by the rejection of his embodied performance in favour of

a westernized version of the work. This anchors the fact that perhaps gallery spaces are reserved for certain bodies, and that, as Stanger proposes, performance often fails to account for othered bodies being excluded from certain spaces. For a body that has been denied entry, and denied arrival by systems numerous times before, it was illuminating that Tegento's image and his body-as-data was allowed in, but that his body, in all its live fleshliness, was denied entry.

There were certain conditions that might grant access for Tegento if we were able to return. The Turner Contemporary Gallery was interested in having access to the drone footage visuals, but not in showcasing Tegento's dance movement. If we use new technologies, create exciting visuals, and otherwise modernize or indeed westernize traditional movement practices, does this open the door? At what cost are uninvited guests allowed in? I stress that this analysis is not a specific critique on the practices at Turner Contemporary, but is, rather, a wider discussion on the prescribed conditions of entry that must be met within white box gallery spaces and on the implications of hosting non-European, othered bodies in spaces which push them further into the category of otherness.

Considering the concept of hospitality in a broader form, I return to Annalisa Piccirillo who considers the act of choreographing hospitality within performances on migration emerging from the Mediterranean. Piccirillo discusses the ability to use resonance and listening (through the entire body as a sonorous vessel) to disturb current assumptions of migrating bodies and open space for new sensorial modes of arrival in the Euro-Mediterranean geography. (Piccirillo, 2021: 195) She discusses the possibility of choreographing hospitality as a way of deconstructing stereotypes of migrating bodies through movement and resonance which constructs space for otherness. The concept of resonance as that which has a lasting effect on bodies, correlates with my own analysis of *Uninvited* and the evidence imprinted from Tegento's body-as-data. Both resonance and evidence are evocative of something left behind, of traces embedded from one to another, of providing proof in embodied forms. When considering resonance as a method of choreographing hospitality, as Piccirillo suggests, it is possible to consider how resonances or traces left behind within bodies and spaces might contribute to more hospitable environments. Piccirillo proposes that 'we need to invent, now more than ever, new sonic and corporeal architectures for listening and performing hospitality, and in which lives might be unconditionally respected and

saved.’ (Piccirillo, 2021: 193) However, I must employ critical negativity to question how we choreograph hospitality in spaces that are just not hospitable. In those spaces which hold hidden power in violent histories such as Stanger describes, are some resonances corrupted by the inhospitable spaces that hold them? And if this is the case, is it worth knocking on the door only to face western exclusionism?

I find myself at a space in between Piccirillo and Stanger, between critical negativity and choreographing hospitality; just as Tegento’s digital alter-ego exists between digital and physical worlds, between softness and resistance, and between arrival and departure. However, what lies in this middle ground is, I argue, what unlocks alternative pathways for artists to evidence the body-as-data, fighting against its violent mode. It is imperative that we have an awareness of the way histories are carried both in bodies *and* in performance spaces and institutions, and the potential traumas these histories can induce. Questioning power hierarchies and holding an acute attentiveness to the representation of refugee liberation within performance, versus the potential conflicting conditions of entry set within the institutions that hold them, is simply the first step in creating work that goes some way to minimising the traumas induced onto refugee bodies in performance.

9. *Uninvited*: evidencing the between as a site of autonomy

Throughout this chapter I have offered a detailed analysis of the practice as research performance *Uninvited* from initial explorations, through the process of creating the work in collaboration with Tom Tegento, to the performance outcome at Margate beach. I have offered a series of observations surrounding the work including the practice of reclaiming Tegento’s image using drone technology, of how this image became an act of choreographing evidence through a re-mapping of borderlines, and of the conditions of entry that remained unmet at the Turner Contemporary Gallery. This practice as research method has revealed a series of outcomes that hold the potential to alter the relationship between migrant bodies and digital regimes of control. The steps taken during *Uninvited* made visible the invisible forces which contribute to producing marked identities for migrants and, in doing so, revisualized the body-as-data as a different kind of ‘between’.

Using a drone to capture Tegento's performance enabled a reclaiming of his image and his body-as-data. Historically, technology within border spaces is considered to prolong the arrival of migrating bodies. Thermal imaging cameras, GPS trackers, radar surveillance systems, satellites, and drones are relied on by border authorities to intercept and push back migrants, to inhibit their movement and arrival into new countries and spaces. Within *Uninvited*, technology that was originally intended to slow movement ultimately sped up, expanded, and encouraged the arrival process and thus moves directly against the effects of the body-as-data as felt by refugees at digital borders.

During Tegento's walking journey, drawing a borderline within the sand enabled us to reveal alternative narratives and pathways for Tegento's migrating body as he chose where to mark the landscape around him. The ephemeral line he drew, which, we accepted, would at some point be washed away by the rising tide, was granted permanence through drone capture. Capturing a new border between land and sea with his body as he walked, Tegento was able to choreograph evidence of his personal history of migration and those who have come before him. These acts contributed to a re-organisation of space that act as a way of evidencing the body-as-data and reclaiming space in the loaded site of the Kent coast. Previously, the body-as-data was to carry the border silently, prohibited from movement, whereas Tegento's body-as-data within *Uninvited* brought this into the realm of the actual, up onto the shore.

My research within this chapter has examined the steps that were taken to negotiate the body-as-data within performance on migration in a less violent mode. From my analysis of current performances which deal with migration in Chapter 2, it is evident that this genre of work falls into two distinct categories – resistance, and awareness building. Performances which aim to act as resistance push against conventional or harmful laws, changes, or governmental procedures and are often considered as acts of protest. Surveillance art such as Mosse's *Incoming* fall into the category of resistance. Performances which build awareness of the plight of refugees aim to shed light on the atrocities faced by refugees for their far-removed audiences. This aim is often accompanied by a secondary aim – the hope that those audiences might be driven to an act of kindness, to donate money, to sign a petition, or to otherwise attempt to help. However, falling into either of these categories does not make the

performance-maker immune to some of the harmful tropes of performances of this kind on migrating bodies. As discussed within Chapter 2, it is possible to build awareness and still absent the refugee, or to speak for them, or push them into the subaltern condition.

Instead of attempting to assimilate with one of these two pre-described outcomes of awareness or resistance, *Uninvited* sits within a third category, 'between'. My understanding of between in this performance sits in opposition to the between-ness felt by migrating bodies at borderzones. I consider between to be an oscillating space, a space of becoming, where bodies move through the many facets of their identities and developing position in systems of control. A between that moves with autonomy, rather than one that is rendered immovable. *Uninvited* choreographs space to move between these sites, between land and sea, between departure and arrival, and evidences the body in this between space. Whereas previously the body-as-data produced fixed narratives for migrating bodies who were perpetually confined to one identity by the state, within *Uninvited* this process is reversed, granting Tegento the autonomy to produce his own borderline, his own between-ness, and to move between identities through the body-as-data. Rather than attempting to unfix the narratives of migrating bodies, this practice as research has revealed the beginnings of an approach for remaining and evidencing in-between spaces by revisualizing and re-mapping the body-as-data. In revisualizing invisible methods of control, we can reclaim this image from the states that use it against us. In re-drawing the body into alternative maps that hold past, present, and future journeys, we can create divergent pathways to move. I argue that by choreographing evidence within site specific performance and drone capture in *Uninvited*, Tegento was able to transcend the limits imposed on him, taking control of his between-ness and reclaiming his body-as-data.

This analysis seeks to illuminate potential outcomes for performance practice through the methods recorded above, but it also understands that there may not be a one-size-fits-all approach to creating performance with migration, as every artist will need to navigate a unique set of circumstances. However, if we are not implicating our audiences in any way, then the hierarchy remains unchanged. If we are not offering any kind of transgression of bodily limits, then the body remains in place. If we are not attempting to reveal violent histories, they will continue to be hidden. If we are not

attempting to create alternative maps, then spaces will retain their own violent traces. Perhaps the issues raised within this research are something we cannot entirely overcome, but to be less violent, to be less harmful, to be less traumatic towards the bodies we are featuring in this work, we must generate an equal exchange between othered bodies and the technologies, systems and societies that harm them.

In the next chapter I focus on the second half of this practice as research - a mobile application performance titled *Contagion* - with the hope of uncovering further examples of this work's ability to shift the management and intention of technologies in performance to open space for alternative narratives. I pay particular attention to *Contagion*'s intervention of existing infrastructure and expansion of the body-as-data across the world through collective participation and GPS tracking as a method of remote choreographic evidence. Within this research I am not offering a solution, as there are remaining conditions which push against the autonomy of migrating bodies within the work and does not allow this issue to simply be 'overcome'. Instead, I offer an approach that potentially minimises the oppressive influence of the body-as-data on migrating bodies. It is my hope that, through these methods, systems will be held accountable for their role in fixing migrating bodies, and othered bodies will be given the space to move into multiple, autonomous identities.

Chapter 4:

Re-writing the Body-as-Data Across Global Spaces Through the *Contagion* Mobile Application

1. Introduction

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[After writing this final chapter I look back at the year and reflect on the crossing of bodies, borders, and data once again. Migration policies in the UK continue to echo the aggressive attitudes of the government and treatment of migrating bodies as disposable. In the summer, PM Boris Johnson released plans to send unauthorised refugees to Rwanda, despite calls that the scheme is unlawful. (Taylor, 2022) It has been reported that 40,000 displaced people have entered the UK this year, making the dangerous crossing to the Kent coast in small boats (Syal, 2022). This number continues to grow without any change in policy or infrastructure for those seeking safety. In fact, there are double the maximum capacity of asylum seekers currently in the Manston migrant processing centre in Kent (CNN.com, 2022), just down the road from where I write this chapter. At the same time, political discourse around migration continues to frame refugees entering the UK as intruders, with UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman stating in parliament that asylum seekers were ‘invading’ the south coast of England (Syal, 2022). This language paints those entering the UK as an army-like force, something to defend against, rather than people fleeing conflict who are seeking safety.]

