



Promiscuous Emplacements

Performing with marginal urban places

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2022

growing
orientation
tools

uncover

WAITING ABOUT PRACTICE

For the lovers, friends and teachers who have passed during the five years of this project,
whose lifeforces have impacted on these pages and performances:

Nancy Stark Smith

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Jackie Lang

bell hooks

Doran George

Laurent Berlant

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Abstract

Promiscuous Emplacements investigates more-than/human relationality through performance with outdoor urban environments across Tāmaki Makaurau. I encounter hidden, overlooked, and neglected crevices and corners of the city – marginal urban places that range from forgotten alleyways and uncared-for stairwells to unnoticed bushy corners of city parks. These places support my reimagination of anthropocentric habits and narratives in and through choreographic practice. I bring together discourse regarding transmateriality, queer concepts, and Indigenous materialities specific to Aotearoa. Developing a *queer*trans/materialist* approach, I position the tentacularity and promiscuity of queer and trans matters as central to a *Choreoqueering* of performance. The inquiry is based on a series of live works and collaborative processes, developing approaches for more-than/human kinship, intimacies and modes of communing.

The methodology of *Choreoqueering* is comprised of five perverse techniques – *scat-tending*, *flotsy*, *bttm//bottom*, *queer clean(s)ing* and *queer napping*. *Scat-tending* is a somatic process of at-tending marginal urban places, whilst *flotsy* is a playful non-representational mode of performance documentation, and *bttm//bottom* centres a friendship-based take on collaborative practice. Collaborations activate everyday tasks in performance, such as cleaning, resting, and napping as *queer*trans rituals of care and protection*. Questions and propositions are generated through practice, enacting an affective and haptic, critical and sensuous research-creation. Key performance events explore the possibilities of intimacies with place in *Queer Dating Sites* (2018); the face-down-bum-up queer sensing of subterranean realities in *Queer Failure Walk* (2017) and *Bttm Methodology* (2019); the feltness and affect of queer*trans time in *queer walk-naps* (2020); and trans forms of *human*plant communing in ill grow back* (2020) and *Songs with Birds* (2022). A queer/ing of Somatics is key to my research, along with the development of modes of Pākehā response-ability through performance in the context of Aotearoa (Bell and Ream 2021). This research proposes a re/generative queer*trans practice that invites the connective reach of *, and the grounding effect of /, to uplift rainbowy lives and *co-shimmer* with marginal urban places.

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Attestation of Authorship

I, val smith, declare that this submission is my own work, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where otherwise indicated). This exegesis contains no material that has been submitted previously by me, in whole or in part, for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Co-Production Declaration For a Pathway Three PhD

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Role in the co-production of the Candidate: co-creators

The Co-produced Work

Please specify the artistic component of this thesis that has involved co-production or creative collaboration and the title and public presentation details of the co-produced work.

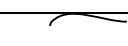
Title and Date of production: ill grow back (2020); Songs with Birds (2022); Bttm Manifesto (2018); Bttm Methodology (2019)

The Co-producers

Name	Nature of Contribution and how you would like it attributed (ie sound recordist)	Name of Organisation
Forest V Kapo	co-creator (ill grow back, Songs with Birds)	artist
Richard Orjis	co-creator (Bttm Manifesto, Bttm Methodology)	artist

Certification of Co-producers

The undersigned hereby certify that the above statement correctly reflects the nature and extent of the PhD candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the collaborators.

Name	Signature	Date
Richard Orjis		7/6/2022
Forest V Kapo		7/6/2022

Glossary

Asterisking — a somatic attunement, a seeing-feeling perversion of Navel Radiation, enables a transit*ioning

bttm//bottom — a friendship-based approach to collaboration

Choreoqueering — a queer/ing form of choreography, has the potential to enact change through performance research

co-shimmering — the effervescence formed when plural more-than/human energetic systems mingle and dance

flotsy — a mechanism for anarchiving performance, a feed forward tool, a multimodal approach

gayYay — a momentary celebration of this queer*trans life

human*plant communing — intimate and entangled relations between human and plant

more-than/human — imagining a world beyond human/nonhuman separation, the slash of more-than/human acknowledges the settler-colonial lineage of white philosophies that keep separate human and nature, human and queer

queer*trans/materiality — a lens that encompasses the promiscuous, tentacular, inventive, proliferative, and perverse nature of matter and self

Queer Clean(s)ing — ritual acts of slowly and softly sweeping and cleaning

Queer Napping — rejects neoliberal underpinnings of white dance by inviting a ‘productive nothingness’, a dreamy space for doing fuck-all

scat-tending — somatic process that at-tends the uuddd, to value and uplift their vitalities and powers; tongue-in-cheek reference to the scientific sentiment of ‘scat’

sensorial perversity — a felt queer*trans knowing, queer and trans acts are innately perverse and unnatural, involuting and unpredictable in substance

Slashing — builds a framework of Pākehā response-ability, perversion of Cellular Breathing

the uuddd — that which is considered to be unworthy, unvaluable, dirty, disgusting, or dangerous by the three Cs colonisation, capitalism and christianity

transit*ioning — what it means to be transgender and migrating between lands, places, and cultural spaces; a tentacular practice (radiating and integrating gender variance)

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Performance events

The following performance events have been sketched and tested in this research project. I discuss invited participants in the body of the exegesis. All events are in Tāmaki Makaurau unless stated otherwise. All are authored by me, or in collaboration with Richard Orjis or Forest V Kapo. Starting with the most recent, events include:

Songs with Birds, 15 July 2022, collaboration with Forest V Kapo and Kyro Selket. Zoom happening, AUT campus.

ill grow back, 3 December 2020, collaboration with Forest V Kapo, Herald Theatre, Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa (EDWA).

Scat Hunt for *Queer Pavilion*, February 2020, Rangipuke Albert Park.

queer walk-naps, February 2020, for About Walking, curated by Melissa Liang and Christina Houghton in association with Te Uru Gallery, Te Wai Ōrea Western Springs Park, 'Heron Park', 'Ken Maunder Park', Lopdell House rooftop.

Sex on Site with Air and Light, 24 January 2020, group exhibition curated by Victoria Wynne-Jones, Enjoy Gallery, Te Whanganui-a Tara.

Queer Napping Workshops, November-December 2019, Bannerman Road, Morningside; Te Wai Ōrea Western Springs Park; 'Coyle Park' in Point Chevalier. Supported by Auckland Council's Creative Communities.

Untitled Arts Foundation Performance, Arts Foundation Ball, August 2019, Shed 10, Auckland city waterfront. Supported by Arts Foundation.

Offline Onsite Hookups (v2), July 2019, ImpulsTranz Performance night, curated by Keith Hennessy, UnPlugged Bar, Vienna. Supported by Impulstanz Festival.

Bttm Manifesto, readings occur in various places, the first was in December 2018 for *18 Horas Entre Nosortos*, other iterations include July 2019, for IDOCDE, in Vienna.

Offline Onsite Hookups (v1), February 2019, for Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa, a weedy bank adjacent to Basement Theatre carpark.

Bttm Methodology, February 2019, 3-day collaborative project with Richard Orjis, Auckland Pride Festival, Artspace Aotearoa's carpark.

Walk of Shame, December 2018, collaborative event with Richard Orjis and participants of Queer Reading Group, locations proximal to the periphery of AUT's city campus.

sex/es on site (v2), June 2018, 125 Diverse Genders and Sexualities Symposium, Te Whare Tapere Iti, Waikato University, Kirikiriroa.

sex/es on site (v1), February 2018, for Under Your Skin You Look Divine, Auckland Pride Festival, Basement Adult Shop & Cruise Club.

Queer Dating Sites, February 2018, Auckland Fringe Festival, AUT City campus.

Queer Failure Walk, December 2017, collaborative event with Richard Orjis and participants of Queer Reading Group, locations in Rangipuke and along Grafton gully and ridgelines.



Introduction

Welcome to these performance pages. Thank you for arriving and gathering with us in our more-than/human inquiry entitled Promiscuous Emplacements. We begin with acknowledging the Indigenous lands and peoples we stand with and on.¹

Elders past, present, and future, rightful guardians of place, safe keepers of humanity. We give thanks and acknowledge
we welcome the powers of skies, stars, winds, and clouds that protect and guide us.
We invite the waters that give us life – the oceans, rivers, harbours, and rains - and
to all the gentle folk of the forests – the birds, insects, faeries and fungi that
envelop, cleanse, and connect us.

practice notes 1: 2022

Promiscuous Emplacements welcomes all of whom and what you are, and how you have arrived here – we welcome the callers and diviners, the relaxers and invigorators, activating in whatever way that you do. Apart-together in these estranging times, let's draw together with/in these pages and places. We are connected as more-than/human in the now with our ancestors, and ancestral lands, for now, for the void, and for the futurisms we call forth.



Figure 1: val smith, *flotsy cycles*, 2018.

¹ I pay respects to tangata whenua within the bright lands of Tāmaki Makaurau – Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei, Te Kawerau a Maki, Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara, and all other tribes affiliated to the places where this research was conducted (central Auckland city, central-west suburbs, outer-western suburbs, and north-west suburbs). I recognise my privilege to engage in dance and performance practice on these lands. I acknowledge the life, spirit, and power of the te taiao protected and cared for by tangata whenua as kaitiaki. I pay homage to mana motuhake and the legacy of whenua.

I am Pākehā², queer and trans non-binary.³

Drawing attention to these identifying positions in the introductory pages marks the drive of this inquiry. Signifiers of who and what I am, 'Pākehā', 'queer', and 'trans non-binary' are understood as alive material-discursive processes (becomings), rather than necessarily of fixed identification categories. An appreciation of cultural multiplicity and partiality. I activate these concepts through this performance research. As practitioner-researcher, I invite and allow the creative as well as the critical possibilities of the language to seep, unfold and enmesh through this work in ways that are open, surprising and unpredictable.

Being Pākehā speaks to my non-Indigenous relationship with Māori land; a positioning that is intimately entangled with Te Tiriti o Waitangi, one of the founding documents of Aotearoa/New Zealand.⁴ As such, my practice operates within the jurisdiction of Te Tiriti. This is a research position that is not taken for granted, requiring of me critical and inter-personal unpacking.⁵ I move through urban environments of Tāmaki Makaurau with various advantages passed to me through the ongoing processes of settler-colonisation. I look at the intersections of being queer and white⁶, working to develop a settler awareness of racism, supremacist attitudes, privilege, bias, and fragility.⁷ I engage with the notion of response-ability (Haraway 2016) through my performance-making, as Tangata Tiriti, a treaty partner.⁸

I have been living and working within the central city and inner-western suburbs of Tāmaki Makaurau for much of this project, and currently reside in south Kaipara, a second research

² I am a non-Māori migrant of UK-European descent living in Aotearoa.

³ I mark my non-heterosexual sexuality as queer, and use trans as a broad umbrella term, which refers to anyone who isn't cis. I use both trans non-binary and trans to broadly mark my gender experience.

⁴ Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed in 1840 by representatives of the British crown and some Māori chiefs. Māori did not cede sovereignty. "Meaning of the Treaty/Waitangi Tribunal," Waitangi Tribunal Te Rōpū Whakamana i te Tiriti o Waitangi, accessed August 14, 2021, <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/treaty-of-waitangi/meaning-of-the-treaty/>.

⁵ As tauīwi (non-Māori) and Tangata Tiriti (people of the treaty) I work to better understand Pākehātanga. I examine the ways that settler-colonial thinking plays out within the fields of dance and contemporary performance.

⁶ I refer to 'white' through this thesis, a shorthand for 'white settler society', which refers to a group of societies that sprang up because of "the great European expansion" into other regions of the globe, including Aotearoa and lands referred to as Australasia. Morna, Anthony, "White Settler Society," Encyclopedia.com, accessed May 23, 2022, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/white-settler-society>.

⁷ 'White supremacy', 'white privilege' 'white bias' and 'white fragility' are notions that recur throughout the thesis, paying attention to the trace and meaning of whiteness as a colonial system (Nayak, 2007). Also see Saad (2018) on white supremacy; DiAngelo (2018) on white fragility; Bonds & Inwood (2016) on white privilege.

⁸ Tangata Tiriti are understood as active non-Māori treaty partners (where Pākehā is more a passive term). My use of the term 'Tangata Tiriti' looks to affirm Tino Rangatiratanga and honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

site. Many iwi⁹ have links to the whenua of these places I engage.¹⁰ My intention is to contribute to the knowledge field of contemporary performance practice (local and global), informed by the cultural context of Aotearoa, through my Pākehā, queer and trans non-binary lens.

Ko val smith toku ingoa.