Within Chapter 4 of this thesis, I discuss my second piece of substantial practice in collaboration with Tom Tegento - *Contagion*. This performance within a mobile application introduces the user to *Rasselas*, Tegento’s digital alter-ego, and then invites them to take a walking journey with him as part of a GPS tracked digital performance experience which contributes to *Rasselas*’ ‘contagion’ across the world. Where *Uninvited* was an exercise in arrival and presence within the forbidding spaces of the Kent coast, *Contagion* explores the act of spreading the body-as-data across multiple spaces through non-visual communication methods. Further information regarding the process of creating the work and links to download the application itself are available within the documentation resource - www.thebodyasdataproject.com. I advise the reader to visit this resource before continuing further for a more detailed visual depiction of both practical works which make up the body-as-data project and underpin this thesis.

This chapter aims to provide an analysis of *Contagion* in relation to my overall research questions. The analysis aims to expose and subvert the invisible violence of new technologies within performance on migration. Analysing this practical work through a specific framing uncovers it as a process of ‘choreographing evidence’. This concept, I maintain, involves a drawing, visualising, or otherwise active elucidation of an alternative narrative or positioning. Choreographing evidence is exactly that: a

choreography. Knowing that choreography deals with the organisation of space, time, and bodies – choreographing evidence involves (re)organising space and time in such a way that it reveals truths and validations of an alternative narrative. In order to arrive at this conviction, the chapter begins by giving the reader insight into the process of creating the mobile application with my collaborator, Tegento. I discuss our remote method of working within Covid-19 restrictions and the development of a ‘script’, including how this was influenced by our restricted movement and desire to inhabit outside spaces. Having briefly introduced the alter-ego in previous chapters, this chapter returns to *Rasselas* in more detail, building from Steve Dixon’s interpretation of the digital alter-ego in performance as a mediated double that exists alongside the physical body (2005:14). It traverses the concept of the digital alter-ego as a tool for performances which use new technologies to explore migration and investigates how this concept was especially valuable for our collaboration.

Once an understanding of the process of creating the work has been reached, this chapter offers an analysis of the work itself and the concept of contagion for the body-as-data. I expose and explore a series of ‘devices’ which contribute to the work becoming an act of choreographing evidence which demonstrates the agency of the moving migrant. To analyse the work, I return to the idea of ‘re’ previously introduced in Chapter 3, specifically re-writing and re-imagining, which provides a framework for evidencing the self as autonomous in movement across a variety of geographical spaces. The chapter discusses the dual purpose of the act of walking both as a method of data collection and as a sensate connection between bodies. It then analyses other GPS tracking systems and mobile applications which serve the purpose of either assisting or hindering the movement of migrants to frame this work as a method of infrastructure intervention. This chapter proposes ultimately that *Contagion* exists as an act of choreographing evidence which illustrates the renewed power of the migrant and that, within this practice, the body-as-data is able to absorb and enact movement across the digital sphere.

2. Building *Contagion*

Due to Covid-19 related restrictions, research and development for *Contagion* began

before meeting in person or starting any form of rehearsal period. After a series of introductory conversations, our first steps began within a Google document, sharing ideas on how the mobile application (app hereafter) would function, and writing a script together. When designing the app, it was imperative that the experience between the user and the subject should not be unbalanced, and that the user was not the only one who 'benefited' from the app. By asking the user to complete a task that would somehow impact the body-as-data we made a conscious attempt to avoid this pitfall. We also decided that tracking their GPS data and asking them to walk would allow us to gather information from each user to 'give' to the body-as-data within a simple structure for app building. We made the decision to provide a non-visual experience for the user within the main performance of the app, and thus chose to develop an audio performance which we felt would sit well within the app's structure.

During our discussions regarding implicating the app user, Tegento suggested inconveniencing the user to mirror how he was inconvenienced by Border Control. He described his arrival at the border and the questions he would be made to answer that felt pointless and inconvenient to him. We decided to include these questions within the structure of the app: to ask the user to enter their geographical location, where they had come from, and where they currently reside for no reason whatsoever. If a user clicked on our privacy policy within the app they would find a paragraph explaining this, which read:

'the information we collect within the welcome section of this app is not stored anywhere, and as such it will not be shared with anyone. It doesn't mean anything. We are only asking for this data to inconvenience you. We don't care about your answers, only where you are going. We don't care where you have come from to get to this point. Our sole interest is in what you are about to do, and the steps you are about to take.' (Appendix C, 2021)

This initial understanding that the app would not function to serve or benefit its user (as most apps do) and instead would offer a performative critique on how GPS and mobile apps affect the arrival process experienced by migrants allowed us to move forward with clear objectives for the work.

Once again, Tegento and I worked with a division of form and content. I presented the form of the mobile application, based on GPS tracking and a non-visual element and Tegento navigated the content for the application. The decision to create a mobile

application stemmed from my desire to explore technology which presents a method of control at digital border spaces. Gaining access to certain technologies that are readily available in most smart phone devices would not only allow for a wide audience reach but also sat within a realistic scope of access for us as makers with very little budget and a short timeframe. GPS technology is widely used and available to the consumer via smart phones and personal computers but also has military origins and is heavily implemented at border-zones for surveillance and control of migrating bodies.

Once this choice had been made, I created a structure and designed the visual presentation of the app with Adobe XD, which was then coded by software developer Liam Hawks. Within the constraints of a PhD programme there were certain limitations in terms of having an app built from scratch and the complexity that our modest budget would allow, so clarity and simplicity of the app structure was paramount. Notably there was also a series of hurdles in making the mobile application readily available on the Apple App Store, including a final rejection meaning that Apple users must download the app through a third-party beta testing application. The process of getting approval for app store access involves describing the app in detail, how users benefit from the app, what value it gives them, and the potential audience reach. This information is read over by an Apple employee who either grants or denies approval. Ultimately, the app was rejected from Apple due to its lack of benefit to the user. Once again, this presents issues of access and points to the fact that, even in digital spaces, certain alternative modes of deviating from existing infrastructure are not encouraged. This rejection from Apple clarifies the purpose of the app, and its ability to subvert the 'beneficial' aspect of a mobile application to its user. Its supposed failure rather contributes to the success of the app in critiquing the technology's interaction with subject and othered bodies.

Alongside the app building process, Tegento and I worked on the content of the piece. Over our editable document, we began with a series of questions regarding the content and structure. We agreed to shift between the present and the past, to enact the recalling and sharing of memories but also sharing a moment with the user in their present. We centred on the act of walking to bring the user into the world of the piece, and Tegento found a chapter from his recently published book, *The Seventh Neck* (2019), which also revolved around a long walking journey. Our intention was that

walking with Rasselas in the present, and hearing of this character's long walking journey in the past, would connect the audience to the work on an embodied level. When working on the script Tegento moved in and out of his chosen chapter as if sharing a story with his audience; he introduced cutaway moments, pauses, prepared his audience for movement with breathing exercises and checked in on them throughout. We framed the performance itself as a journey that shifts through a series of shared moments with the user as if Tegento was talking live, occupying the same space and time as the user. Once the script was finalised, Tegento recorded the performance which I then edited into a full audio track to build into the app, ready for publication.

Tegento also began building a profile of his digital alter-ego, Rasselas, as inspired by Aneta Stojnić (2017) and Steve Dixon (2005). We came to define Rasselas as 'a digital manifestation of Tegento's journey, who was also created through the passing of hundreds of thousands of people through digital borders.' (Appendix A). This reifies the connection between the alter-ego and the archive, positioning this figure as at once a document and a performing device. It was understood that the user would appear to interact with Rasselas as they navigate throughout the app, but that throughout the performance this role would quietly shift between Rasselas' character, Tegento's own self and the narrator. There is an intentional ambiguity between the work as a narrative produced *by* Tegento and *about* Tegento and his alter-ego. We came to see Rasselas not as an extension of Tegento's identity but as a door to reconnect to his body-as-data.

3. The Digital Alter-Ego

I have previously demonstrated that the body-as-data affects the physical self and holds acute power over the individual. At the border zone, the body-as-data impinges on the movements of the migrant. Within performance, the body-as-data has the potential to extend the self beyond identificatory limits. In attempting to associate the body-as-data with a framework surrounding digital alter-egos, it is important to note that there is differing thought within recent scholarship regarding the relationship between the body and a digital double.

In his discussion of the 'digital double' within digital performance (2005), Steve Dixon defines the digital double as the mediated double that exists alongside the physical body within digital performance spaces, drawing from Antonin Artaud's theatre double, as a dark shadow of the self. This can include avatars, projections, cyborgian alter-egos, film, and video. (Dixon, 2005: 14) Dixon distinguishes one particular form of the digital double that remains unacknowledged by the performer (directly or indirectly) as a *digital alter-ego*. (Dixon, 2005: 19). The digital alter-ego according to Dixon manifests itself through technology to portray the assorted identities of the performing subject. He refers to *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988) in which Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari refer to themselves as a 'crowd' via their own multiple states and personalities, citing that multimedia performance enables this 'crowd' to come into being. He states:

'The digital double as an alter-ego is also able to encapsulate the different mystical 'becomings' at the centre of *Mille Plateaus*: becoming-animal, becoming-intense, becoming-woman, becoming-stars.' Dixon, 2005: 20)

Dixon's interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari allows for an understanding of the digital alter-ego as a site of becoming, which in turn enables us to open the door for the body-as-data as a transformative state, and as a way of experiencing 'multiplicities' or multiple identities, and firmly cements my proposition that the body-as-data might exist and thrive in between spaces.