I recognise how the names of peoples and places (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) contribute to a sense of belonging and cultural connectedness.¹¹ My own genealogical lines connect me back to the lands and cultures of England and Ireland.¹² Migratory disconnection, however, disrupts any grounded sense of me now 'belonging to' these lands of my ancestors. Through settler-colonisation, my ancestors claimed a space for my family and me to be living in Aotearoa.¹³ A yearning to feel connected and belong to ancestral lands endures.¹⁴ This desire informs my inquiry into what it means to be a better Tangata Tiriti, guided by the suggestions of Tina Ngata (2020), an advocate for Indigenous and environmental rights.¹⁵

My genealogy is more than a blood-line conception of origin however. My conception of family embraces chosen and spiritual relatives, friends, lovers, and collaborators (not limited to the human), and includes queer ancestors and transcestors who I relate to. I call on this family as a *creative queer kinship network*, responding to Donna Haraway's call for the urgent

⁹ Iwi denotes an extended kinship group, nation, people. Te Aka Māori Dictionary, 'Iwi', Te Aka Māori Dictionary, 1 June 2022, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=iwi>

¹⁰ 'Whenua' and 'lands' have varying impacts; whenua holds an Indigenous Māori view, and lands a settler-colonial perspective. I use the terms alongside each other with a comma between (whenua, lands), to indicate and respect the cultural difference of ontologies.

¹¹ My English ancestors immigrated to (and colonised) Australia many generations back on my mother's side. On my paternal side, my Irish grandfather arrived by ship and settled in Aotearoa (date unknown) living and breeding in Pirongia (on the lands of Waikato, Maniapoto), later in Ōtāngaroa (on the lands of Ngāpuhi), then Te Awaroa, Helensville.

¹² My surname connects me to my grandfather, known as Thomas James Smith who sailed to Aotearoa from lands referred to by settlers as Montana, on Turtle Island, United States of America, around 1921 (no records of boat name). He took on the name Smith to cover over his life in Turtle Island as Owen McCabe. Smith was his mother's maiden name. He left behind a wife and children there who still carry and pass on his given surname McCabe. We are beginning a journey of reconnection of the Smiths and McCabes between Turtle Island and Aotearoa. These names Smith and McCabe are embedded in a legacy of loss, denial, and migratory re-settling that links me to County Cavan in Ireland (and the Celtic spirituality of those lands and peoples).

¹³ With huge thanks to my cousin, Gaye Simms (née Smith) for pursuing Pop's paper trail through many years of research, digging and DNA testing (Ancestry DNA). Through Gaye's research, some of the secrets of our grandfather 'Thomas James Smith' were brought to light.

¹⁴ I seek out pagan spirituality and Irish Celtic systems of knowing through this study seeking a better understanding of my way of seeing, engaging, and making meaning of the world.

¹⁵ Ngata, Tina, "What's Required from Tangata Tiriti," Tina Ngata, December 20, 2020, <https://tinangata.com/2020/12/20/whats-required-from-tangata-tiriti/>

task of “making kin, not babies” (2016).¹⁶ It is this expanded network of multispecies kin, that I draw strength and support from in this research project.



Figure 2: Queer Reading Group, *Walk of Shame*, 2018.
Image: val smith



Figure 3: Queer Reading Group, *Walk of Shame*, 2018.
Image: val smith

In my work and life, I have felt drawn to hidden, overlooked, and neglected urban places, things, beings and entities. Places I am attracted to are often positioned off to the side of busy centres in the city, small and out of view, or at the edge of more prominent, popular, or well-defined urban environments. These *marginally* located city places include forgotten alleyways, uncared-for stairwells, unlit and unkept courtyards, the edges of architectural forms, and unnoticed bushy corners in recreational parks. I am drawn to certain qualities common to these places: dirty, dark, discarded, dangerous, disgusting, and decaying; elements that excite, and interest me. Largely, these qualities relate to what is considered unnatural, shameful, undesirable, or distasteful by the Pākehā settler-coloniser culture of ‘New Zealand’, drawing a relationship to marginalised genders, bodies and sexualities.

In this project, I pay attention to how I am orienting toward these locations that I call ‘marginal urban places’. I notice and respond to my desire to care for and become physically

¹⁶ Haraway, Donna, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, First Edition edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2016), 159.

and emotionally closer to the more-than/human things, beings, entities, forces, elements, and structures that reside in each place, as well as architectural and atmospheric elements. I nurture a care-full awareness of how qualities of the dirty, dark, discarded, dangerous, disgusting, and decaying, and these more-than/human elements and marginal urban places are often concealed or ignored by settler-colonial, christian, and capitalist cultures. My inquiry develops an ethics of care within this context of white hegemonies in relation to queerness and transness.

I recognise that British colonisation intruded onto Māori lands and Te Ao Māori¹⁷, pressing many binaries such as man/woman, nature/human, and nature/queer.¹⁸ Politician, and scholar Elizabeth Kerekere (2017) asserts that takatāpui are whanau,¹⁹ reclaiming whakapapa²⁰ rights and sovereignty for takatāpui as a culturally located identity. The work being done by Kerekere, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (2001, 2016)²¹, and others, has re-established takatāpui as a precolonial and traditional identity, uplifting perspectives on diverse genders and sexualities, which were often censored by colonists.

My own Pākehā story of growing up in a homophobic and transphobic christian household, provides an affective backdrop to this inquiry, as does wider histories of pathologisation and demonisation of queer, intersex and transgender folk. Moving through the city terrains of Tāmaki Makaurau, I experience everyday harassment and attacks against my non-cis, non-straight way of being in the world.²² These experiences are complicated by how they intersect with my Pākehā privilege, class, and able-bodied advantages.

¹⁷ The Māori world.

¹⁸ I challenge the ongoing imposition of primarily British-Victorian attitudes to sexuality and morality on Indigenous sexualities and genders of Aotearoa. I recognise the harmful impacts of those impositions, and acknowledge the thinking, feelings, and actions of Indigenous Māori, Pasifika, and POC people who have worked to counter this in Aotearoa.

¹⁹ Kerekere, Elizabeth, "Part of The Whānau: The Emergence of Takatāpui Identity - He Whāriki Takatāpui" (Wellington, Victoria University of Wellington, 2017), <http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/handle/10063/6369>

²⁰ A whakapapa paradigm is articulated by Ocean Pipeka Mercier (Ngāti Porou) in the recent collaborative book "Imagining Decolonisation" (2020), meaning to have "deep connections to relationships with and stories in the land", giving one the power make decisions about and thereby privileging Māori traditions and histories. Mercier, Ocean Pipeka, "What Is Decolonisation?" in *Imagining Decolonisation*, ed. Amanda Kiddle et al. (Wellington, Aotearoa: Bridget Williams Books, 2020), 33, <https://www.bwb.co.nz/books/imagining-decolonisation/>

²¹ See for example Thomas, Melody, 'BANG! Season 2 Episode 6: Takatāpui', RNZ, 2 July 2018, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/bang/story/2018651794/bang-season-2-episode-6-takatapui>

²² I see my lens as different from but interconnected with experiences of takatāpui, Pasifika and POC rainbow peoples of Aotearoa, who face historical trauma, discrimination, invisibility, and other stresses of colonial dynamics of cis/heteronormativity. See a takatāpui perspective here: Pihama, Leonie, et al., 'Honour Project Aotearoa' (Kiri Kiriroa Hamilton: Te Kotahi Research Institution, The University of Waikato, 2020), <https://tewhariki.org.nz/assets/Honour-Project-Aotearoa-Final-Report.pdf> and Rainbow Youth Inc and Tīwhanawhana Trust, "Takatāpui: A Resource Hub", Accessed June 1, 2022, <https://takatapui.nz/growing-up-takatapui#meet-participants>

My performance research focuses on more-than/human relationality. As will be explained, I spend time listening, sensing, and at-tuning with place and its beings and entities, to see-feel, think-move and notice emerging relation forms. I dance with the energies, elements, and forces that connect us in space and time. My entry point into inquiry is through the desire to undo anthropocentric concerns and narratives in contemporary performance practices. I then begin to examine the ethico-political implications of forming creative, intimate, and critical relationships with the more-than/human. I work to reimagine choreography through more-than/human perceptions, encounters, and experiences, challenging a view of dance that sees human bodies as central and most significant to the practice.

Later, I recognise the importance of foregrounding my Pākehā positioning. I identify my white bias and non-consideration of Indigenous ontologies in the first literature review (Chapter 2). I shift emphasis to consider Māori materialities and mātauranga Māori²³, working to acknowledge Indigenous perspectives on what I term the ‘more-than/human’.

Being Pākehā, queer and trans non-binary provides the context for examining my work with/in selected ‘marginal urban places’ across Tāmaki Makaurau. My positioning and emergent approaches have generated a research question, aim and intentions that guide and inform the performance works I create.

Questions, aims and scope

This thesis consists of a text and many performance events, principally asking:

How might a queer choreographic practice delve into more-than/human relations?

The primary aim for this study is to generate a body of work that examines *how* more-than/human relations might be activated through queer choreographic practice. To achieve this aim, I established two research intentions, to:

1. develop Choreo-queering strategies for relating with the more-than/human in performance.
2. create a series of choreographic events that explore more-than/human kinships, intimacies, and modes of communing through a queer lens.

The research question, aim and intentions are emergent and subject to revisiting and revision as the project unfolds. Underpinned by an iterative examination of the ethico-ontological

²³ Indigenous knowledge system of these lands, comprising all forms of Māori knowledge - cosmological, philosophical and methodological understandings. The term ‘mātauranga Māori’ has become increasingly important, with more efforts to understand what it means in the last two decades, see Mead (2012), in Haemata Ltd et al., eds., *Conversations on mātauranga Maori*. (Wellington: New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2012).

power and promise of activating more-than/human relationality, I assess the shifting insights, meanings, and understandings of this inquiry as a critical-creative enmeshment.²⁴

I examine a performance-making that holds a 'queer*trans' lens, forming an approach that I call *Promiscuous Emplacements*. Emergent methodologies work to unsettle the binarised language of human/nonhuman, place/body and nature/queer. Rather than creating kinetic phrases of movement or practices that are typically recognisable as dance, I explore the *feltness* of more-than/human performance relations. I investigate the possibilities of more-than/human kinships, intimacies, and communing, with their various qualities and capacities.

Notes for the reader: voices, glitches, subversions, and symbolisms

Throughout this thesis, voices shift and change, language and grammar glitches and ticks. Lists and questions provide for the flourishing and untameable elements of *research-creation*, a form of practice-oriented research at the intersection of art practice, research and theoretical concepts (Springgay and Truman 2016).²⁵ Then, punctuating recognisably academic writing, the anarchic mappings and practice notes of *flotsy*, slop and slip onto the page (see Chapter 3). Typographical symbols – the slash, asterisk, and hyphen – are also activated, imbued with bodily, material, and haptic knowledge, and critical-creative meanings. Activations of these symbols reflect the experimental emphasis of research-creation. Infecting the page with multimodal felt knowledge, I turn away from a discipline-centric framework toward a non-representational drive to articulate (Manning 2014). These activations and shifts engage different ways of knowing and techniques for performing the page. My approaches to the page are outlined in the following subsections.

Shifts in voice

I move between variations on artist and researcher voices, in the tone, form, and inflections of my writing. At times I adopt an insider voice (first person, experiential, personal), speaking from within the haptic and perceptual realms of my choreographic practice. This will be as an immersed 'artist', 'performer' and/or 'participant' of events. Other times, my voice is more formal, utilising academic styles and structures (more formal containers that hold the multitudes).

On occasion, the voice is not my own, speaking for me about the research acts, bodies, creations, or movements of this inquiry (a meta-voice if you will). I also open the page to the

²⁴ My term 'critical-creative enmeshment' follows Eva Hayward's 2008 'critical enmeshment' as a doing and knowing that I get knotted into. Hayward says the enmeshment "grapples with the mundane and sublime". Hayward, Eva, "More Lessons from a Starfish: Prefixial Flesh and Transspeciated Selves," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3/4 (2008): 65, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27649785>.

²⁵ Springgay, Stephanie, and Sarah E. Truman, "Propositions for Research-Creation," *The Pedagogical Impulse* (blog), 2016, <https://thepedagogicalimpulse.com/research-methodologies/>.

voice-force of the more-than/human. This voice is of the things, beings, entities, forces, elements, and structures of marginal urban places that I engage, and/or, of the artistic work itself.

Writing, Performance²⁶

Methods of performance writing can open possibilities for articulating, translating, and evoking movement and the sensorial and affective experiences of the research to the page (Longley, 2013).²⁷ I hope to avoid a page layout that positions artistic practice as lesser-than more formally edited academic contextual paragraphs and sentences. I play with different fonts, styles, positioning on the page, capitalisation, and lowercase. Intuitive selections reflect a valuing of practice-driven poetics, seeing the resonance of wordly assemblages important to research writing. Below, I utilise Microsoft Word document's 'Special Style2', with its slightly larger font size and indented format, to emphasise the 'practice notes', and regard a plural voice-force.

Multiple voices provide a non-monotonous view. perhaps they might also reveal forces, powers, ideas, and knowledge forms of the more-than/human. in the futile human attempt to correctly translate, i accidentally summon a flailing voice. one that bumbles and trembles. a voice for or as dance?

practice notes 2: 2021.

Moving between different voices and modalities of writing helps account for the unfathomable aspects of more-than/human relationality. I am thinking about the inter-species unknowability and communications that emerge through practice which are hard to articulate and compose. Performance writing disseminates the kinaesthetic language of choreography in another way, attuning words with the feltness of practice.