Also briefly referring to Deleuze's *Cinema 2* (1989), Dixon suggests that Deleuze's depiction of the digital alter-ego considers it to be indistinguishable from the self, or indeed that their differences are not of any relevance. Dixon opposes this consideration, arguing that within performance the distinction between the digital and the real are well-defined. The double does not try to convince audiences otherwise, and they are able to differentiate between the double and the self with ease. His description is akin rather to that of Antonin Artaud's theatre double – considering the double as a shadow, a darker embodiment of the self. (Artaud, 1958)

In contrast, Aneta Stojnić's writing on digital alter-egos, as previously discussed in Chapter 1, considers avatars as digital alter-egos which decentre the self. She refers to the digital performer (specifically using the example of an avatar) not as a subject, but as the alter-ego of the decentred self. This decentred self oscillates between

physical body and digital body, acting as a mask which obscures the physical body from its central role and thus blurring the lines between the alter-ego and the self (Stojnić, 2015: 73).

It is useful now to think back to my original definition of the body-as-data at border control spaces, where the migrant's movement is halted and they are forced to carry the border with them as the body-as-data becomes trapped. If the body-as-data alter-ego is entirely separate from the physical body, the physical body would not experience the same obstruction caused by the body-as-data nor would they be able to experience the same becomings or the same movement through and between spaces. I therefore share the view of Deleuze and Guattari and Stojnić in proposing that the distinction between the self and the digital alter-ego is distorted within *Contagion*. The interaction between the user and Tegento's voice is mediated through the introduction of his alter-ego, Rasselas, and the stories told shift from the perspective of Tegento, Rasselas and a third character discussed in the third person. His physical body is not present within the work, but becomes embodied through the shared movement led by the voice, which constantly remains unidentifiable as just Tegento, just Rasselas, just a narrator.

Although there are many similarities between our understanding of the digital alter-ego, there is also one fundamental distinction. Stojnić refers to the digital alter-ego as a mask. However, within both *Uninvited* and *Contagion* the body-as-data resides within a quiet space *beside* Tegento's performance rather than in front of his physical body as the description of a mask would suggest, instead providing a space for the oscillation of his performed and wider identities within the digital space. In forming the work, Tegento utilised the body-as-data, deliberately blurring the lines between himself and his extended self through the digital alter-ego in order to move beyond his perceived limits. I therefore argue that the body-as-data digital alter-ego existed as a performing device or tool within the process and performance of the work. This is most transparent during *Uninvited*, in which Rasselas gave Tegento the confidence to perform as his multi-faceted self, moving in front and beyond the mask (previously discussed within chapter 3, page 85). In *Contagion*, Tegento performs the role of Rasselas and whilst it could be argued that the alter-ego also becomes a mask for him at this point, it is the process of creating the work that frames the alter-ego as a tool. When developing the script, there was a deliberate blurring of roles between Tegento, Rasselas and the third

person character from his novel. Near the start of his script he declares:

‘Growing up in Africa and living here, This individualistic lifestyle plus the lockdown... it’s lonely for everyone. I mean home is becoming a prison for most of us, especially me. I mean, yeah, I am a refugee!’ (Appendix D)

This is a statement only true of Tegento’s reality. His acknowledgement of lockdown measures situate him firmly within the world of the reader. However, during the previous sentence he states ‘I am Rasselas’ and later whispers ‘I can feel us getting closer now, I’m collecting each step and the contagion spreads’ (Appendix D) which places him in a digital space powered by GPS technology within the app. He also narrates the story of Alem from his novel in the third person, sometimes falling into speech from Alem’s perspective – “‘Yeah, I’ll keep going. Have I any choice?’” He said it as if no one could stop him anymore.’ (Appendix D). These three voices within the performance provide a level of ambiguity to the narrator’s identity and thus provide a space in which to shift between each state. The body-as-data digital alter-ego has the potential to become a tool when two factors are met: when the body-as-data is able to shift through spaces and across sites with autonomy and when the binary between the alter-ego and the original self becomes blurred. When this gap is closed, the distinction between each role becomes harder to define and states move between one and the other. During *Uninvited* and *Contagion*, the distinction between Tegento and Rasselas becomes faint, and therefore the performer shifts between his body and his autonomous body-as-data alter-ego.

Within the previous chapter I discussed Tegento’s experience of the alter-ego as a place where multiple identities can emerge. These identities, or sense of meaning, emerge from experience, from his connection with what is around him. It is useful to return now to the concept of ‘becoming’ set out by Deleuze and Guattari, as utilised by Dixon above. Everyone and everything, according to Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1988), is constantly in a state of becoming. Through this concept they aim to re-consider how social laws, identifications and restrictions are imposed from above, in hierarchies, and offer an alternative mode of understanding the self through becomings, which constantly change and shift according to the sets of interconnected relationships, or assemblages, to which the self is connected. These assemblages connect in ‘rhizomes’, which are immanent, rather than transcendent or ‘arboreal’ systems. By nature, arboreal systems, the

government for example, are hierarchical, whereas within rhizomatic systems, such as the internet, something takes on meaning depending on the interconnected set of relations that it develops around, without a single central point. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that this becoming takes place through an affinity, a small strange connection, which stimulates the shift or 'line of flight' (1988: 9) towards another. In essence, our becoming shifts and changes based on how we are assembled with other things.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that 'the man of power will always want to stop the lines of flight.' (1988: 229), which connects to my previous discussion of how the body-as-data is prohibited from becoming and forced to remain within a fixed narrative. As I have demonstrated above, the lines between the body-as-data and the physical self are blurred. Tegento's performance within *Contagion* demonstrates a clear shift along a line of flight between various becomings, thus demonstrating how the digital alter-ego acts as a tool or device to move away from the previously fixed narrative of the body-as-data. I now discuss how Tegento's becomings are evidenced through *Contagion*, in order to mobilise against the structures which prohibit his movement and conceal or erase his agency.

4. Shifts, Becomings, and Glitches in the *Contagion* App

The *Contagion* app draws on the concept of contagion as a method of communicating movement across multiple bodies. Contagion, a word predominantly linked with disease, refers to the rapid spreading of influence, infection or harmful ideas from one being to another. Especially in a post-covid landscape, contagion can also be linked with the spreading of fear and mobilisation of global politics. This fear is often spread through social and mass media reports which hold the power to shape the consumer's understanding of information and affect their behaviour. The omnipresence of smartphones in a technologically driven society such as Western Europe, the focus of this study, allows contagion to happen rapidly and continuously. Contagion is thus inherently linked, not just to a biological spread but also to a digital spread. In addition, othered and refugee bodies are often framed within Western discourse as contagious bodies. This is demonstrated within Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), as she discusses disease genocides and European "penetration" of the world. She states that:

'the "coloured" body of the colonized was constructed as the dark source of

infection, pollution, disorder, and so on, that threatened to overwhelm white manhood (cities, civilization, the family, the white personal body) with its decadent emanations.’ (Haraway 1991: 223).

Fear of contagion from othered bodies can also be seen within communities in Northern Territory Australia and the indigenous peoples’ approach to Asylum seekers as contagious as a political claim to indigenous sovereignty, as explored by Emma Cox (Cox, 2013: 149). Fintan Walsh also discusses the language often used in more recent Western political discourse surrounding migrants or refugees as ‘infectious’ or moving in swarms (Walsh, 2020: 9). Thus, contagion becomes linked to migration.

The *Contagion* app aims to subvert the normal equation of refugees as contagious bodies. The app, as I will demonstrate over the following pages, instead implicates us all as contributing to the contagion. Within the contagion app it is becoming-data, the body-as-data, that spreads through contagion. The negative connotations of contagion are subverted to reveal and encourage a shared desire to spread the contagion of data to support movement across shared digital spaces. I now return to Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988) and our renewed understanding of the body-as-data as a site of becoming in order to discuss the concept of the contagion and its value. During their analysis of various becomings (becoming-animal, becoming-woman, etc) they suggest that ‘these multiplicities with heterogeneous terms, cofunctioning by contagion, enter certain *assemblages*; it is there that human beings effect their becomings-animal.’ (Deleuze, 1988: 282) Deleuze and Guattari promote an understanding that becoming does not happen through birth but through contagion. Therefore, the idea that the body-as-data is entangled in a contagion, or as a state of becoming-data which spreads via contagion, solidifies the fact that the body-as-data can enable and encourage free movement of bodies between spaces. The *Contagion* app is a performative reflection of this concept.

Throughout this chapter I will now refer to those who have experienced this app both as user (of the app) and participant (in the performance), to mark the moments where their roles shift from decision-maker to contributor. The *Contagion* app functions by taking the user through three stages – consent, aural walking experience and contribution. When the user opens the app they are invited to input their information

before they can continue to the performance. This information is discarded instantly. Once completed, the user is invited to merge their body-as-data with Rasselas. They must give consent to continue. Their consent is linked to the tracking of GPS data by the app but also reflects the user's willingness to contribute to the contagion and active participation in the work. Once consent is given the user receives a message on the screen from Rasselas inviting them to take a walking journey with him. Once again the narrative voice remains ambiguous, writing 'Hello, we would like you to walk. Please. Go outside and take a walk, at a comfortable pace, with headphones, so we can communicate.' (Appendix D) The user is instructed to connect a pair of headphones to proceed and finally a small play button appears.

Once the user presses play, they are introduced to a whirling soundscape of drones, crashing waves and a distorted, booming voice which commands "please stay out of the water, it is dangerous and contaminated". These sounds are directly lifted from location during *Uninvited* and encapsulate the user within a particular surveillance driven world in which they are bound. The booming voice, originating from a beach patrol van, acts as an authoritarian figure of control and the drone buzzing invites the user to imagine their own surveillance at the hands of technology. Suddenly the soundscape begins to glitch and flicker and a different, softer voice opens "hello?" over the digital jittering. The glitching noise anchors the voice as an intervenor, as something that exists in between spaces, from outside of the world built by the previous soundscape which has pushed through technological deviations of the glitch to reach the user. Although this glitch is not an actual malfunction of the technology, the representation of it as such prepares the user of the app to understand the voice as that so the concept of the glitch is a useful device from which to unpick the opening section of the app.