Sub-versions of the page / the cadence of glitches and ticks

By performing the page, I am also writing performance. I subvert the functions and norms of a Word document. I make use of the margins for example, claiming the bottom spaces of the page as queer*trans space. I make use of words and marks on the move, sometimes melding terms such as fictive and friction = frictive, or preferencing the plurality of 'we', over 'me' or 'I'. Building on a poetics of glitches and ticks, I disrupt and subvert the structures of formal writing.

²⁶ A reference to Performance Writing scholar John Hall who theorised the comma of 'Performing, Writing', the title of a symposium held in Pōneke/Wellington in March 2017, which I attended. Hall gave the keynote, which outlined his thoughts on the comma and the field of Performance Writing. Also see his article 'Performing, Writing' *What's the comma up to?* (2018). I am interested in his analysis of writing and performance as two adjacent terms, that beg for extension with the pause and uncertainty of the comma.

²⁷ Longley, Alys, "Movement-Initiated Writing in Dance Ethnography," in *40th Anniversary of Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, ed. Norman K. Denzin, vol. 40, Studies in Symbolic Interaction (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2013), 69–93, [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0163-2396\(2013\)0000040007](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0163-2396(2013)0000040007)

Status can also be attributed through capitalisation if following the conventions of the english language.²⁸ I question this authority when it is uncritically assumed. Utilising lowercase, I want to destabilise the authority of Academic and formal writing.²⁹ I preference ‘i’ before ‘I’ in an insider voice; lowercase feels right to me.³⁰ i resonate with the politics of assuming the smaller and lesser positioning of lowercase and the bottom margins. a stance of the submissive, the lowly, the sub-terranean (see *bttm//bottom* theory in Chapter 4).

Videos, lists, provocations, questions

Videos and lists of choreographic tasks, or manifesto-like statements, pop up as provocative inserts throughout the chapters. All with an insider voice. In the late stages of the research, I shift to a more spontaneous writing that moves across lines and borders, refusing the ordering of lists, further unsettling a regulatory structure.

Questions also appear through the chapters, as generative incitements of future practice, which will be left, at times, unanswered. This approach is inspired by Transgender Studies scholars Eva Hayward and Che Gossett (2017), who break from the demands of solutionism over lingering with a generative problem.³¹ I see questions to set further trajectories of the inquiry in motion (speculative tendrils of the research). Some lie outside the scope of this research project, yet have an important place, briefly mentioned, for how they lay the path for future inquiries.

The playful symbolism of hyphens, slashes and asterisks

Typographical symbols are playfully entangled throughout the research terminologies and methods. Slashes //, asterisks **, and hyphens -- are explored, bringing my own perspective to the ‘more-than/human’, ‘thinking-moving’, ‘queer*trans/materiality’, and ‘Māori/Pākehā’. I draw on various theories of materialism to activate the symbols through my inquiry, then reactivate their capacities through a queering of somatic modalities (see Chapter 1 and 3). The hyphen, asterisk, and slash proliferate as critical-creative markers of the inquiry. Their meanings and matters are refined through the thesis.

²⁸ By placing emphasis on the first letter of Names, Placenames, Disciplinary Fields, Brands and Companies.

²⁹ Word processing software, however, consistently overwrites my preference for lowercase, an annoying autocorrective tick. Thus, insisting on lowercase involves extra labour to undo unwanted adjustments. Sometimes I surrender to this auto-authority and embrace the inconsistencies.

³⁰ I use lowercase for my name val smith. this reflects a horizontal politics that upsets the hierarchical games of the written english language. contradicting myself, i still uphold Capitalisation when referring to other peoples’ names, wanting to honour the sovereignty of self-identifying (self-ID), especially for trans folks.

³¹ Hayward, Eva, and Che Gossett, “Impossibility of That,” *Angelaki* 22, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2017.1322814>

Flotsy: anarchival pieces

A brief mention of *flotsy*, as you are already encountering these anarchival pieces in this exegesis (see Figure 1, p 1; Figure 4 & 5, p 11). *Flotsy* is understood as a “feed-forward mechanism” that builds on the notion of ‘anarchiving’ (Manning,³² Massumi,³³ and Senselab 2016³⁴). The *flotsy* you see, reflects the messy practice of *Choreoqueering* (see Chapters 3 & 4), stirring and mapping the bodily knowledge of this inquiry. *Flotsy* resists mere documentation or interpretation (WalkingLab 2014).³⁵ Instead, I embrace a multimodal approach that resonates non-linear research, and the poetic sensibility of languaging performance. I draw over images to augment promiscuously, not to erase. I obscure identification of performance participants for queer/trans safety (Figure 8, p 26), though permission to publish these images has been granted. I expand on my approach to *flotsy* later in Chapter 3 as a key method of this research.

These techniques – voice shifting; writing, performance; glitches and tics; sub-versions of the page; lists, provocations, questions; hyphens, slashes, asterisks; and flotsy – all draw on the field of Performance Writing.³⁶ Next, I define some of the key methodological approaches and concepts of this thesis.

³² Manning, Erin, ‘The Anarchic Share’, *The Go-To How to Book of Anarchiving: Senselab and the Distributing the Insensible Event*, ed. Andrew Murphie (Montréal: Senselab, 2016), <http://senselab.ca/wp2/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Go-To-How-To-Book-of-Anarchiving-landscape-Digital-Distribution.pdf>

³³ Massumi, Brian, ‘Working Principles,’ *The Go-To How to Book of Anarchiving: Senselab and the Distributing the Insensible Event*, ed. Andrew Murphie (Montréal: Senselab, 2016), 7.

³⁴ SenseLab, *The Go-To How-To Book of Anarchiving: Senselab and the Distributing the Insensible Event*, ed. Andrew Murphie (Montréal: Senselab, 2016).

³⁵ WalkingLab, ‘Walking Anarchiv’, 27 November 2014, <https://walkinglab.org/portfolio/walking-anarchiv/>

³⁶ Through this inquiry, I have tested the terms ‘performance writing’ and ‘experimental documentation’, later discovering and resonating with Manning/Massumi/Senselab’s concept of ‘anarchiving’. I do not explain this shift of terminology in the exegesis. Rather, I consider that which is produced in the contemplation of various terminologies, to live in the discarded texts of this thesis. I value the ephemerality of these brooding PhD alter-lives/after-lives, seeing the potent and latent forces of these cast-off texts in the future essays of this research.



Figure 4: val smith, *flotsy cycles*, 2018.



Figure 5: val smith, *flotsy cycles*, 2018.

From paradigms of materiality, to Choreoqueering, and ‘queer*trans/materiality’

This research joins in with other performance artists, researchers, and artist-researchers in an undoing of anthropocentrism, refusing human exceptionalism. I review the uptake of more-than/human ontologies by practitioner-researchers wishing to advocate for the agencies and vitality of things and other than human beings. I search for queer and trans perspectives. I also challenge the preferential lean into white philosophies, and oversight of Indigenous ontologies of the more-than/human calling for redress. In doing so, I seek to unsettle material and animacy hierarchies, heterosexuality and cisgender hegemonies, and question who and what is rendered human or not, live or not, and gets to matter in terms of racial taxonomies (Chen 2012; Barad 2012³⁷).

In a literature review, I will refer to three paradigms of materiality: vital materialisms, Indigenous materialisms, and queer materialisms (Chapter 2). I provide some analysis of whiteness and settler-coloniser researchers of materialisms, then work to recognise the

³⁷ Barad, Karen, ‘On Touching—the Inhuman That Therefore I Am’, *Differences* 22, no. 3 (2012): 206–23, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-1892943>

contributions of Indigenous ontologies (mātauranga Māori in the context of Aotearoa), finally locating my practice within queer materialisms. I situate my own contribution in relation to the broader fields of Performance Studies, practice-oriented research (more specifically research-creation), Queer Theory, Transgender Studies, and transmaterialist thought. Foregrounding a definition of 'queer' (see below) helps to build a contextual platform for my choreographic take on more-than/human relationality. I begin with a tracing of 'queer' through cultural histories, then consider 'queer/ing' towards my methodologies, as forms of *Choreoqueering*.

Queer, queer/ing, Choreoqueering

Let's play queer together with the spark of desire, and self-birthing

practice notes 3: 2019

I consider queer cultural histories and activisms, as well as queer theory, inherent to my critical-creative approaches. The term 'queer' can refer to a plurality of rainbow identities, communities, histories, terminologies, and activisms in the global context. It also remembers our histories of discrimination, abuse, and violence. The misuse of queer as a slur, does not erase the term's important stories of generations who have fought for our rights globally, and in Aotearoa, an ongoing struggle.³⁸ My use of queer remembers these histories. I see these stories and political movements as active and alive within this research.

The shiftiness of our self-ID terminologies

Our rainbowy communities are remarkable language innovators, creating names for ourselves that are empowering and that keep shifting and multiplying.³⁹ We generate terminologies and adapt acronyms that abbreviate our diverse sexualities, genders, and sex characteristics, such as LGBTQIA+,⁴⁰ QBIPOC,⁴¹ and MVPFAFF⁴² (a Pasifika acronym).⁴³ Queer

³⁸ In Aotearoa, some of our elders who are activists prefer 'rainbow communities' to 'queer', as many in our older generations still feel traumatised by the term with its history as an insult (see Gender Minorities Aotearoa). My understanding of the term 'queer' reflects my experience and the LGBTQIA+ culture and communities that I grew up within. Our queer and trans ancestors have defended our ways of being/becoming/knowning, so that we may live better, more equitable lives. I am thankful for and have gained from these fights, and the work and sacrifices made by those gone before me.

³⁹ Diminishing the value of self-naming is damaging. Imposing language and identities on queer, trans and intersex folk is also hurtful.

⁴⁰ The acronym LGBTQIA+ refers to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Plus.

⁴¹ The acronym QBIPOC refers to Queer Black, Indigenous, People of Colour.

⁴² Phylesha Acton-Brown coined MVPFAFF to enhance Pasifika gender diversity identities - Mahu, Vakasalewa, Palopa, Fa'afafine, Akava'ine, Fakaleiti (leiti), Fakafine. See Weedon, Alan. "From Fa'afafine to Fakaleiti: Understanding Pacific Gender Diversity," ABC News, August 31, 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-08-31/understanding-the-pacifics-alternative-gender-expressions/11438770>

⁴³ Pasifika is an umbrella term referring to Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Islands. In Aotearoa, this term is sometimes replaced with 'Moana communities', referring to Te Moana Nui a Kiwa, a Māori name for the Great Southern Ocean of Kiwa.

has also been used as a shorthand. It is important to note that all these abbreviating forms bring up the complexity and fraughtness of naming ourselves. As an umbrella term that tries to encompass *all* our diverse communities, queer can alienate, exclude and erase Indigenous terminologies, as well as invisibilise older gays, and trans and intersex people. There are diverse lenses and experiences coinciding within our takatāpui and Pasifika/Moana rainbow communities, for example. Thus, I recognise queer as situated and fluid, yet also partial and splintering.

Whilst I don't see the concept queer necessarily bound to terminologies of identity; I do recognise the importance of identities for many in our communities.⁴⁴ I see a need for sensitivity with any critique of identity politics due to an ongoing colonial history of policing the category of human.⁴⁵ Having said this, my use of the concept queer in this research looks to its creative and critical possibilities.

The possibility and flourishing of 'queer'

A poetic articulation by Cultural Theorist Eve Sedgwick (1993), provides an opening for 'queer' that flourishes through my practice, as:

the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically.⁴⁶

Sedgwick's queer is always in flux. I consider this affective relationality as a foundational ontology in my definition of queer. This possibilises the troubling of meanings and matters of self, body and other, within a field of queer indeterminacy. Whilst I recognise my theoretical stance may not resonate with all rainbow people, I find it generative, and most closely aligned with my bodily experience of dance and queerness. I engage an ongoing questioning of what queer is and can do in this inquiry. Persisting with the critical and creative possibilities of queer, also opens the concept to its active form 'queering.'

⁴⁴ The exclusion, loss, suffering and injustice that results from homophobia and transphobia (and their entanglement with racism, sexism, ableism, and classism) is assumed in my use of 'queer', I am in a sense memorialising trauma so as not-to-forget our collective past.

⁴⁵ For some people, critiquing identity may feel like "the very same gesture as the colonial act of exclusion from the category of the human." (Erin Manning 2019, in response to Fred Moten's 2016 cautioning on the critique of identity politics). See Manning, Erin. "Toward a Politics of Immediation," *Frontiers in Sociology* 3, no. 42 (2019): 9, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2018.00042>

⁴⁶ Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Tendencies*, Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 8.



Figure 6: val smith, *Queer Dating Sites*, 2018. Image: val smith

Queer/ing

i am resisting the casting of overlooked urban environments and discarded things as dirty, disgusting, shameful, scary, or dangerous.

this practice gently rocks to topple these harmful views, reimagining these un-cared-for, forgotten or forbidden places and materials as important, worthy of attention.

at times this practice is also merging-with

to activate a care-full dissolution from the 'inside'

a trickle rust toil bubble kind of queer/ing

that recognises the yearn to connect,

to feel connected with.

practice notes 4: 2018

Queer/ing in this inquiry is invited as a form of political activism that presses against monoliths of religion, state, and capitalism. An activism that counters discourses of legitimacy that exclude and harm whom and whatever sits outside of cis/heteronormativity.⁴⁷ In adopting the active implications of the term queer/ing, I am joining in with the aspiration of many practitioner-researchers and theorists, including Sedgwick (1993), in an opening to potentiality.

⁴⁷ Sedgwick, 1993, 6.

I engage queer/ing through choreographic practice to move with the spark(l)ing matters of queerness and transness. I am summoning the shimmer and heat of queer political activism. Valuing the political potency of disruption, countering and stirring. As a form of research, queer/ing is always reflective of queer methodologies – in process, non-representational, and never fixed, nor predictable.⁴⁸ My research processes galvanise the necessary rage of political struggle to motivate change from the edges of societal mainstreaming (and the margins of gaystreaming). I see queer/ing as synonymous with reimagining and possibilising. I expand on *Choreoqueering* next, the encompassing methodological framework of this inquiry, and its *thinking-moving* as a form of research-creation.

The thinking-moving of Choreoqueering

because love is love
i offer an urban queer activism that keeps onnn generating more relations,
more collaborations, morrrre ideas for sub-version.
proliferation and promiscuity
with love at the heart – a love that treasures
practice notes 5: 2019

This thesis is fundamentally methodological in its contributions, grounded and productive in contemporary queer and trans struggles. The methodology of *Choreoqueering* (a queer/ing form of choreography) is developed and employed for its potential to enact change. Rooted in a critically queer approach to Somatics, I pervert and reimagine somatic modalities; challenging notions of the natural and the neutral (discussed in Chapter 3); producing speculative bodies. The openness of *Choreoqueering* gathers a hopeful choreographics (the choreo), one that imagines better, more just worlds, drawing on the ‘queer futurity’ of José Esteban Muñoz 2009.⁴⁹ I imagine alternatives (speculative queer futures).

Choreoqueering is underpinned by this speculative thinking-moving, where making is understood as a form of thinking. Following Erin Manning’s body of work regarding *thinking through moving* (2008, 2009, 2014a, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b), research-creation does not instruct experience, nor can it be predetermined in advance; it is an experimental practice that extends knowledge with relation, movement, and change.⁵⁰ Building on this, *Choreoqueering* refuses organising in relation to pre-empted or pre-formed categories, bodies, and individuals. Instead, it encompasses ecologies of perception and experience.

⁴⁸ See Browne, Kath, and Catherine J. Nash, *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 17.

⁴⁹ Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Sexual Cultures (New York University Press, 2009).

⁵⁰ Manning, Erin. “10 Propositions for Research-Creation,” *Journal of Electronic Publishing* 19, no. 2: Disrupting the Humanities: Towards Posthumanities (October 1, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.3998/3336451.0019.206>

Choreoqueering engages the possibility of *becoming newly sensitive* to affective and sensorial information (De Brabandere 2016).⁵¹ My emphasis is on the pleasure and process of making that includes cultural, haptic, material, meta-physical, erotic, gendered and temporal information. I advocate for an embrace of the en-joy-ment of blurriness, dreaminess, and uncertainty in the bodily knowing of performance.⁵² My approach understands performance as the medium for this research-creation project, enfolding thinking-moving into the knowledge field. *Choreoqueering* then, accounts for the knowledge and perceptions emerging within the more-than/human encounters and inter-actions of Promiscuous Emplacements.

Matters of the body are taken up by practitioner-researcher Clare Croft *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings* (2017).⁵³ Croft proposes the materiality of the body for queer dance practitioners as felt and lived, and not separate from “LGBTQIA+ life or our queer politics.”⁵⁴ Croft explores questions that inform my own inquiry such as: “How does queerness exist in the realm of affect and touch?”⁵⁵ Building on Croft’s pleasureable and complex bodily knowing, along with Manning’s thinking-moving, my *Choreoqueering* approach to matters of the body centres felt experience, relationality, and situated knowledge. Knowledge arises through emplaced bodily encounters.

Queer (and) Trans (and) Materiality: introducing ‘queer*trans/materiality’

My emerging approaches to more-than/human relationality for performance reflect my interrogation of the nonhuman turn. I critically consider theories emerging from the meeting place of Materialisms and Performance Studies. To me, it is just as important to this inquiry to queer normative notions of nature, structured by the foundational nature/culture divide⁵⁶, as it is to queer the cultural constructions of gender and sexuality (as argued by Taylor and Blaise 2017).⁵⁷ I am also informed in this regard by many queer and trans ecology theorists,

⁵¹ De Brabandere, Nicole, ‘Experimenting with Affect across Drawing and Choreography’, *Body & Society* 22, no. 3 (1 September 2016): 103–24, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X16640325>

⁵² This approach calls into question what is traditionally conceived of and valued as knowledge within the Academy.

⁵³ Croft, Clare, ed., *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁵⁴ Croft, 2017, 2.

⁵⁵ Croft, 2.

⁵⁶ Theories of queer and trans ecologies have also proved vitalising to my inquiry. Susan Stryker (2020) for example, offers a recent trans mattering of the nature/culture divide. I see trans mattering to have a resistant material impact on the dominant elements and binarised thinking of New Zealand society and its colonial relation forms.

⁵⁷ Taylor, Affrica, and Mindy Blaise, “Queer Departures into More-Than-Human Worlds,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Sexuality Education*, ed. Louisa Allen and Mary Lou Rasmussen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), 591–609, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-40033-8_29

such as Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands (2010) and Susan Stryker (2020), as well as ecosexual researcher-artists.⁵⁸ I look to disrupt the ‘natural’ through choreographic practice (see George 2014), and unsettle the idea that nature is removed from the queer or trans.

Early in this study, I discovered Giffney and Hird’s book *Queering the Non/Human* (2008),⁵⁹ and the special issue in 2015 of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (21.2) that regards theorisations of *Queer Inhumanisms*, including an insightful introduction by Luciano and Chen.⁶⁰ Luciano and Chen (2015) ask, “Has the queer ever been human?” They utilise the term ‘queer’ to denote an unsettling of sexual norms, and to show how these norms constitute and regulate the nature of ‘human’ and hierarchies of humanness.⁶¹ I am also drawn to the analysis of Tallbear and Willey (2021), who explore queer, Indigenous, and multispecies belonging beyond settler sex and nature.⁶² These examples provided exciting groundwork for my examination of queer and trans perspectives on materiality that include Indigenous and POC scholarship.

Later, I am informed by the text *The Queer Life of Things* (Harris and Holman Jones, 2019).⁶³ This is a substantial work that situates queer materialisms in Performance Studies, informed by affect theorists and Mel Y Chen’s *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Chen (2012) is important for how they draw on then-recent debates about race, sexualities, and affect, to regard transgressions of animacy, and disruptions of ‘proper’ intimacies, including the relations of human and nonhuman.⁶⁴ Amid all this stimulating literature I am left wondering how practitioners might be applying queer and trans materialities within the context of choreographic practice, which is the crack that I squeeze and position myself into through this investigation.

⁵⁸ See Tallbear (2012); Morris (2015); *Ecosexual Bathhouse* by Pony Express (2020); Zheng, Stephens and Sprinkle (2021), “A Conversation between Three Ecosexuals,” in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Climate Change*, ed. T. J. Demos, Emily Eliza Scott, and Subhankar Banerjee, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2021.: Routledge, 2021), 164–72, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429321108-19>

⁵⁹ Giffney, Noreen, and Myra J. Hird, eds., *Queering the Non/Human* (Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008).

⁶⁰ Luciano, Dana, and Mel Y. Chen, “Introduction: Has the Queer Ever Been Human?” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, no. 2 (May 9, 2015): iv–207, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/581599>

⁶¹ Luciano and Chen, 2015, 186.

⁶² TallBear, Kim, and Angela Willey, “Critical Relationality: Queer, Indigenous, and Multispecies Belonging Beyond Settler Sex and Nature,” in *Posthumanism in Art and Science: A Reader*, ed. Giovanni Aloï and Susan McHugh (New York, United States: Columbia University Press, 2021), 202–11.

⁶³ Harris, Anne M., and Stacy Holman Jones, *The Queer Life of Things: Performance, Affect, and the More-Than-Human* (London: Lexington Books, 2019).

⁶⁴ Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012), 11.

The asterisk and slash of queer*trans/materiality

Reviewing work that brings together Transgender Studies and materialisms and builds on queer theories and feminist new materialisms provides important context to my inquiry. The work of Stephanie Springgay (2019)⁶⁵ and Springgay and Truman (2017a⁶⁶, 2017b⁶⁷) have been important in my research, as they are fast advancing inroads for the activation of transmateriality in the context of research-creation.

I build primarily on theoretical physicist and feminist theorist Karen Barad's 'trans*materialities' (2015), which provides an ethico-ontological basis upon which I develop *queer*trans/materiality* (explained in Chapter 1). I also integrate conceptual and critical elements from transdisciplinary scholar and author Eva Hayward and her collaborators, especially work around the notion of 'tentacularity' and the asterisk of trans* (2008, 2010, 2015, 2017),⁶⁸ also discussed in Chapter 1. The asterisk of my term *queer*trans/materiality* emphasises the perverse nature of 'self', and 'matter'.⁶⁹ The notion of a whole, coherent self is cut apart, in favour of Barad's (2015) sutured, re(con)figuring and affectively charged self-birthing bodies and selves.⁷⁰ I later develop 'sensorial perversity' and 'gayYay' (Chapter 1, part I), notions that possibilise the emergence of five *Choreoqueueing* techniques (in Chapter 3 & 4).

I engage the slash / in Chapter 1 (part II), following a review of theories around the relationality of Indigene/settler-colonist (Jones and Jenkins 2008; Jones 2020; Barnett 2015; Hobbs 2017). This leads to embedding the slash into my conception of *queer*trans/materiality*, marking the relationship of Māori/Pākehā inherent to my study. The / reminds me of my Pākehā positioning living and working in Aotearoa, a grounding stance in this choreographic research. I also work with two slashes in the development of *bttm//bottom* (Chapter 4), a friendship-based collaborative approach that grows from my work with artist Richard Orjis (Pākehā). I then delve more deeply into the slash of Māori/Pākehā collaboration with artist Forest V Kapo (Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Raukawa) in Chapter

⁶⁵ Springgay, Stephanie. "'How to Write as Felt' Touching Transmaterialities and More-Than-Human Intimacies," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38, no. 1 (February 2019): 57–69, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-018-9624-5>

⁶⁶ Springgay, Stephanie, and Sarah E. Truman, "A Transmaterial Approach to Walking Methodologies: Embodiment, Affect, and a Sonic Art Performance," *Body & Society* 23, no. 4 (2017): 27–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X17732626>

⁶⁷ Springgay, Stephanie, and Sarah E. Truman, "Stone Walks: Inhuman Animacies and Queer Archives of Feeling," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 38, no. 6 (November 2, 2017): 851–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2016.1226777>

⁶⁸ The asterisk, following trans*, is meant to break open the category of transgender in "a liberal project of inclusivity", that Hayward and Gossett (2017) challenge, looking instead to the crisis of being-ness inherent to trans. Hayward and Gossett, 'Impossibility of That', 21.

⁶⁹ Barad (2015) sees matter as never reliably inert, or neutral, rather it is made of infinitely trans*forming complexities.

⁷⁰ Barad, Karen, 'Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings', *GLQ* 21, no. 2–3 (01 2015): 387–422, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2843239>

5. With *Forest*, the / represents a discursive-material investigation of inter-cultural as well as inter-species engagement; its meanings and matters guide explorations into more-than/human kinship and communing.