Glitches in computing and electronics refer to momentary malfunctions or faults within a system. They can also be described as deviations from a correct value or an unpredictable change in a system's behaviour (Goriunova et al, 2008). Although often associated with error, the glitch does not always necessarily come from this. Glitches can arise from perfectly functioning programmes. This view is shared by Rosa Menkman in her 2011 monograph *The Glitch Moment(um)* in which she states:

'a glitch occurs on the occasion where there is an absence of (expected)

functionality, whether understood in a technical or social sense. Therefore, a glitch, as I see it, is not always strictly a result of a technical malfunction.’ (Menkman, 2011: 9)

Often within the genre of digital art recently branded ‘glitch art’, glitches are intentionally manipulated into art practice either by representation (through pixelated images and jittering screens) or by design (through manipulation of code). Within *Contagion*, the glitch deliberately occurs within the aural soundscape which shifts from a voice of surveillance and control to a singular narrative voice. The glitch in this sense is no longer a malfunction but a device in which to highlight, anchor or perhaps evidence change. Turning to Legacy Russell, curator, writer and author of the *Glitch Feminism Manifesto* (2012) we can consider the potential for the glitch to become a place of transformation. Russell suggests that the glitch is ‘[...] a correction to the “machine”, and, in turn, a positive departure. This glitch [...] calls for a breaking from the hegemony of a “structured system”’ (2012: online) Russell’s interpretation of the glitch as creating a renewed awareness and recognition of the heightened ability of virtual and digital selves of othered bodies over their physical counterparts allows for a reading of the glitch in *Contagion* to signify the narrative voice of Rasselas as a breaking from the hegemonic, authoritarian voice that was heard first. The glitch therefore evidences a moment where the user is offered a peek behind the curtain and an opportunity to renew their understanding of the migrant body centred in the work. Glitches are often visual representations of these departures, but here within *Contagion* it is an aural glitch that signifies a deviation from the structured system. The system in question here refers to the mobile application and, more broadly, the *smart-* phone owned by the user, and even more broadly, systems of control induced by digital technologies. Placing this experience within a smartphone device which we have come to rely on for information, communication, navigation and a plethora of functions for everyday life, lulls the user into trusting the app as they would trust other apps on their home screen. We trust our phones to tell us where to go, we trust them to give us the correct information from the right time to breaking news: we trust them to be *smart*. By using a technology which is at the heart of consumer culture, a technology which is not regularly questioned or challenged, the glitch offers a sudden departure. As researcher and glitch tutor Jon Satrum suggests, the glitch presents ‘a moment where you are snapped out of the system you are participating in.’ (SAIC, 2012: online) The aural glitch offers an outside view of the system that surrounds it and thus frames the narrative voice as a method of

deviating from current cultural and societal norms. In short, the glitch prompts a shift from the user's current mode of thought into a place of hyper-awareness which opens the gate for an alternative positioning of Rasselas from othered migrant to a digital presence which moves away from systems of authoritarian control. Rasselas is the glitch.

By promoting a shift in positioning, the glitch contributes to the production of multiple narratives for Tegento, in a Deleuzian sense of becoming. The digital presence he is entangled with is re-framed as a mobilising, rebellious figure by the glitch. His connection with the glitch promotes a line of flight which positions Tegento as 'becoming-glitch' or 'becoming-deviation', both of which sit in opposition to the standard reading of the migrant/refugee as powerless within digital and political systems. I will now explore how the *Contagion* app produces a specific form of evidence so that these becomings, these shifts in meaning and identity, can be revealed within and outside of Tegento's body and mobilised against systems of control.

5. Evidence Left in Footsteps

As the glitching soundscape subsides, the voice invites the user to walk with him. At this point the main experience of the performance begins to take place as the participant is invited to take a journey and the app's GPS function tracks their movement. The voice prepares the participant for this experience. They are encouraged to bring their focus to their surroundings, to feel sensations around them such as the breeze passing them as they travel and are instructed to bring their focus inward. They are asked to bring their awareness to their breath, preparing them for movement. This preparation is intrinsic to the work, as it helps to connect the participant to the narrator in an embodied sense. When recording the narration, Tegento carried out the walk and prepared his own body for movement in the same way as he instructs the participant to do so, cementing a connection between the virtual voice and the physical body.

Once the participant is ready, the voice offers to tell them a story. The story within the app originates from Tegento's book *The Seventh Neck* (Tegento, 2019) which is a

semi-autobiographical novel drawn from Tegento's experiences about a boy fleeing his home with his best friend in search of a safe place to live. The chapter chosen follows the main character on a walking journey where he befriends the river Nile and they travel together day and night. The shared act of walking between the participant, the narrator and the character of the story anchors this action as a significant image and offers the participant a symbolic connection by mirroring the journeys of migrants. However, within this work, the act of walking also serves multiple other purposes.

Firstly, the walk enables the app to function. Walking generates GPS data for the infographics at the end of the performance (which supply the participant with information about their own contribution and the overall total in kilometres) helping the contagion to spread and thus becoming a tool for data collection. Secondly, having placed the participant in an already embodied state, the act of walking connects them to the original walk tangibly within their own body. The act of walking together-but-not-together promotes an embodied and sensate knowledge exchange in which participants are able to viscerally connect to the journey of the migrant. Each participant of the walk, including Tegento's original walking journey to record the voice, connects to the story and performs the same shared act of placing one foot in front of the other. In doing so they share and transport embodied knowledge across different bodies in multiple geographies. Finally, it is important to remember that this act of walking has been repeatedly captured via GPS tracking. The original walking journey taken by Tegento when he travelled from Africa to Europe with a GPS-enabled phone and almost certainly surveyed by border control forces is repeated firstly when recording the sound for the app and again whenever anyone participates in the app experience. This repetition shifts the movement into multiple different spaces and thus re-establishes itself outside of the original site of capture. During this repetition, a series of digital and physical traces are left by the participant which provide an afterlife for the work and extend it beyond the moment of participation. As Rebecca Schneider suggests, this performance remains. (Schneider, 2001)

To further understand the implications of this participatory practice it is useful to turn to Deirdre Heddon's concept of *autotopography* as a writing of place through self (2007). Heddon explores this concept through her participation in the *One Square Foot* project initiated and managed by Dorinda Hulton (2003) in which she was a performer-

participant. Participants were given the task of choosing a square foot of space in which to explore and devise a series of solo performances with a team of artists in response to their chosen site (Heddon, 2007). Within her contribution to the *One Square Foot* project Heddon worked with three artists; Arianna Economou, Horst Weierstall, and Helen Chadwick, to generate three performances in response to her chosen site in the context of the artists' disciplinary language and working methodologies. (2007, 42) She discusses how working with each artist developed her understanding of autobiography in performance as a process that can reflect many perspectives and interpretations of the self and of the place. Each time she revisited her chosen square to work with the next artist the more layered her performance became. She states:

'Though the initial choice of my square foot had been made purely on its significance in my present, everyday life, working with each artist enabled me to reconceive this small square of land as being layered and having depth; as existing simultaneously in the present and the past (and also conjuring a future); as being literally here, but also someplace else- in fact, many other places - as being personal but also connected to others, continuously shifting.' (Heddon, 2007: 46)

Understanding place as something which is made rather than a fixed entity, and connected to both the personal and collective self, allows for a reading of the participatory practice within *Contagion* as a writing of Tegento's journey (and indeed self) within multiple places. Within *Contagion*, place is simultaneously constructed and resituated by the participants who re-enact Tegento's walk. Considering that this app is available to use at any time, it is possible to imagine that this place is *always* shifting, even now. The participants' journeys are imbricated with Tegento's own in past, present and future, and present a rhizome of place in which his body-as-data resides.

The multiple bodies that participate in this choreographic re-organisation of place, I argue, become evidentiary objects: methods of evincing Tegento's body-as-data in its autonomous, becoming-glitch state. The continuous re-writing of place enabled and experienced by these bodies provides legitimacy and concreteness to an otherwise individualised experience. The shared, repeated walking repertoire, this choreographic act, becomes a method of accessing pasts and futures in multiple spaces, and thus becomes a choreographic contribution of evidence.

6. App-based Interventions

Once the user has completed their journey, they are thanked for their contribution and the voice fades. The app states that they have successfully merged their body-as-data with *Rasselas* and a series of infographics show how far the contagion has spread both through their individual journey and as a collective in kilometres. The role of the user is framed clearly in this section of the app. They are not the main beneficiary of the work and their contribution serves the direct purpose of generating GPS data for the contagion and assisting the body-as-data. The task of walking acts as a device for data collection from multiple bodies across multiple sites. However, it is useful now to leave the fleshly contributions of this work and move into the digital realm to discuss the use of GPS within *Contagion* as an intervention against existing infrastructure.

GPS technology is used by countries across the world for both civilian and governmental activities but its history can be traced back to the United States Department of Defence who first deployed this technology for military use (Kumar and Moore, 2002), (Westbrook, 2019), (Ceruzzi, 2018). The Global Positioning System, which uses a constellation of satellites orbiting 20,200km above the Earth to precisely pinpoint a user's location in real time, was in development throughout the late 1970s-1980s and widely used in the Gulf War to assist the US military to navigate desert terrain in Kuwait and Iraq in 1991 (Morrison, 2016: 6). The success of GPS technology within the US Military prompted the proliferation of these systems across the globe, including Galileo in the EU, INRSS in India, BeiDou in China, and QZSS in Japan (Ceruzzi, 2018: 9), and indeed the fact that they exist 'reveals that satellite positioning systems are critical to political power in world affairs' (Ceruzzi, 2018: 10). Fast forward to present day, after civilian use was granted, and the omnipresence of smartphones means that GPS has become a standard component of everyday life. Trust in GPS systems is unfaltering. We no longer rely on road signs to reach our destination and instead blindly follow the small blue arrow on our devices to take us where we need to go. We presume that our *smart* phones always know where we are without a second thought. Undeniably, 'GPS has become an invisible piece of infrastructure, like clean water or electric power – taken for granted unless something disrupts it.' (Ceruzzi, 2018: 6)

GPS navigation also functions to prevent the individual from going down the 'wrong'

route. However, it is necessary to question the perspective from which wrong routes are decided and to remember the origins of the technology. The concept of what is 'wrong' is engendered by a particular system with a particular agenda. It is not neutral. As artist and cultural theorist Dani Ploeger argues in his discussion of the history of GPS technology:

'the supposedly objective perception of space that is enabled by the use of GPS-coordinates in fact embodies a particular way of looking at the world that is rooted in colonial history and has inherently militaristic characteristics.'
(Ploeger, 2021: 45)

In this sense, modern GPS technology (in European practice) is as much a method of control and privacy violation as it is a form of comfort. In the context of migration, GPS holds the power to both aid and hinder the movement of migrants across borders. GPS satellites deployed at border control attempt to provide hyper-visibility to those who deploy them by tracking spots where border crossings are most often attempted. At sea, satellites are used to detect vessels and alert border control ships long before they can be seen by human eyes. In the UK, pilot schemes are running in which GPS ankle tags are attached to migrants allowing them to be tracked at all times. It has also been reported that tagging is used by private companies such as G4S and Telefonica who profit by selling tag data to the government. (Guardian, 2022) (BIDUK, 2022). In this way, the people most stripped of their right to privacy and free movement are those who are already vulnerable.