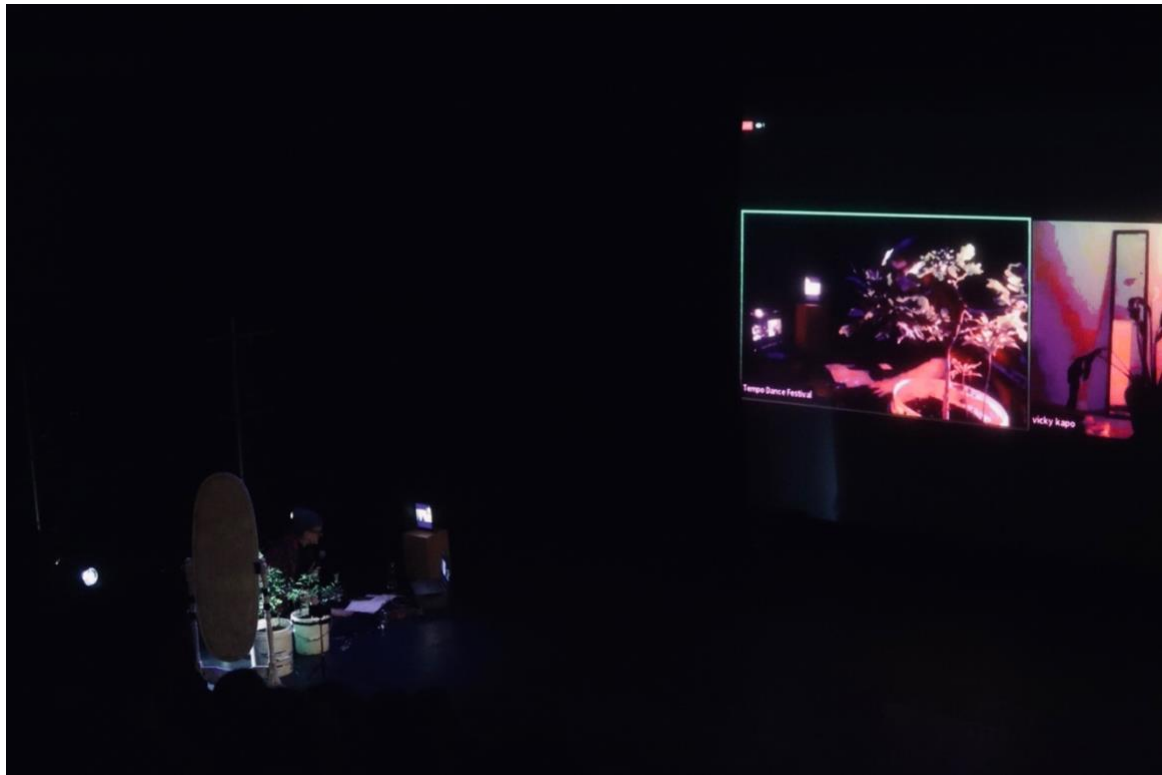


Figure 7: Forest V Kapo and val smith, *ill grow back*, 2020. Image: Courtney Rodgers

Place, Pākehā response-ability, ‘marginal urban places’, and the more-than/human

Where we locate performance matters. The place of any performance carries stories and weight. It is not neutral. My use of the term ‘place’ throughout this thesis infers the Indigenous land on which we work, following a reading of Tuck and McKenzie (2015) whose work counters an overlooking of the significance of place in research from an Indigenous Studies perspective.⁷¹ Their proposed model of a ‘critical place inquiry’ offers a decolonising conceptualisation of land and place within the context of settler-colonialism, globalisation, and environmental degradation.

My approach is guided by theorists of decolonial discourse regarding place, land, Indigeneity, and relationality, primarily through theorists Kim Tallbear (2011, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2021), and Eve Tuck (and her co-collaborators Marcia McKenzie, K. Wayne Yang, and Linda Tuhiwai

⁷¹ Tuck, Eve, and Marcia McKenzie, *Place in Research: Theory, Methodology, and Methods*, Routledge Advances in Research Methods: 9 (New York; Oxford, England: Routledge, 2015).

Smith) (2012, 2014, 2015, 2019).⁷² Tuhiwai-Smith, Tuck, and Yang (2019) remind us that “there is no decolonization without Indigenous presence on Indigenous land and waters.”⁷³ This is Indigenous land (always was, always is).

Pākehā response-ability and settler awareness

A Pākehā approach to performance emplacement requires of me a critical attention. I develop practices that acknowledge my settler genealogy, white privilege, advantages, and bias. I also interrogate how white settler society intersects with and informs my everyday experiences as queer and trans non-binary (building an intersectional awareness).⁷⁴ Guidance from reading Māori materialisms and perspectives on whenua in the context of Aotearoa folds into my settler awareness of place relations and understanding of the impact of settler-colonisation.⁷⁵

The terminologies of *Choreoqueering* that I test respond to my growing focus on being Pākehā within the context of Aotearoa. I make explicit my positioning as Pākehā in this inquiry, an approach guided by Tina Ngata’s Māori view on being a good Tangata Tiriti, treaty partner (2020). Ngata’s question of “what does justice demand of us?”, leads me to see how the legacy of colonisation in Aotearoa informs my white bias. I return through this thesis to one principle Ngata proposes, which guides my practice, to – *be tau (at peace) with your position*.⁷⁶ I see an urgent need for non-Indigenous performance artist-researchers to account for and address the cultural situatedness of places that we engage in practice. In considering best practice in terms of Pākehā accountability, I also look to Ngata’s suggestion to “Be prepared to make sacrifice.”⁷⁷

My choreographic practice delves into a ‘*Pākehā response-ability*’, a term coined by Pākehā scholars Avril Bell (2014),⁷⁸ Rebecca Ream (2020, 2021), and Bell and Ream (2021). Bell and Ream build on Haraway’s notion of ‘response-ability’ as a care-fullness when facing issues of

⁷² The way that I approach Indigenous and decolonial texts to begin with, as a non-Indigenous reader, is an ethical question.

⁷³ Smith, Linda Tuhiwai, Eve Tuck, and K. Wayne Yang, eds., *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education: Mapping the Long View* (New York & Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 1.

⁷⁴ ‘White supremacy’, ‘white privilege’ ‘white bias’ and ‘white fragility’ are notions that recur throughout the thesis, paying attention to the trace and meaning of whiteness as a colonial system (Nayak, 2007). Also see Saad (2018) on white supremacy; Robin DiAngelo (2018) on white fragility; Bonds & Inwood (2016) on white privilege.

⁷⁵ Tuck, Eve, and K Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 2, <https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/aec/pdfs/Decolonization-is-not-a-metaphor.pdf>

⁷⁶ Ngata, Tina. “What’s Required from Tangata Tiriti,” December 20, 2020, <https://tinangata.com/2020/12/20/whats-required-from-tangata-tiriti/>

⁷⁷ Ngata, 2020.

⁷⁸ Bell, Avril, ‘Relating Maori and Pakeha : The Politics of Indigenous and Settler Identities’ (PhD, Palmerston North, Massey University, 2004), https://mro.massey.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10179/267/02_whole.pdf

colonialism and racism (Haraway 2008; 2011; 2016).⁷⁹ Haraway describes ‘response-ability’ as the capability of ethical sensitivity and response, responses of becoming-with, and rendering each other capable as in “cultivating collective knowing and doing.”⁸⁰

Picking this term *Pākehā response-ability* up and applying it within the context of queer*trans/materialist performance research, I engage a bodily practice of care-fullness and reciprocity, which can be seen in *slashing* in Chapter 1. An application can also be seen in *scat-tending* in Chapter 3, which draws on an ethics of care in developing a queer*trans way to at-tend and attune with marginal urban places and the more-than/human in performance. My take on Pākehā response-ability faces the active traces of colonisation, cis/heterosexism and other hegemonies inherent to Pākehā dance and performance. I engage collaborative and intimate relationships with the human and more-than/human, knowing that for many Indigenous peoples, including Māori, nature and the more-than/human is considered kin (Hoskins and Jones 2017).

Marginality – ‘marginal urban places’

Let’s re-view what we think of as the ‘site’ of performance,
to gather with the unnoticed and unseen at the margins of urban ecologies,
assembling with those of us who have been pushed to the side
– now, past and future –
due to being who we are
practice notes 6: 2018

The word ‘marginal’ typically carries a strong connotation, commonly considered negative. The marginal from this view is that which is oppressed and dominated, silenced, and restricted by the power structures of the centre (Walker 1999). The centre is often seen as a spatiality of hierarchy and order, implying a hegemonic source of oppression and domination of race, gender, class, bodies. The marginal then, is displaced and denied, conceived as a space of powerlessness and restriction.⁸¹

American Black feminist scholar and activist bell hooks (1952-2021) suggested otherwise in 1989, viewing the margins as “a space of radical openness”, “a profound edge”, coming alive as an empowered position that “nourishes one’s capacity to resist”.⁸² For hook’s, marginal space is to be celebrated for what it offers, taken up as a position of power in the realm of

⁷⁹ Ream, Rebecca, “Composting Arcadia: Stories from Pākehā Women ‘of the Land’ in Wairarapa, Aotearoa New Zealand” (PhD, Victoria University, 2020), 15, <http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/handle/10063/9162>

⁸⁰ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 34.

⁸¹ Walker, Joseph S. “When Texts Collide: The Re-Visionist Power of the Margin,” *Colby Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1999): 35.

⁸² hooks, bell. “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 1989, 20, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44111660>.

oppositional political struggle.⁸³ I am inspired by this perspective, resonating with the strength of the individual and the collective on the edge. *Promiscuous Emplacements* takes up hook's notion of marginal space as a site of radical possibility, a space "to see and create, to imagine new alternatives, new worlds".⁸⁴ This leads me to conceive 'marginal urban places' which follows in this outlining of my key research terminologies. Marginal urban places become a conceptual and political platform from which to situate and propel my queer*trans/materialist methodologies.

i emplace choreographic practice marginally.
materially and psychically aligning with the damp and dark edges, cracks, alleyways,
and crevices of the city,
residing with more-than/human things and entities and elements.
practice notes 7: 2018

Building on hooks (1989), my engagements with marginal urban places become a nourishment, an empowering space to imagine, rest, dream, and seek pleasure with more-than/human company. Being queer and trans non-binary, I have experienced hurts and harms, not always met with care.⁸⁵ Sometimes I choose the margins because these urban spaces feel like shelters to me, a refuge from gender policing and restrictions. The margins, for me, are places to connect, to listen, to care for the more-than/human. The margins have become a place for reimagining and dreaming better worlds for me, to repair, and to refuse the control and certainties of the cis/heteronormative centre. Yet, the potentially empowering position of staying with marginal space that hooks' theorisation offers me, is also conflictual.⁸⁶

Next, I review the emergence of the concept 'more-than-human'; the concept's uptake by various fields of knowledge; and the reproduction of colonial patterns within the nonhuman turn.

⁸³ Importantly, her articulations account for the pain and struggle of a politics of location for Black communities, addressing longstanding issues of place, belonging, identity and desire.

⁸⁴ hooks, 'Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness', 20.

⁸⁵ Knots have formed through my life in being judged as bad/disgusting/not good enough, and through the impact of not being recognised or valued for who I am.

⁸⁶ My engagement with the margins is a non-totalising sense of empowerment. I recognise the different lenses on placement/displacement/belonging for Indigenous, POC migrant, and Pākehā settler-colonial queers. It still requires checking for my Pākehā privileges and affordances. As Pākehā, I am less restricted in urban movements, afforded the privilege of choice, whereas Indigenous Māori, Pasifika, and POC people are more restricted, marginalised as a people and by location within the dominant settler state (Bell 2014). In building relationships with marginal urban places then, I recognise the uncomfortable realisations and conflicting feelings.

More-than-human / more-than/human

Let's subvert the humancentric orientations of dance,
opening to the more-than/human of making and sharing and showing,
resonating the sensorial pulsing of more-than/human communities.
practice notes 8: 2019

Cultural Ecology and Geography scholars were responsible for the emergence, adoption and development of the concept 'more-than-human' (Abram 2006),⁸⁷ and the notion of 'more-than-human worlds' as including and exceeding human societies (Whatmore 2006).⁸⁸ The context of these knowledge fields is a counterpoint to nature-culture dualisms, articulations consider more-than-human approaches, and frame more-than-human as a methodology (Jacque et al. 2020).⁸⁹ The concept more-than-human has been taken up by many other fields and disciplines, including practice-oriented research, research-creation, and environmental humanities.

This inquiry builds on the work of Erin Manning (2013) who centres more-than-human as a 'mode of perception' inherent to relationality in the research-creation context. Another view important to this study comes from Stacy Alaimo in environmental humanities who fields the concept 'trans-corporeality' (2010), wherein her questioning of 'nature' considers the human as "always inter-meshed with the more-than-human world."⁹⁰

Adding the slash to more-than/human

The 'more-than-human' with two hyphens, signals for me a Eurocentric conception of a world beyond human/nonhuman separation, which acknowledges the agencies and vitality of the more-than-human. The slash of more-than/human counterpoints this idealism, acknowledging the paradox and impossibility of such an attempt to evade the white paradigms many of us are steeped in. Adding the slash brings the work back to earth, acknowledging there is still a space between human and that which exceeds us (in a Pākehā worldview). More-than/human also acknowledges the settler-colonial lineage of white philosophies that keep separate human and nature, human and queer.

⁸⁷ Cultural Ecologist and Philosopher David Abrams coined 'more-than-human' in Abram, David. (1996) *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*, First edition. (New York: Pantheon Books).

⁸⁸ Whatmore (2006) considers the more-than-human as "new ways of approaching the vital nexus between the bio (life) and the geo (earth), or the livingness of the world". Whatmore, Sarah. "Materialist Returns: Practising Cultural Geography in and for a More-than-Human World," *Cultural Geographies* 13, no. 4 (October 2006): 600, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1474474006cgj3770a>

⁸⁹ Jacque, André, et al., Eds. *More-Than-Human* (Rotterdam: Het Nieuwe Instituut, 2020).

⁹⁰ Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 2.

I became weary of reproducing ‘colonial patterns’, which Luciano and Chen (2015) describe as “alternately appropriating and ignoring non-Western thinking.”⁹¹ Checking my Pākehā reviewing of ‘more-than-human’, I reconsider the voices I am paying attention to, those I am drawing on and uplifting. Whilst ‘more-than/human’ offers a contraposition to colonialist human exceptionalism, the meanings I ascribe to the term still reflect my white understanding of the substance of the world.

I locate interrogations of new materialism (see Todd 2016,⁹² Vosters 2014,⁹³ Ravenscroft 2018⁹⁴), that offer challenges to the ‘new’ of the ontological turn by Indigenous scholars. I also find decolonising perspectives on more-than-human terminologies (Ravencroft 2018,⁹⁵ Chen 2012, Clary-Lemon 2019,⁹⁶ Rosiek, Snyder and Pratt 2020⁹⁷). I come to see the ‘new’ of new materialism as a careless colonial act of avoidance, blinkered to the vital contributions of Indigenous materialisms.⁹⁸ As such, in Chapter 2 I examine the cultural locatedness of terminologies, as well as unpack the white oversight of Indigenous ontologies and materialities.

The slash of more-than/human then, recognises my positioning as researcher as non-Indigenous, and locates my intention to work at undoing white hegemonies within the nonhuman turn (from the microcosm of myself and my practice to the macro picture of racist systems and governing policies). More-than/human is an acknowledgement of attempting to grasp the potential of thinking beyond anthropocentrism, knowing it is impossible, yet still reaching for a speculative relationality that binds humans and the other than human. More-than/human guides my way of working, but will never be a complete or knowable conception, rather something to be strived for. Following is an overview of each of the five chapters of this thesis, to guide the reader.

⁹¹ Luciano, Dana, and Mel Y. Chen, “Queer Inhumanisms,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 116, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-7275600>

⁹² Todd, Zoe. “An Indigenous Feminist’s Take On The Ontological Turn: ‘Ontology’ Is Just Another Word For Colonialism,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29, no. 1 (2016): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12124>

⁹³ Vosters, Helene. “Military Memorialization and Its Object(s) of Period Purification,” in *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things*, Eds. Marlis Schweitzer and Joanne Zerdy (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014).

⁹⁴ Ravenscroft, Alison. “Strange Weather: Indigenous Materialisms, New Materialism, and Colonialism,” *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 5, no. 3 (September 2018): 353–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/pli.2018.9>

⁹⁵ Ravenscroft, 358.

⁹⁶ Clary-Lemon, Jennifer. “Gifts, Ancestors, and Relations: Notes Toward an Indigenous New Materialism,” *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture*, November 12, 2019, http://enculturation.net/gifts_ancestors_and_relations

⁹⁷ Rosiek, Jerry Lee, Jimmy Snyder, and Scott L. Pratt, “The New Materialisms and Indigenous Theories of Non-Human Agency: Making the Case for Respectful Anti-Colonial Engagement,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 26, no. 3–4 (March 1, 2020): 332, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419830135>

⁹⁸ To actively recognise that Indigenous more-than-human ontologies have always existed is therefore important to this study.



Figure 8: val smith, *Queer Napping Workshops*, 2020. Image: val smith

Overview of the thesis

This exegesis is organised into five chapters that interconnect and lead into one another. I begin with a review of literature that reveals an overarching ontological and methodological drive to this inquiry. Then, progressively we move towards analysis and critique of my research processes. I structure discussion in each chapter in relation to iterative live works.

Chapter 1: queer*trans/materiality

I begin with a two-part chapter that offers a paradigm for approaching the choreographic feltness of more-than/human relations. In conversation with thinkers Karen Barad and Eva Hayward, I sketch *queer*trans/materiality*. In Part I, I highlight the asterisk as a sticky material-discursive symbol. Queer and trans matters are brought into entangled relation through a bridging as *queer*trans*.⁹⁹ I discuss an early work, *Queer Dating Sites* (2018), and a key rehearsal session in the development of this work that involves an encounter with a

⁹⁹ Examining genders links to experiences of sexuality for me, and vice versa, experiences of sexuality bridges my gender identities.

single pink sequin in a marginal urban place. I also action a perversion of the somatic process of Navel Radiation (Bainbridge Cohen 2008, 2018), as *asterisking*.

Then, in Part II I probe the critical-creative possibilities of the slash (and by extension the hyphen), with attention to the relationship of Indigene/settler-coloniser, and Māori/Pākehā in the context of Aotearoa (Jones 2020; Jones and Hoskins 2016, 2017; Jones and Jenkins 2012). I discuss another early work, *Queer Failure Walk* (2017), developed in collaboration with Richard Orjis and Queer Reading Group. I examine speculative approaches to more-than/human relations and the qualities and capacities of the slash in action, building on Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Cellular Breathing somatic process (2008, 2018). I build a Pākehā framework of response-ability (referring to Haraway 2016) and explore principles for being a good Tangata Tiriti, treaty partner (Ngata 2020). This chapter advocates for the material potency of asterisks and slashes in performance (even in their contradiction), to enliven the multi-dimensional and multi-sensorial capacities of engaging more-than/human relations.

Chapter 2: Reviewing practitioners of more-than/human performance: three materialisms

In Chapter 2, I continue discussion around the challenge to anthropocentrism within the field of Performance Studies, examining three fields of materialist thought that extend my understanding of more-than/human relations in performance. I organise my discussion into three sections.

First – I review rituals of meeting and greeting in works by Finnish-Swede artist, researcher and pedagogue Annette Arlander residing in Helsinki, and artist-researcher Minty Donald based within Theatre Studies at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, who both draw heavily on Jane Bennett's vital materiality (2010). My analysis sees that many practitioner-researchers, who are European, from the United Kingdom (UK) or Nordic region, or Euro-American, are rebounding notions of the agential, vitality and volition initiated through the nonhuman turn (primarily building on Bennett 2010).¹⁰⁰ This review of vital/'new' materialism in action is then questioned for colonial patterns and white bias.

Second – I look to examples of Indigenous materialisms in action from practitioner-researchers working in Aotearoa. I write in conversation with the choreographic work of artist Tru Paraha (Ngāti Hineāmaru, Ngāti Kahu o Torongare, Ngāti Te Tarawa, Ngāpuhi-nui-tonu, Israel/Palestine) who resides in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland; the performances of takatāpui artist Louie Zalk-Neale (Ngāi Te Rangi, Pākehā) located in Te Whanganui-a-Tara/Wellington; and the sonic explorations of sound artist and designer Rachel Shearer (Pākehā, Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga a Māhaki, Ngāti Kahungunu) also based in Tāmaki

¹⁰⁰ Researcher-practitioners are notably influenced by, but not exclusively tied to, the vital materialism of things proposed by theorist Jane Bennett (2010).

Makaurau. Their various works engage mātauranga Māori¹⁰¹, Te Ao Māori¹⁰², and Māori cosmologies¹⁰³, offering vitalising perspectives on tangata whenua concepts of whakapapa¹⁰⁴, hau¹⁰⁵, and Te Pō.¹⁰⁶ The perspectives of these artists, along with insights from Indigenous and decolonial theorists, inform and guide my positioning as Tangata Tiriti and my performance engagements with place and the more-than/human.

Third – I examine the speculative queer materialities of choreographic artists, recognising this is where my own practice best fits. I look at recent workshops by Keith Hennessy, an Ontario born queer white performance artist who lives in Yelamu/San Francisco, and Jeremy Wade, a Euro-American dance artist based in Berlin, Germany. Their works insist on a criticality for uplifting disability justice, and safeguarding matters of queerness. I contribute queer*trans/materiality and *Choreoqueueing* techniques to this discourse. I also note the need for more analysis and broader articulations of queer and trans materialisms, particularly of pertinence to Performance Studies.¹⁰⁷ There is also a need for more intersectional analyses of materialisms, such as the junction of materiality, race and gender identified by Chen (2012).

Chapter 3: Choreoqueueing I, scat-tending and flotsy

Chapter 3 and 4 brings sharper focus on methodologies. The methodology of *Choreoqueueing* is introduced as a critically queer form of choreography. Through Chapter 3, I build my own understanding of what constitutes the subject of, and means of engaging with, choreography. I address this through ethical and political queer*trans processes of slow/ing and soft/ening. Efronsini Protopapa is a key conceptual voice that deepens my understanding

¹⁰¹ Indigenous knowledge system of these lands, comprising all forms of Māori knowledge (Mead 2012) in Haemata Ltd et al., *Conversations on mātauranga Maori*.

¹⁰² Te Ao Māori denotes the vast Māori world. Three key areas include te Reo Māori (language), Tikanga Māori (protocols and customs) and te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi). Māori ki Te Whare Wānanga o Ōtākou, 'Te Ao Māori | The Māori World', Māori ki Otago, University of Otago, accessed 1 June 2022, <https://www.otago.ac.nz/maori/world/>

¹⁰³ Tribal creation traditions and genealogies. Royal, Te Ahukaramū Charles. "Māori Creation Traditions - Different Creation Traditions," Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, February 8, 2005, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/maori-creation-traditions/page-2>

¹⁰⁴ Māori genealogies. "Whakapapa is a taxonomic framework that links all animate and inanimate, known and unknown phenomena in the terrestrial and spiritual worlds. Whakapapa therefore binds all things." Taonui, Rāwiri. "Whakapapa – Genealogy - What Is Whakapapa?," Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, May 5, 2011, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/whakapapa-genealogy/page-1>

¹⁰⁵ Hau is "a cosmic force and vital essence embodied in all persons and things", often referred to as "the breath of life or alluded to as the wind." Henare, 2001, 209–11.

¹⁰⁶ Te Pō, referred to by Paraha (2019) as Darkness Perpetual, the Unknown. Paraha, Tru. "Speculative Chøreographies of Darkness" (Thesis, Auckland, University of Auckland, 2019), <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/49320>

¹⁰⁷ Whilst acknowledging there is existing work opening out this terrain such as Holman and Jones (2019), Chen (2012), and Springgay and Truman (2017, 2019a & 2019b).

of dance's constitution, who posits the framework of 'possibilising' (2009) as a *space of the dance-possible*.¹⁰⁸

Five key *Choreoqueueing* techniques are explained across Chapters 3 and 4, all informing and guiding my encounters with the more-than/human in live works - *scat-tending*, *flotsy*, *bttm//bottom*, *Queer Clean(s)ing* and *Queer Napping*. They are also referred to as perverse techniques. In addition, I contribute a queer*trans perspective to the emerging field of Critical Somatics. I outline *scat-tending* first, a somatic technique for building intimate more-than/human relations through tentacularity, a haptic-sensing. *Scat-tending* builds on the 'tending' of Kuppers and Heit (2017). I discuss the work *sex/es on site (v1)* alongside *scat-tending*.

In conversation with Manning, Massumi and Senselab (2016), *flotsy* is described next as an anarchiving of performance and feed-forward mechanism in relation to the live works *sex/es on site (v2)* and *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)*. Flotsy provides a way to connect to the more-than/human through anarchival processes of writing, drawing, and moving with joy and generative relationality. The other three *Choreoqueueing* techniques continue in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Choreoqueueing II, queer*trans rituals of care and protection

Bttm//bottom, *Queer Clean(s)ing* and *Queer Napping* are referred to in this chapter as 'queer*trans rituals of care and protection'. *bttm//bottom* is a friendship-based collaborative practice (with Richard Orjis), a *Choreoqueueing* technique that reflects our en-joy-ment and pleasure-seeking processes in practice together, also celebrating queer intimacies of subjugation, embracing powerlessness and lowly positions (after the 'queer failure' of Halberstam 2011). I regard our co-created multi-modal project *Bttm Manifesto* (2018).

In an examination of *Queer Clean(s)ing*, I discuss *Untitled Arts Foundation Performance* (2019), which reimagines the everyday actions of cleaning and clearing as queer*trans performance rituals. I invoke the powers of the 'dirty' and hi-vis safety gear, to posit this perverse technique a melding of queerness, transness and protection spells. As will be revealed, I understand 'ritual' as a process of trans-formation involving practices, tools, invocations, and chants, drawing on the cultural context of Celtic (neo)Paganism (see Magliocco 2009).¹⁰⁹ This work links to a term I later develop in Chapter 5, *transit*ioning*.

¹⁰⁸ Acknowledging the inherent connection Protopapa's 2009 argument has to Andre Lepecki's book *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the politics of movement* (2006), a discussion of choreographic strategies where "dance's relation to movement is being exhausted." Protopapa, Efrosini. "Possibilising Dance: A Space for Thinking in Choreography" (Roehampton University, 2009), 2.

¹⁰⁹ Magliocco, Sabina. "Reclamation, Appropriation and the Ecstatic Imagination in Modern Pagan Ritual," *Handbook of Contemporary Paganism*, January 1, 2009, 223–40, https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789047442356/Bej.9789004163737.i-650_010.xml

Discussing the queer*trans ritual of Queer Napping, I attune to pre-colonial histories of place, research Māori placenames, explore land acknowledgements and engage Maramataka, as well as counteracting the impacts of capitalism's do-do-do and colonial cis/heteronorms. I look at three live iterations, naps at 3pm for *Bttm Methodology* with Orjis (2019), *Queer Napping Workshops* (2019-2020), then *queer walk-naps* (2020). This iterative development of Queer Napping possibilises a collective form of rest as a restorative queer*trans practice.

Chapter 5: Songs with Birds

I return to the typographic symbol of the slash in the fifth chapter, to rethink performance place relations as a form of 'Pākehā response-ability'. I discuss the already underway Māori/Pākehā collaborative practice with Forest V Kapo (Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Raukawa) delving into the relationality of the / as a fertile site of inter-cultural and inter-species exchange. I examine two live works: *ill grow back* (Dec 2020), and *Songs with Birds* (July 2022), the concluding work of this inquiry.