In the US, a mobile app called *CBP One* developed by the government is now in use which claims to help asylum seekers by confirming their identity using biometric data. However, the app also admits to tracking its users via GPS and facial recognition and thus poses the risk of persistent surveillance for those attempting to cross the US-Mexico border (American Immigration Council, 2021). The data collected from this app will likely go through a process of data crunching, or the stripping of unwanted data and translating data for analysis. Data crunching is an automated process which is therefore unable to make 'human' decisions, take environmental context into account, or otherwise consider the life of the body behind the data. Data crunching therefore serves against the migrant by default. This mode of app-based GPS surveillance inhibits the movement of the migrant and enforces strict control via abstract technologies.

Accepting that this piece of technological infrastructure serves against migrants and hinders their movement, we need to consider the opposite end of the spectrum. There are mobile applications which use GPS technology to aid migrants to cross borders such as *Ref Aid* which connects non-profit services with migrants using a simple map interface (Ref Aid 2022) and *MigApp* which offers information to aid safe passage from UN Immigration (2022). Within art practice, there are similar interventions using GPS tracking systems and other surveillance technologies which aim to 'reflect and reimagine the social and political landscape of contemporary surveillance.' (Morrison, 2016: 6) The *Transborder Immigrant Tool* project (2007), which was led by Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0 and b.a.n.g. lab, adapted mobile phones into GPS devices that could help immigrants safely cross the US-Mexico border. The phones also delivered poetry to its users with the objective of simultaneously offering survival information and emotional support. The *Transborder Immigrant Tool* was investigated by the US government and never distributed to its intended users, which anchors the fact that this project pushed against the normative intentions of GPS tracking. Of the *Transborder Immigration Tool* project, collaborating professor Ricardo Dominguez writes: 'TBT was, and is, a direct gesture that routes around these border zones and imagines that another world is possible.' (2019: 1057) Projects such as this demonstrate the ability for GPS technologies within performance to become representational tools that subvert their military histories and act as interventions in existing infrastructure.

Before claiming that the *Contagion* app sits within the category of such an intervention, it is useful to look closely at how this app gathers and interprets its GPS data. Although the user is asked to input their name and biographical information into the app, this information is not stored and so once they begin the performance, their footsteps are gathered without any other identificatory data to match up to aside from their current location. The GPS data collected from participants of *Contagion* anonymises the user entirely. In fact, their data is harvested together with all other contributors to form one large data set labelled as the body-as-data. The only individual with any claim to this data set is Tegento. It is his voice, his story and his script which are represented within the app. Through this process of gathering collective data, I argue that *Contagion* continuously re-maps Tegento's body within multiple sites and routes as an ever moving and shifting entity. In its normative state, GPS data collection functions to

pinpoint a 'target' in one space, in real time. The purpose of the technology is to determine exactly where a connected person is and control their movement. By prompting multiple users to connect as one entity and trigger locational data, *Contagion* subverts this purpose and choreographs a multitude of sites in which one person resides. In this way, the data gathered by GPS technology within *Contagion* activates the evidencing of Tegento' body-as-data as no longer being fixed, as having agency. The app itself therefore functions not only as a performative experience, but also as a document which holds within it the data generated from multiple geographically diverse repetitions of a single walking repertoire. This document offers digital proof of Tegento's body-as-data in its becoming-glitch, continuously transforming state.

7. Choreographing Evidence: (Re)organising Space and Time

Over the course of this chapter, I have offered a detailed analysis of the *Contagion* app from its conception, through to building the app, and finally application for real users in relation to the objectives of this thesis. *Contagion* as a concept refers to the spread of movement and ideas across space and I have argued that within *Contagion* the body-as-data has been able to shift between spaces, across sites and through bodies. I have discussed the body-as-data as a digital alter-ego and suggested a framework for this digital alter-ego as a tool within performance. I have considered how this method might encourage a process of Deleuzian 'becoming' and therefore enable the body-as-data to move freely through different identities or multiplicities. I have also shown that lines between the body-as-data alter-ego and the physical self are intentionally blurred within *Contagion*. Analysing the function of the app itself, I have made the case for *Contagion* as a place of transformation, using the glitch as an example of how this transformation is possible. I analysed the glitch in detail with reference to glitch scholars Legacy Russell and Jon Satrum, and provided a framework for this glitch as a device which reveals to the user the system in which they operate. The glitch thus provides an alternative representation of Rasselas as existing outside of this system, as an intervenor, and thus able to move away from authoritarian control. I have also drawn the reader's attention to the act of walking within the work as having the dual purpose of data collection and as a method of sharing embodied knowledge across multiple geographies. The shared walking practice between the participant, Tegento, and his

narrative voice is defined as a device which, through repetition, re-establishes Tegento's body-as-data self outside of the original site of capture. I have drawn from Deirdre Heddon's concept of autotopography to suggest that as participants travel on their walking journey they enact a re-writing of place in which the site of Tegento's journey shifts in location and across time through the bodies of the participants. Paying closer attention to *how* this walking journey is captured within the app, I have analysed the use of GPS tracking on multiple bodies to form a data set for one identity. By examining GPS technology as a piece of invisible infrastructure which controls and regulates movement, I have suggested a framing of *Contagion* as an intervention in said infrastructure. I argue that the 'merging' of data between Tegento and the participants choreographs a world in which Tegento's body-as-data noticeably exists in, and shifts between, multiple places. Ultimately, the analysis above attempts to make some progress in understanding how the relationship between moving bodies and digital regimes of control is recalibrated within *Contagion*.

I have proposed that the points laid out within this chapter all contribute to a wider comprehension of this work of an act of choreographing evidence. I have outlined a series of devices, all of which I suggest contribute to the (re)organisation of space and time within the work, including repetition, the glitch, re-writing of place, digital alter-egos and GPS intervention as an exercise in world-building. As explored throughout this chapter, these devices all serve the purpose of realising an alternative narrative for the body-as-data, and of revealing Tegento's body-as-data within new routes and across multiple bodies in myriad places. These methods not only provide alternative 'between' spaces for the body-as-data but also gather evidence for the body-as-data within these spaces so that it cannot be disregarded. Within the previous chapter I introduced visual methods of choreographing evidence in *Uninvited*, however within *Contagion* this evidence is non-visual. It exists within the bodies of participants who perform a repetition of footsteps as they walk with Rasselas and shift the movement that was originally captured into a multitude of different spaces. It resides within the GPS data collected from these footsteps, and within the app that records, stores, and presents this data. The app itself, available to download and use at any time in any space, becomes a practice of choreographing evidence. By (re)organising space through a choreographic and digital exploration of contagion, the *Contagion* app provides evidence of a different narrative for Tegento's body-as-data, one that moves with

autonomy.

This chapter has sought to illuminate the methods employed within *Contagion* as going some way to challenge the dynamic of othered bodies within digital regimes of control and their representation within performance spaces. However, my analysis is not intended as a 'fix' for the problems examined within this thesis, but instead comes from a place of hope. I hope that this method of practice might begin to mobilise a rethinking of how migrant narratives are crafted. Unless we seek out new modes of practice for othered bodies and the body-as-data, we will always be limited to replicate the structures that oppress othered bodies. It is the responsibility of the artist to re-organise digital and physical spaces to reveal and cement embodied histories, narratives and identities, and to choreograph new pathways which move away from the current limits of systems of control.

The contagion has spread 43 kilometres and continues to rise.

The Body-As-Data: Conclusion

Within this thesis, in response to my main research questions, I have mapped out a series of findings which aim to uncover an approach for movement practice to unlink bodies as moving data from their problematic fixed identities to create new, shifting narratives. This thesis began with a review of current literature surrounding bodies, borders and data which exemplified issues around Eurocentric digital technologies and their consequences for migrating bodies; the privileges underpinning the 21st century cyborg and the ethical implications of moving beyond bodily limits into digital realms. Moving on, five performance practices focusing on migrant bodies/experiences were analysed, allowing for a critical consideration of ideas including: giving voice, unconscious absencing and digital alter-egos. Finally, this thesis provided a critical reflection of two practice-as-research outcomes from collaborations with artist Tom Tegento.

In response to the main questions of this thesis, a process has developed through our practice, which begins to challenge the dynamic between migrating bodies and digital regimes of control through a conscious re-situating of the body across multiple sites utilising digital technologies. Engaging with this process has therefore produced a number of strategies for understanding and working with moving bodies-as-data within performance. The following findings offer practical and conceptual knowledge to contribute to the field of performance on migration in a digital age.