I discuss how *ill grow back* explores more-than/human communing, in particular building human*plant relations. Digital devices and online tools including Zoom technologies, as well as utilising tarot and dance techniques, become important to how Forest and I connect with each other, the houseplants, and with place. Our shared practice engages the sovereignties of Indigenous peoples, lands, and plants.

I then speculatively sketch *Songs with Birds*. This work simultaneously holds space for the affective and material communings that move across the slash of human/nonhuman, Māori/Pākehā, Aotearoa/Australia, and deepens into more-than/human communing through collaborative practice. I elaborate on how we engage human*bird and human*tree relationality. *Songs with Birds* centres a queer care ethics, to situate the inter-cultural and inter-species elements of emplaced performance. This discussion is followed by Chapter 6, which provides some closing reflections and suggests some possible future directions for the research.

Toot! Let's leap into the ocean of expanded multispecies love!

We are about to be immersed in the more-than/human worlding of *Promiscuous Emplacements* to see-feel the * and / of *queer*trans/materiality*, and to think-move with the perverse techniques of *Choreoqueering*. Before we embark, I invite a pause together. Let's rest with the affective wor(l)ds of Transgender Studies scholar Susan Stryker.

Hearken unto me, fellow creatures. I who have dwelt in a form unmatched with my desire, I whose flesh has become an assemblage of incongruous anatomical parts, I who achieve the similitude of a natural body only through an unnatural process, I offer you this warning: the Nature you bedevil me with is a lie. Do not trust it to protect you from what I represent, for it is a fabrication that cloaks the groundlessness of the privilege you seek to maintain for yourself at my expense. You are as constructed as me; the same anarchic womb has birthed us both. I call upon you to investigate your nature as I have been compelled to confront mine. I challenge you to risk abjection and flourish as well as have I. Heed my words, and you may well discover the seams and sutures in yourself.¹¹⁰

Stryker's empowering transgender rage and self-affirmation, alongside Barad and Hayward's trans theorisations enables the activations and movements of *Choreoqueering*.¹¹¹ I enact the work of *Promiscuous Emplacements* for our empowerment. So that we can direct our rage against the conditions in which we must struggle to exist and be recognised.¹¹² *Promiscuous Emplacements* thinks-moves for queer*trans liberation, re/generative powers, and for the potency of unproductivity (as and when desired).

¹¹⁰ Stryker, Susan. "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage.," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 3 (1994): 86, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-3-237>

¹¹¹ Also see Barad (2015) who discusses Stryker's transgender rage, in a sub-section of this essay entitled "Monstrous Selves, Transgender Empowerment, Transgender Rage", 391-393.

¹¹² Stryker, 238.

1. queer*trans/materiality: the asterisk and the slash

I lean into the laptop screen, to look closer at the asterisk's six limbs



leaning into this intimate proximity, you seem closer to me

a perceptual shift

i see that the number of your arms depends on font style. limbs r not wedded to font size (11) in Baskerville, which was my default 'Normal' in Word for a while.

*¹¹³ *¹¹⁴ *¹¹⁵

practice notes 9: 2020

In this two-part chapter, I interrogate the anthropocentrism of performance.¹¹⁶ I develop a paradigm, *queer*trans/materiality*, that experiments with the reach of more-than/human relationality through a critical-creative enmeshment of the typographical symbols * and /. Discussions of the performance works *Queer Dating Sites* (2018) in Part I and *Queer Failure Walk* (2017) in Part II are interspersed with poetic musings on the asterisk and slash (of relevance to the fields of Performance Studies and Performance Writing). I will bring the concepts of 'queer', 'trans' and 'materiality' into relation utilising these symbols, with an emphasis on a haptic sensing of performance relations and developing choreographic settler awareness when engaging place and more-than/human relations.¹¹⁷ I tease apart the qualities

¹¹³ This asterisk is in Avenir, a tidy five-pointer.

¹¹⁴ This asterisk is six limbed in the font of Baskerville, but when in bold it performs a TUCKING where one limb retracts/enfolds and disappears (as pointed out to me by artist Creek Waddington). POOF! Magically reducing the symbol to a five tentacled star. Try en-boldening it, and you will see said TUCKING in action.

¹¹⁵ This Bell MT asterisk (font size 18) is a self-referential footnote. Opening a portal to the bttm//bottom margins of this page. This * wishes to draw you the reader into intimate relation with the marginality of this research. An invitational opening, this asterisk vibrates the powers of marginal space on this page-stage, and the more-than capacities of footnoting. I destabilise the default central staging of the Word document (now a pdf). I want to reveal this sub-area of the page and explore its latent functions and capacities. This introduction to the * sub-verts the norms and structures of formal academic writing, resists the rules, and advocates for information valued as lesser-than in the knowledge hierarchies of Academia.

¹¹⁶ The philosophical viewpoint of anthropocentrism centres concerns of human beings, seeing humans the most significant entities in the world. White discourse and philosophies that uphold an anthropocentric logic in performance, overlook the vitalities, capacities, and powers of the more-than/human, seeing the liveliness and sentience of the more-than/human as lesser-than or non-existent.

¹¹⁷ I recognise the problematics of using the terms 'queer' and 'trans', with their Eurocentric lineages; erasure of Indigenous terminologies and realities, and for their potential to recolonise space.

and capacities of the symbols examining the complex intersections of engaging queerness and transness, the more-than/human, and Māori/Pākehā relations. In doing so, I find myself developing a Pākehā and queer*trans more-than/human approach.

Part I: asterisking

The shimmer of feeling-with; *, radically open, yet undeniably excluding.
practice notes 10: 2020

The asterisk is the ‘little star’ symbol on your keyboard (*).¹¹⁸ A typographical sign, the * has roles, and functions in writing: indicating a database search or censorship, or to embolden/intensify a word.¹¹⁹ It is however, to the field of Transgender Studies that I look to examine the material qualities of the asterisk as a basis for my performance research.

From a Transgender Studies perspective, the asterisk indicates the prefixial nature and state of trans, meaning an across and beyond-ness (Hayward and Gossett 2017). Hayward and Gossett’s consideration of the * also remembers ‘trans’, as in transgender, with all the history and politics that are carried forward with the visibility and announcement of this term. Their examination of ‘trans*’ is understood in relation to “a liberal project of inclusivity”, meaning the * symbol was originally intended to break open categories of transgender, trans women, or trans man.¹²⁰

I am drawn to the asterisk’s sticky tendencies, outlined by Eva Hayward (2015, 2017),¹²¹ and to the promiscuous matter/s of the * in trans*materiality (Barad 2015). I build on both views of the * in my development of a queer*trans/materiality paradigm. I consider tentacularity a sensuous stickiness, a seeing-feeling that reaches to connect; and promiscuity as a felt materiality that is proliferative, perverse, inventive, and agential. I find openings for performance through the asterisk in its linking and excessiveness, rather than in a demand

¹¹⁸ The word asterisk has its origins in Greek and Latin words meaning ‘little star.’ To contemplate here the proliferation of * as stars in the night sky may seem disjunctive. Yet, I wish to draw a line of connection to the later stages of the research where I reflect on older cosmologies, including Maramataka and Matariki in Chapter 4, then again in Chapter 5, for the concluding event *Songs with Birds*.

¹¹⁹ Pronounced ‘aste-risk’, its usage also includes being a footnote symbol, showing you are planning to comment at the bottom of the page; and as a grawlic, to omit letters, e.g., in swearwords you want to sanitize, like f***. See Fogarty, Mignon, *The Grammar Devotional: Daily Tips for Successful Writing from Grammar Girl (TM)* (St. Martin’s Publishing Group, 2009), 79.

¹²⁰ Hayward, Eva and Che Gossett. “Impossibility of That,” *Angelaki* 22, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2017.1322814>

¹²¹ Hayward and Weinstein (2015) extend on this stickiness, positing the asterisk as needy, like a “starfish’s limby reach.” Their asterisk is “fingery”, an anemone soft and tender, “hungry for connection”. Rendering the asterisk of ‘trans*’ is for Hayward and Weinstein “miming a starfish’s limby reach, follows trans and attaches to it, attaches it to something else, a spiky allergenic pollen soliciting immunological mobilizations, a viral latching-on to membraneous surfaces of words.” Hayward, Eva and Jami Weinstein. “Introduction: Tranimalities in the Age of Trans* Life,” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (May 1, 2015): 198, <https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2867446>

for tidy precision.¹²² I understand this proliferative quality as the inventive &&& of the asterisk. The * of queer*trans/materiality, signals this &&&, contributing to my approach to more-than/human relations in choreographic practice.

Tentacularity: the */asterisk as a sticky body-in-relation

Tentacularity is haptic and affective
(the asterisk is touchy-feely)
is sticky, promoting proximal kinships
(the asterisk is hungry for connection)
is care-full, empathic, and con-sensual
(the asterisk is a response-able citizen in a community of symbols)
practice notes 11: 2020

I build on Hayward and Gossett's asterisk as 'fingery' (2017), which suggests a seeing-feeling that yearns for connection and belonging.¹²³ I also re-member Hayward's conception of 'tentacularity' (2008), exploring the starfish's ability to grow back its limbs, likened to transsexual *trans*-forming and *re*-generation.¹²⁴ Tentacularity is reverberated through queer*trans/materiality: a haptic thinking-moving that reaches for the possibility (and potentiality) of inter-species connectivity, communing, and intimacies.

My engagement with the symbol * underpins a *becoming-with* in performance emplacements in a reaching-towards, a proximal search for more-than/human kinship. I am opening out to connect and engage through the sensorium of the felt body-in-relation. I see tentacularity as the health-full yearn for physical connection, for touch, possibilising the multi-sensorial capacities of *Choreoqueering*, which will include extrasensory touching (Chapter 3 & 4).¹²⁵

¹²² Hayward and Gossett. "Impossibility of That," 20–21.

¹²³ Hayward and Gossett's asterisk (2017) is articulated as "a grasping", designating a fingery multiplication rather than demanding precision, in "the possibility of nearby-ness", 20–21.

¹²⁴ Hayward, in musing the metaphor "like a starfish" in 2008, questions the clumsiness of the analogical device of 'like-ness' to capture "the kind of poetic and material enactments of trans-sexing/speciating." Hayward, Eva. "More Lessons from a Starfish: Prefixial Flesh and Transspeciated Selves," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3/4 (2008): 66-67, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27649785>

¹²⁵ A perception of touch that occurs beyond the seven senses of smell-olfactory, taste-gustatory, sight-vision, hearing-auditory, touch-tactile, movement-vestibular, and proprioception-body position.

Haptic relationality

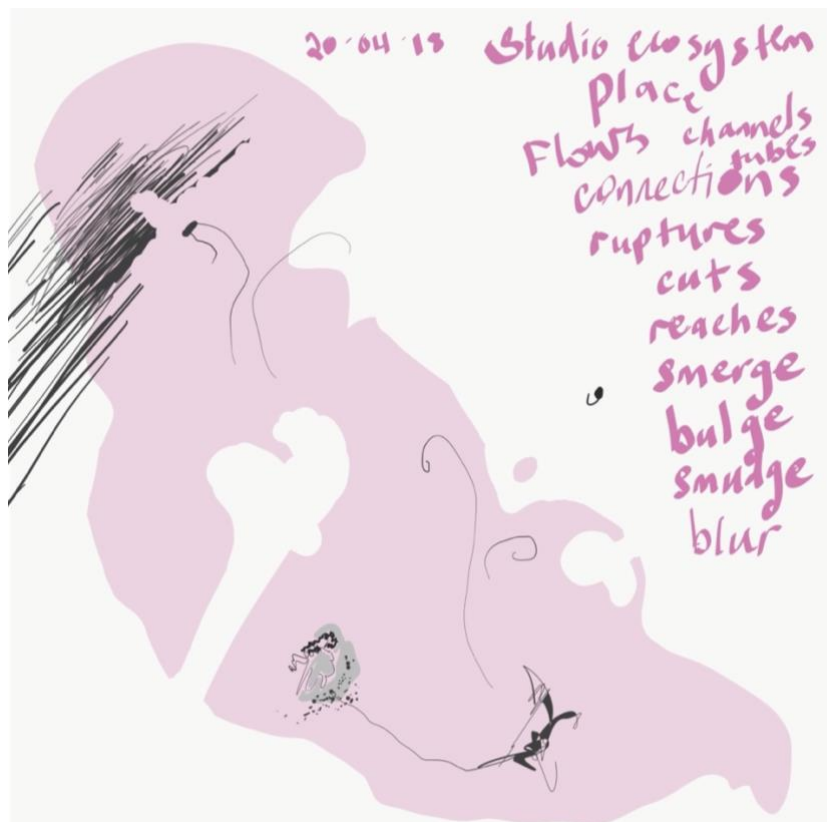


Figure 9: val smith, *flotsy cycles*, 2018.

In connecting 'queer' and 'trans' with an asterisk, as queer*trans, I am positioning these two concepts in the midst of a material practice that feels, a haptic-sensing. The * ripples, reaches, then returns, rests, and radiates amongst the liveliness of communities of beings with diverse genders, bodies, sex characteristics, and sexualities. I focus my inquiry in the haptic relationality of performance as an intermeshed network of material relations. My research becomes a dance of the intra-relational, a feltness fluctuating between bodies, things, elements, and places.