The issues that arose from Chapter 1, i.e. the asymmetrical and oppressive impact of technologies upon migrating bodies, were picked up and re-considered in relation to the use of digital technologies within both *Uninvited* and *Contagion*. Here we created an alternative process which captured bodies in a mode delinked from violence and instead served as an intervention in existing infrastructures of technological surveillance. The drone, rather than enacting violence by means of hindering the movement of migrating bodies, contributed to artistic practice by capturing the re-drawing of borderlines and consequent manipulation of space to allow Tegento to generate an alternative map. *Uninvited* utilised drone capture as a means of revealing the collective histories of migrating bodies, thus rethinking the harmful narrative of bodies captured as data. Similarly, in *Contagion*, GPS technology was employed within the performative app to collect data for Tegento's alter-ego Rasselas, from multiple

bodies in multiple geographies. This function opposes the hindering of movement experienced by migrating bodies-as-data and subverts the technology's historically militaristic aim of pinpointing the location of a single subject framed as 'target'. In this sense, the migrating body-as-data moves beyond the previous restrictions of surveillance technology. The original aim of this practice was to resist capture, yet what has developed is a mode of capture which contributes to the evidencing of a body-as-data which flows through, shifts and adapts to the body's surroundings. This illustrates an approach by which digital performance processes can be utilised to reconceive migrant narratives.

To address the question of developing an approach, I entered into this practice with the hope that the digital alter-ego might offer answers, and so presented this concept to Tegento at initial stages of our research. The creative strategies that developed were a result of this discussion of the alter-ego, and draw from the appreciation that the alter-ego was not only an extension of the self but a linked emancipatory possibility of development of second, third and multiple other selves. Our shared understanding of the alter-ego as the digital 'version' of the migrating body, standing in front of the machine, as a representation of the body-as-data which limits the physical subject's movement, was imperative to how this concept contributed to the work. We understood that if the digital alter-ego had the ability to move freely, then this would also create a sense of autonomy for the body. Within our practice Tegento's use of the alter-ego expanded his ability to shift his narrative within performance. As the practice developed the binaries between body and alter-ego continued to blur, which gave way for multiple narratives to emerge. The digital alter-ego has been present throughout this research and it has been established as a tool for performance which contributes to the autonomous and continuous 'becoming'. Reflecting on the alter-ego, I have perceived that this practice not only presented a space for Tegento to experience his various becomings, but also became a choreographic device which contributes to a wider interpretation of this practice as, what I term, 'choreographing evidence'. This concept involves a drawing, mapping, or otherwise active manipulation of space (as a choreographic device) to reveal and activate an alternative narrative or positioning for the body-as-data.

In partial response to the issues raised within Chapter 2, (that is, the risk of absencing, aestheticizing, and speaking for migrating bodies within performance, otherwise

addressed in my description of methods of working together with Tegento) I took time and care to explore the interpretation of our practice carried out as choreographing evidence, which makes space for voices rather than speaking over others. The practice I have evaluated attempts to allow the body-as-data to move between and across various binaries that might have otherwise rendered them immovable. By reflecting on the creative process in this way, patterns begin to emerge, mainly centred around the autonomy Tegento had in organising space, to shift his narrative and to situate his body in spaces where the collective migrating body-as-data previously lacked free movement. Tegento was able to re-draw, re-map and re-write his body into these spaces. My research questions originally emphasised the idea of *removing* bodies as moving data from their fixed identities, but interestingly the outcome of this research promotes a shifting *into* and *across* multiple identities, rather than a removal. Within *Uninvited*, Tegento re-draws the border; within *Contagion* he re-writes the body-as-data into multiple sites, suggesting, not that Tegento was removed from the identity of the migrating body-as-data, but that he choreographed a space in which the body-as-data had autonomy. The practice of re-drawing and re-writing the body-as-data into numerous spaces, and then activating this revised body through digital means, forms the basis of choreographing evidence. Within my analysis I show that the concept of 'choreographing evidence' significantly recalibrates the relationship between migrating bodies and digital regimes of control by re-situating the body in various places to firstly reveal, and secondly evidence, multiple narratives.

The approach established within this thesis emphasises how othered bodies-as-data can shift through different spaces and how this shifting can be captured in a way that reveals alternative narratives in a process of choreographing evidence. The body-as-data, as Aneta Stojnić maps out, is prevented from free movement, and thus the challenge within this practice has been to find a process which does not replicate this condition within performance. In the preceding chapters I have evaluated the collaborative practice with Tegento to establish an approach which promotes a continuous re-situating of the body, dictated by the body itself, to move between various states of being. These findings produce specific knowledge surrounding the 21st century cyborg within performance and othered bodies in relation to digital surveillance technologies. They demonstrate the ability for othered bodies to manipulate these technologies in a way that provides autonomy and counter lingering violence. This work

also extends existing research on bodies as evidence within performance scholarship by providing a framework for choreographing evidence as a process which reveals and cements alternative narratives.

The claims I have set out above are not intended as a solution, as inevitably there are conditions that remain unmet, but instead they demonstrate the need for change. They firstly provoke an awareness of the body-as-data and its various implications for othered bodies across performance practice and, secondly, offer the beginnings of an approach that addresses and subverts violence and restriction imposed upon the body-as-data. This work demonstrates the ability for performance to navigate migrant narratives in a multitude of ways that actively attempt to weaken the grip of violence on moving migrant bodies-as-data. It also provides the potential for further research into performance on migration within a digital age, for continued scholarship on choreographing evidence using surveillance technologies, the digital alter-ego and acts, and of digital re-mapping, which can be mobilised to challenge regimes of control.

When I set out to conduct this research I intended to use 'immersive' digital technologies such as virtual and augmented realities within my practice with Tegento, as I believed these had the most scope to resituate bodies into other (virtual) spaces. However, the capacity and budget of the project did not allow for this in practice. Now, having specifically focused on surveillance technologies in two small-scale performances presented above, I find that there are questions that remain unanswered concerning such potential re-situation. Further research is needed to broaden the scope of this project and to continue to analyse the kinds of digital performance practice which could engage with choreographing evidence or navigate the body-as-data away from the mode of violence. Since the completion of this research, new modes of enquiry have emerged surrounding surveillance technologies and their impact within performance, and with greater resources I believe it would be valuable to explore the connection between biometric technologies and virtual reality as a site to shift bodies-as-data away from structural violence.

This thesis attempts to move beyond the situation described by Aneta Stojnić as the inscription of bodies into digital regimes of control, by reflecting on the histories and

violence that are carried within bodies across digital borders. Furthermore, it has also explored how those histories continue to be carried into choreographic spaces and what can be done to acknowledge them. As I have demonstrated, bringing the body-as-data into the realm of choreographic enquiry and performance on migration allows artists and scholars to seek out alternative modes of practice, which mobilises bodies as moving data to begin to test the limits of systems of surveillance and control.

The body carries the border with it, but the border can be re-written.

Wordcount: 48,390

Appendices

Appendix A – Transcript of Journal entry

4th June - Studio Practice 1

Form and content

We met for the first time in person today – it was a strange experience after so many video calls, like meeting your pen pal. The evening was mostly made up of conversations. We discussed the research around the project, and I talked about the practical logistics of the space we were performing in. We discussed Rasselas – who he was, why he exists and what Tom wanted to get out of his embodiment. **We discussed the idea that Rasselas is an “inbetween”**. He already exists but we are harnessing him to claim space in loaded sites.

We talked about movement languages as universal and the best way to share stories. Tom discussed his love of physical theatre as a presentation and performance of the self/persona rather than a character. He said he wanted there to be two clear aims of the performance – to give a sense of enjoyment through his cultural lens, and to make people feel uncomfortable enough to change. We talked about what Tom wanted to share – he wanted to bring his cultural performance language into British spaces as he feels like he cannot share this. He said this part of him is forced to be left behind, that in order to integrate he has to “become” British.

He talked about various African traditions where dance is king. He said every situation is like a festival, including births and funerals. We talked in detail about birth, the traditions that come with this – 4 elements. We also spoke about the importance of water. He previously shared a chapter of his book for our app on befriending the river. We discussed why water is such an important image for him. He said it is also going on a journey and it represents freedom. It doesn't stop.

We discussed digital borders, fingerprint recognition, pixels, travelling through digital spaces and the idea of carrying the border with you (from Stojnić)

We talked about the idea of being in-between something.

5th June - Studio Practice 2

Embodying the alter ego

We focused today on the embodiment of Rasselas. I took what Tom discussed, the images he presented, and turned them into improvisational scores. He spent some time in each of these states.

First state – birth, presence, arriving, questioning

2nd state – water, flowing, expanding, moving forward, wings

3rd state – carrying the border, something heavy but invisible, pushing, pressing

Tom shared lots of traditional Ethiopian movement with me. We talked about how different regions have a different style, and that his region focuses a lot on the chest and central body. He said he wants to share some of this traditional movement. We decided to do a sharing when we get to the Turner, as this would have most significance.

We spoke about me being involved. Tom was keen for me to be part of the performance, I think this was kind of a safety net for him, but we decided that I shouldn't be there, **I didn't need to validate his presence.**

Tom told me about his friends that were in trouble, how they struggled to integrate. He told me that once he was granted asylum, he was given 1 short orientation session, and that it wasn't enough. He and his friends all found it so hard to integrate into a society that wasn't like his. He talked about his desire to build more awareness and methods of integration.

6th June - Studio Practice 3

Resistance

I posed some questions to Tom to round off what we had talked about in the previous session:

What images do you want to present?

- The birth of Rasselas, presence in a loaded space
- Freedom of water
- Carrying the border

- Becoming (shifting identity, not just a refugee, not just one story)

What do you want the audience to see/feel?

- Enjoyment
- Empathy
- A sense of opening up, acceptance
- Uncomfortable – get used to it because I am here

What do you want to get from this piece?

- Acceptance
- Connection
- Confidence
- Knowledge
- Space (the most important)

How can we implicate the audience?

- Film them
- Ask them questions

We discussed Rasselas' existence within a performative space, how he is seen by audiences, and what their observations of him does to his empowerment. **We asked how to implicate audiences.** We talked about how we could resist any sense of being boxed/framed. We discussed how to take the audience out of being passive voyeurs, how to incriminate them even. We decided that it would be powerful for his dancing body, in this universal movement language, to speak.

We discussed language and how much to give the audience, how much knowledge to give them by speaking in English and how much to **deny them the privilege of understanding.** We decided that they should have some context, but that these moments shouldn't give them power. So, each of Tom's spoken moments in the first section were written as questions, to implicate the audience. He also frames his first bit of speech in Ethiopian, to deny the audience the power of knowledge and understanding.

We reworked this first section to revolve around the questions we were asking. I suggested using a poignant moment from our previous day's conversation, where Tom

had told me that **the word for refugee is the same as the word for guest in his language**. We talked about traditions of welcoming guests, what this connected to in terms of religion and folk stories etc. We decided from then to give the audiences a series of images:

- Being born from people crossing the border
- Refugee vs guest
- Judgement
- Inbetween

These were framed with movement from more stories that he wanted to share:

Tom told me a story about how some artists came to the jungle while he was there. They were French. They took him to the ministry of culture and he performed there. They treated him like royalty. He loved this moment, like it was a sense of relief from what he was going through. In that moment he did not care how he was seen, how his audience categorised him. He was enjoying himself and using his skills and sharing his culture.

Tom really opened up today. He told me the worst points of his journey, which is something he said he doesn't like to do often as people don't like to hear it, or they don't know how to react. He told me that when he was in Calais he paid someone to take him away. He didn't know what his meant, and so one day he was captured and shoved in what he called a 'fridge' which was a refrigerated lorry. There were a few people in there, but he had no idea what was going on. He said that he thought he had just paid for his own death. The driver got out, called the police who came and opened the doors to shout at him, it was the first time he had seen light in 24 hours. He was taken for questioning. He was taken to an underground car park which he had never seen before, he thought it might be a British prison.

We also made the last section. This felt like the hardest section to make as it was a culmination of everything we spoke about. At this point, I felt like the working methods we had set up (form and content), became a little restricting. Tom was almost looking to me or relying on me to find some form for this content that he wanted to share. So I decided to push this section back to basics. We looked at what we wanted to share

and found some images connected to this. They were mostly about his journey to the UK.

Watching it, I felt like we were focusing purely on Tom's journey. Rasselas had disappeared. We had forgotten that this was supposed to be a becoming. It was about everything that made Rasselas and everything that made Tom. We talked about this, and decided to note down everything that Tom felt he was in that moment. He spoke these words during his movement score of the images that represent his journey. At the end he suddenly said

"I am everything" which felt like a moment of Rasselas breaking through, finding his empowerment.

We also shared some traditional Ethiopian dance and song, that Tom really wanted to share.

13th June - Rehearsal on Location

We went to Margate today to look at the spaces we were performing in. It was the hottest day of the year and the beach was packed. It suddenly felt a million miles away from the pictures I sent Tom previously. It had gone from a beautiful performance space to a tourist spot. But, at least we had a big audience!

We rehearsed at Nayland, and remarked the connection with TS Elliot's Waste Land. We also tried a little bit of the journey, which suddenly felt huge and epic. It was going to take him so long to travel across that space. The piece had transformed into a durational performance, and a feat of endurance. We looked at his physicality on the sand, and what it felt like to carry this invisible force.

We got an ice cream after rehearsals and discussed Tom's future (he's just been accepted onto the MA course at Kent). He said something that really struck a chord with me. He said "there's a really small part of me that when I perform, I switch to being "British" Tom than "refugee" Tom". He said it helps him with his confidence, that British Tom has the right to be on the stage and command his audience, whereas refugee Tom is below his audience, a second-class citizen. He said that within this piece he feels like he is beginning to present both Toms now...

Reflecting on this, am I asking him to perform something close to him in a space that he is not comfortable to share it in? We spoke about this - he wants to share his culture. How can the alter-ego help to bridge this gap?

20th June – LIVE PERFORMANCE

We live streamed this performance, trying to capture those who were looking on at Tom to implicate them. This is possibly a more difficult task than anticipated when the audience is just passers by – there are questions surrounding those who do not want to be filmed and those who reacted negatively, getting their consent etc.

The first image of Tom singing - was seen as powerful. Taking space. Finding a space for his heritage.

The first section on the Rock Shelter. This was sort of contextualising his journey. I questioned whether it was needed. It felt a little basic in terms of content. Also for this section I felt like I directed him quite heavily. I would give him notes and try to shift his movement to a more 'interesting' place – was this my right / my role? I definitely steered this section.

The walk was by far the most powerful image. This started as an image of “carrying the border” that Tom felt encompassed much of what we had talked about and we had never seen it all the way through. The actions he took imprinted into the sand and created a line that was drawn across the beach as he made his journey, which took around 45 minutes as he was moving so slowly. It became both a piece of durational performance and also land art. It reminded me of Richard Long’s work. I spoke to Tom afterwards and he said the walk was trance-like, it made him think about everything he had been through up until that point, and everything he was. The earth, ie the sand, became part of the work. Tom became the earth.

At the Turner on the Terrace – this piece felt the most awkward for me. His performance of the Masinko and the traditional dance piece would have been fine on their own. I don’t know if we needed the speech with the words. I think I spoon-fed the audience. Gave them too much power in knowing what our intentions were.

There was also a big question mark around participation. Tom said “you can join me if you want” but we did not curate the participation and so there was not really a moment for the participation to begin. I think perhaps he was looking to me to invite people but I was conscious of my positioning within the piece.

The performance happening in the entrance to the Turner was a really interesting image, but also it still felt like we were outside of the gallery. The way this part of the piece was framed almost felt like we were busking or entertaining the attendees of the gallery while they ate their lunch. It was reminiscent of performers coming up to people while they ate in restaurants – street performers or buskers. This relates to a nomadic way of life. What are the connotations of this? Tom said this too, but he also said that is sort of a traditional way/space to perform in his culture. Lots of questions now...It no longer felt like Tom had power in that moment. It felt Minstrel like?!?! We need to enter into the space or be invited into the space!!

During the performance we flew a **drone** over Tom’s head which captured incredible images of the path he created across the beach. This capturing of his body by a piece of technology which is primarily used for warfare was an interesting addition that I had not anticipated. It has been suggested that we take this footage and create some kind of showing or installation within the Turner. I have questions about how this is presented to an audience. How Tom’s image is placed within the gallery space, is he absented? Or is he liberated?

Talk to supervisors about this.

Main questions

- Where was Rasselas? Is he needed?
- Did Tom have power/agency on the Terrace? Minstrel-like
- What did the involvement of drones do to the piece?

Rasselas

Conversation with Tom – he feels like Rasselas is needed. Rasselas is there so that Tom can present these things. The way we framed him meant that Rasselas is like a tool rather than a mask. Creating Rasselas meant that Tom felt like he could enter that

space and his embodiment could thrive. He does not necessarily perform the alter-ego but he uses him.

The Turner performance

still this body is not allowed all the way in to the space. It is only now that we are being allowed in to the space. There are still issues around othered bodies being excluded from certain spaces and the politics and choreography of space in that way. So, what are the conditions for 'transformation' that are laid out? ie opening/inviting of space? When was he allowed in? What conditions have to be met for his body to be allowed inside? Also the binary of inside and outside is unnecessary? There are many outside spaces that are inside, etc etc. What kind of space does Tom have? What is he given?

The drone image:

a drone, a machine for warfare and something that is used at border controls and used violently, capturing Tom's artistic journey in such a way that might be transformative, shows that there are alternative methods of body data capture. Abstract machine collecting the data of Tom's performance. The body as data here is transformative because these images prompted a conversation in which Tom has been invited into the Turner to present the footage.

APP Development

Most of our conversations around the app building have been over Whatsapp video call, so I have not felt the need to reflect until the app has taken shape.

An important note when considering the function of the application: In order to make sure that it is not unbalanced (like case study #3 Beanotherlab), the user cannot be the only one who benefits from the app. Eg in Beanother lab the user got to change their perspective and see through the eyes of a refugee, but in doing so the identity of the refugee became 'fixed' further into refugee status.

What kind of app would use the user? How can it reflect border technology or technology that is an oppressing force? Came up with the idea of tracking their GPS, and using this to spread the alter-ego's presence around the world. In a sense, we are

using them to travel, to move across borders without the restriction of border technologies.

Tom's idea – inconvenience the user of the app as well as use them. Ask them pointless questions like he was asked when he arrived in the UK. Ask where they are going, where they were born etc, for no reason.

Although both of us are more comfortable in physical performance, we decided to go with an audio walk/performance as this will be the most straightforward option for building an app. Tom wrote a book – could a chapter from this book become part of the script for the audio performance?

Some Questions that I started with and Tom's responses:

What is it that you would like to share with this work?

An experience of a refugees? I could use my novel

What is that experience? Is it a story? Is it your experience of existing in the UK right now? Is it a history of your journey?

Both like remembering all the way through?

Do you want to use this as a way to share the other elements of your identity that may have been lost, to disrupt the eurocentric point of view of British people and transport them to another place that we talked about before? *Definitely, let's.*

How would you like to share this? I.e. through words, movement, neither? This is probably most relevant for the live site specific piece. *Everything. Sharing movement*

What language do you want to share? E.g. written language (i.e English, Ethiopian etc) but also do you want to use movement language?

Yes.

Data language? Yes.

Do you want to include things that are non-visual? *Yes, songs.*

Script:

Tom found a section of his book for the app. He wants to present the chapter as *Rasselas*, as if he is reading the book too. This means we have 3 different elements of Tom: Himself, *Rasselas*, and Alem (from the novel chapter).

There is a running thread through all of this. The idea of walking. The app itself needs the user to walk. Tom walked when he was creating the work. The character Alem walks.

Elements to draw from:

Water

Walking

The Space for Rasselas to reach the user

Appendix B – Code of Practice

Code of Practice The Body as Data Sidonie Carey-Green & Tom Tegento 2021

This code of practice outlines responsibilities & behaviours of both individuals in regard to our collaboration and process of making performance work. They will also act as a code of ethics to safeguard both artists.

As artists working together on ‘the body as data’ project, we commit to the following principles:

- We will work without hierarchy, as equals and collaborators
- We will be prepared to work, to play, to experiment with our craft.
- Our studio is a safe space, where ideas are welcomed, and thoughts can be discussed with the knowledge that once we leave the studio they will not be shared.
- The idea of creating a safe space is challenging, we will commit to create a brave space, to challenge ourselves.
- One person’s reality or truth does not negate another’s.
- We will check in at the start and end of each session
- We will care for our bodies, warm up and stretch to prevent injury.
- If you are finding the process intense and you need to take a break, say let’s take a break. This will always be welcomed.
- If material arises that is uncomfortable or painful for either of us we will inform the other and take a moment to move away from this, and take a small break inside the studio.
- If you wish to withdraw from this project, you may inform me at PEWE009@live.rhul.ac.uk by 12th June 2021.

Signed:

Signed:

Appendix C – Privacy Policy

The information we collect within the welcome section of this app is not stored anywhere, and as such it will not be shared with anyone. It doesn't mean anything. We are only asking for this data to inconvenience you. We don't care about your answers, only where you are going. We don't care where you have come from to get to this point. Our sole interest is in what you are about to do, and the steps you are about to take

In order to use the app and interact with the performance, you are consenting to us collecting your GPS data in order to track your location. We will use this data to provide accurate readings on your walking contribution to the contagion. We will also add your total kilometres walked to the overall total of every user. This data is for our eyes only and will not be shared with any other parties.

Appendix D – Script from Contagion

Hello? Are you there? (clapping, finger tapping) It's Rasselas. I need you to walk for me. Eh.. I will keep you company. A! Let me remind you of the famous African proverb, about walking before we start, aha... "Start walking slowly, if you want to go farther, walk fast if you want to go faster," kinda like that. I need you to get me as far as you can, we are doing this together. (Pause) I like walking outside from my small flat, it gives me a sense of freedom. Little workout, my body needs it. I hope you feel the same way. Ready to loosen up!

Growing up in Africa and living here, This individualistic lifestyle plus the Lockdown? it's lonely for everyone. I mean home is becoming a prison for most of us, especially me. I mean, yeah, I am a refugee!

(Water Escape sound)

Observe everything around you as much as you can, What can you see? Can you feel the breeze? I can. I can feel the air from the water by the river side. I'm walking along. Quietly settled water, the ducks swimming. Those majestic swans always in couples. I can feel the breath of the plants as well. While we start our journey, I'm going to ask you to vary your pace at points. I need you to allow me into your space as I tell you about mine. Bend your head down, make a very slow and short pace walk until you feel warm, then go a little faster. It shouldn't be that easy, you have to WANT it before you become free to let go. We can try that again like... ready, steady, go... again, seriously ready, steady and let's go... And listen here.

Ah... (Jogging)

Watch over your breath, and your mind. Breathe in, and out. Listen to my voice. Then explore your hemisphere, the energy around you, the voice of nature, people and everything they made. Before you see it in your eyes try to see it in your mind, first. You will be surprised, you will fall in love with it, trust me. You can see the collection of all past experiences and what tomorrow would be. You may see just images - that works too, that's how visions start! An image of a road straight ahead. Nice image!

I like maps. It can be your friend. Believe me every way leads into something. So, while we walk, make sure you have a friend like me or maybe you and yourself. There's nothing better than befriending oneself! I had the river befriend me once, I'll tell you about it if you want. I have a lot of experiences in walking. Sometimes, I think of people on my way. My old friends. How heavy their experiences were. How sad to see their life wasted in war. How devastating to see our hope and destiny cancelling each other. How hard is to say I'm free. I see it all walking in front of my eyes.

"CHAPTER TEN...

Following the Nile...

Alem is not feeling alone yet.

He feels part of nature now, surrounded by all this silent beauty. Right: cliff.

Left: river.

Daf... daf... fuua... da... (floodwaters sound)

Looking up he sees a soft white cloud with a clear blue sky as a backdrop; he imagines divine figures within the clouds. Across each of the river's obstructions, little fountains dance in the sunlight. Sometimes within the fountains and under the clouds he sees a tiny rainbow. Within a rainbow he sees a flag and within the flag, his mother and more visions. He sees them together, himself, his mother and father, and Aba Tso. They're within him. The colours are mainly green, blue, yellow, purple, and red, the colours of the Ethiopian flag, the Eritrean flag - African flags. He looks up to the sky and they remind him of that promise, the divine

oath God gave to Noah , an oath that if we can learn, we can find our blessings and grace from it – in between the sky, the fountains and the mountains. Meanwhile down on the narrow road he keeps on going thinking of all this. Aligned with his new companion, the Nile, he increased his pace walking in strangeness, in desperation but also in hope.

'It's all for you', he said to himself. He missed somebody else's company so he made himself his own company.

'It's all for you, my love. Freedom. Even if I've never known you.'

Freedom – He befriended the Nile – it became his best friend, at least for then, far away from their homeland by now. He looked back as far as he could to the distant horizon, the sun beating down on the sand. He recited a sad lament for his motherland as was his custom. Back home, back in time, it was deep in his culture, a poetic culture, to express ideas on love – country – freedom – a precise sonnet!

'Greetings'

'Africa tabetsih edewiha :

havéEgziabhier. 'Africa stretches her hand: only to God.'

The river beats

'Riv... riv... rrivera... amon!

Doff...daff... buff...'

Alem sings

Abayyy... mola Alu (2x) Zares

yalamelu...

Singing together, they keep going – side by side, talking in a language no one can understand easily. He addressed the river, his strange friend who couldn't stop flowing forward and singing its own refugee lament. He asked questions as if he would get the answer from this river.

"Where are you running to, anyway?"

"Better if you first ask me why" "Okay, why?"

"I go wherever it takes me to be with my love."

Crazy river. Can a river know love? Maybe. If it can run and can sing, can flow and have a life, then why not love? Well everything has something to hate and love he mused.

"Who is your love?"

"Freedom."

"Uuwaa!!! You have been running throughout those millions of years since you were born, and have you ever met your 'Love'?"

"Nay! ... I'm still searching." "When will you give up trying?" "Never."

He sang the river's song – a country song with the sound of the river as a backdrop.

Abay, bimola

Chewatachn liela.'

"Thank you, you are soothing me well."

"Hey, don't worry. That's what friends are for."

They smiled at each other and kept on going faster than before.

Until the next night and the night after, they kept smiling and keep going on."

....

(Interval from the narrative)

How are you doing? I can feel us getting closer now, I'm collecting each step. The contagion spreads as you continue to walk. (Drinking water.) Water is life. Water is life. Let's keep on going.

(Escape water)

"When the going gets tough the Nile keeps on going. The river, still flowing and smiling.

Alem,whistling. 'Wisslllll....'

(Raya song)

'Dadadaaadaa...

Dufdufgda...

Da..'

Singing together and flowing along together, going down to the unknown until another night and morning passes and then on again and again. He felt tired.

It's morning again. Alem realised that the further from home he travelled, the faster he went - to nowhere, but searching for a destination. He couldn't deny the aching inside. After passing numerous hills and valleys he was now walking on a path along long, flat barren land that stretched far ahead of him. It was boring but he just kept on walking.

"Aa... I can't go any faster"

"It doesn't matter as long as you keep walking." "How do you manage to handle it?"

"I just keep flowing, as I said. Keep going, you will find yourself somewhere you can't even imagine."

"Yeah, I'll keep going. Have I any choice?" He said it as if no one could stop him anymore. He is on his own for sure. Nothing is easier than to be on one's own.

"I'll keep going as long as I possibly can". He encouraged himself.

But he knew it was not possible for him to flow like the river because he had legs, legs that tire. He could only walk. He wished he could flow or even fly. He wanted to be a river or a bird which of course was impossible for him. He began to feel really tired and his thoughts grew ever more fanciful. The dying sun was giving way to the new, bright, full moon. The cycle of life: day in, day out, the sun gives way to his friend the moon. He had a deep sense of joy; in his solitude he wondered at the fidelity of the moon, constant as time itself - a joy without human intervention.

Unable to continue further, Alem sat down between his two friends and enjoys his rest in between natures. The moon is his queen and the magnificent waters of the river reflect her beauty. Within a deep blue frame against the background of the dark sky, the darkness magnified her beauty. The moon and the river: he wondered how those two natures support each other continuously without a single day of fighting. Peace had come to him and he started to be lulled by the marvellous natural symphony of the river which led him to a deep, deathlike sleep. Such beauty it seems was the meaning of his life, nature in all its hues of green and yellow. At every page of his life he had admired nature, imagining himself in an enormous green room, the nuptial room. He dreamed of a green horse – a unicorn with a green horn with its mane blown by the green wind – green blood that runs with green life and green music performing in his green adventure. His soul was soothed and strengthened by the green. When he thought of green he thought of a world without war, no anger, no poverty or thirst. He thought only of festivities in a green field. In a garden with a free - spirited dove, he can see things.

He sees beyond his imagination as if a movie were projected on the sky, laying down on his back staring at the sky. He sees a world beyond that which anyone has ever seen, a world beyond all this trouble, where no one can be stopped from loving, keep going, living a life as God has intended it to be - a happy life with families around, a life where no one has control over his life but God himself." (T. Tegento, 2015: p81-89)

...

Now, let's leave from our story and come to where we are. I can see you have moved forward a long way, thank you for that. keep going until you feel you have achieved something, your goal. You will know once you get there. To see yourself ahead, to be the best of yourself, to compete with no one but yourself first. To live a life of your own. To line up your road! Or it could be just to get home in peace and happiness. Keep walking until you feel the freedom of doing all you always want to do. Keep going! Everything and everyone connected. Me and you are now the same, like one data! I move, run, and walk with you now!

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