This queer*trans form of materiality pays care-full attention to how close or distant we feel with other bodies and things in performance. This is not a process of measuring proximity however, it's more empathic, intuitive, a sensing. Noticing how we position ourselves in relation to each other (a 'we' that is inclusive of the more-than/human). *Promiscuous Emplacements* explores the vitalities and agencies of such proximities, and any emergent intimacies, temporalities, and other bodily experiences of performance. Inviting queerness and transness into a felt performance approach, leads me to another linking, of Navel Radiation and the asterisk of trans*, situated through engagements with the somatic modality of Body-Mind Centering and Transgender Studies.

Perverting Navel Radiation: trans starfishy antics (asterisking)

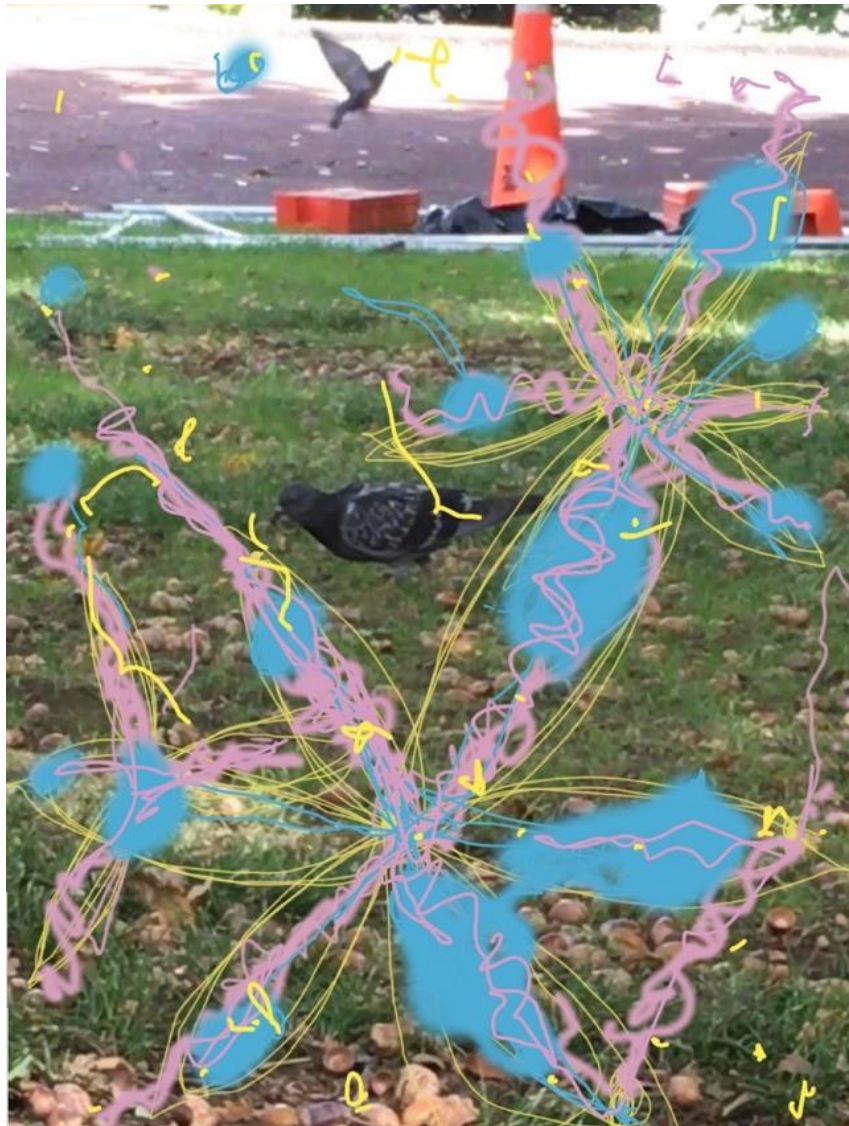


Figure 10: val smith, towards *Queer Dating Sites*, 2018. Image: val smith

I activate the *’s trans tentacularity by building on and adapting Navel Radiation. Navel Radiation is a pre-vertebrate pattern of the Basic Neurocellular Patterns (BNP) from the somatic modality of Body-Mind Centering (BMC) developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen.¹²⁶ The pattern of Navel Radiation is one of radial symmetry where all six limbs (head, tail, arms, legs) flow “inward and outward” with the support of the “navel centre” (Bainbridge Cohen 2018b). This establishes orientation around a navel before the spine and vertical axis “as we

¹²⁶ The Basic Neurocellular Patterns (BNP) are familiar to me from workshops with Olive Bieringa and Otto Ramstad of Body Cartography Project in Aotearoa (2001-2005), a workshop in Tamaki with Bonnie (2017), and through a personal study over several years of Cohen’s 2008 book. *Bainbridge Cohen, Bonnie, Sensing, Feeling and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering*, Second Edition (Northampton, MA: Contact Editions, 2008).

progress through the vertebrate patterns.”¹²⁷ Bainbridge describes our limbs integrating with each other “through our navel centre as a six-limbed starfish.”¹²⁸ I experience through this practice energies and movements that radiate through limbs and beyond to connect and press into things and surfaces around me. A bodily experience of reaching and contracting; resting and expanding.

My embodiment of the asterisk is a haptic retracing of Navel Radiation in relation to Eva Hayward’s theories of trans and the asterisk, and her concepts of ‘fingery’ (2017) and ‘tentacularity’ (2008). Through reimagining the body’s starfish patterning in relation to Transgender Studies, I sense the possibility for radiance of a queer*trans becoming-with the more-than/human. In my perversion of Navel Radiation, what I term *asterisking*, I activate reaching to connect and movement not just from and through the six limbs but with any area, organ, tissue or surface of the body as tentacles of the *. Heart, nose, elbow, toes, pelvis, nipple, hair, eye. I imagine my body to be a starfishy forming, a sea creature with multiplying tentacles: a more-than/human becoming. Then, moving further through the lens of queer*trans/materiality, I see-feel my body as the asterisk, a *. Re-invigorating the imagery of Navel Radiation through movement-based experimentation, asterisking involves radiating rippling reaching queerness and transness through bodily tentacles (through conceptual, typographical, material, and felt radiation), also returning and resting/yielding.



Figure 11: val smith, *asterisking in action*, 2022. Screenshot of video: val smith

[Video of *asterisking in action*](#)

¹²⁷ Bainbridge Cohen, Bonnie, “Fear of Falling,” Body-Mind Centering, October 22, 2018, <https://www.bodymindcentering.com/fear-of-falling/>

¹²⁸ Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, *Basic Neurocellular Patterns: Exploring Developmental Movement*, 2nd ed. (California: Burchfield Rose Publishers, 2018), 167–212.

Multi-centered bodies of relation and flow

Promiscuously emplaced, the asterisk of this perverted form of Navel Radiation radiates through a queer off-centre 'centre'.¹²⁹ Asterisking cuts apart the conception of a singular 'navel centre' of the body with its' multiplying tentacles. Instead, asterisking has the capacity to radiate reach and connect in multiple directions at once, at any time, from any place or surface, to somewhere else. The multi-centered * flows outwards past the skin surface, beyond any conception of a bounded human body of spine, brain, belly, or complete closed systems. Asterisking also yields, receives, and retreats inward to pool, to rejuvenate. Flowing outward, and yielding inward, this tentacular starfishy forming enables connectivity through a cyclic breathing. Beckoning salty oceanic relations with the more-than/human; asterisking moves with the fluid patterns of water ways, rippling toward and away from. Bodily rips, tides and waves of relationality sooth and reinvigorate.

We trans folk cut and bleed (de-member), to transform, heal,
re-create/re-generate and re-member ourselves.
felt transitions have the capacity to see-feel outside-inside and inside-outside, a
loopy perception, the hyphen ensures there is no division of inner and outer
no division of trans and nature, or from what is termed natural
practice notes 12: 2021

I remember a starfish has a dispersed nervous system, with no centralised brain, but a way of feeling-thinking that is receptive and radial.¹³⁰ The starfish thinks-moves with its many tentacles, as do I. I activate an asterisking nervous system that tentacularly expands to connect and communicate.¹³¹ Reaching and seeing-feeling like a plant's tendrils, I move in relation to the things, elements, structures and beings I encounter in the marginal urban places of Tāmaki Makaurau - with road cones, pigeons, acorns, and weeds (see Figure 10, p 35). I propose asterisking a speculative somatic practice that attunes and becomes-with the more-than/human in performance, including sea creatures, ocean bodies, plant bodies, broadening a scientific definition of the nervous system rooted in white settler society.¹³²

¹²⁹ I reconceive the navel of Navel Radiation as a shifting centre, a site of active exchange, rather than a point of origin. Radiation then, is initiated from an unset place where I imagine the margins can meet and intermingle with the status quo.

¹³⁰ I am also thinking about the multiple brains of the octopus, one at the base of each tentacle.

¹³¹ Asterisking is not beholden to the classical conception of a nervous system that requires a brain, spinal cord, and nerves. I suggest electrical and magnetic communication, signalling the potential to travel and connect between and across bodies, things, and surfaces.

¹³² Miguel-Tomé, Sergio and Rodolfo R. Llinás. "Broadening the Definition of a Nervous System to Better Understand the Evolution of Plants and Animals," *Plant Signaling & Behavior* 16, no. 10 (October 3, 2021): 1927562, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15592324.2021.1927562>

Coming back to performances on the land in marginal urban places, I imagine the more-than/human nervous system of asterisking to also have the capacity to reach and communicate across the spacetimes of live and virtual works, including those streamed online. Moving beyond a bounded location, the asterisking body can reach across screens and spaces, to connect with other places, lands and creatures. The unbounded nervous system of the asterisk in performance touches atmospheres, sometimes connecting with other planets, stars and sky bodies. The potential is for inter-species communications and a becoming-with that is not bound to sameness (see *ill grow back* and *Songs with Birds*, Chapter 5).

Trans-forming and re-generation

There is a paradigmatic friction in engaging Transgender Studies and the field of Somatics. However, I sense a spark(l)ing and smoking potential in this merging. Asterisking is rippling through my multiplying bodily tentacles – I am radiating and retracting genders, exploring the feltness of queer sexualities. The agential openings of asterisking sees trans and queer bodies not bound by one gender, one centre, one relationship, or species.¹³³ I can see-feel the shifts of non-binary genders through the tentacularity of the tissues, flows and systems of my body. Fingers, organs, fluids, bone, hair, orifices, flaps, flakes, all moving in relation with places and the more-than/human.

Sometimes * becomes an orificial contemplation on felt portals to other worlds (more just), ancestral worlds (Celtic), desiring sites (deterritorialised), and relation forms (polyamorous)

Asterisk-portals include nostril, mouth, anus, and fontanel

Emplaced amongst and between, the * is orificially oriented in its capacity and aesthetic (looks like an anus).¹³⁴

The asterisk both fits in a gap, and “signifies the wider cavity.”¹³⁵

In this middling queer*trans position, * is at once an &&& that invites the more-than of relations and opens an orifice-portal to somewhere *e/se*.

Someplace potentially pleasure-seeking...

practice notes 13: 2020

¹³³ Asterisking carries the capacity for Barad’s “monstrous re/generations”, or queer self-birthing as I explore further soon. Barad, Karen. “Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings,” *GLQ* 21, no. 2–3 (01 2015): 388, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2843239>

¹³⁴ The anus is important to my discourse, as it is non-specific to one gender. Almost all humans have an anus, a site of pleasure for many non-cis genders and queer sexualities. The anus becomes a portal-bridge that connects us in a yearn for bodily pleasure. Entering the margins of the page again is a passively active btm//bottom position, see Chapter 4.

¹³⁵ Personal communication with artist Creek Waddington (Pākehā).

Asterisking promotes multi-gendered and multi-centered bodies. The tentacularity of the * has proven itself queer indeed! A sticky sensuous withness, emerging through engagements with the *, my understanding of a desire to feel connected as queer and trans has shifted. I am teeming with multiplying relatives, connections; I am made of this haptic relationality.

Asterisking, a perverting of Navel Radiation, is a queer form of somatic practice, (see *Queer/ing Somatics* in Chapter 3) that underpins several performance iterations including *Queer Dating Sites* (to be discussed in this chapter), *sex/es on site (v1) & (v2)*, and *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)* (Chapter 3). I shift now to the second key quality of queer*trans/materiality, promiscuity, which builds on Barad (2015).

Promiscuous matters when emplacing performance (building on Barad's trans*materialities, 2015)

Promiscuity is proliferative and desiring
(open to polyamory and plurality)
Promiscuity is atypically sensorial
(the asterisk feels differently)
Promiscuity is speculative, promoting agential queer connections
(a political imaginary)
practice notes 14: 2020

My engagement with the notion 'promiscuity' relates to Barad's interest in "matter's experimental nature" from *Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings* (2015), a key text in this inquiry.¹³⁶ There are other inclinations of Barad's imaginaries of matter in this article: that it is inventive, yearning, unnatural, in/determinate, self-birthing. These are all embedded in my *Promiscuous Emplacements* performance strategies, entangled through the dance of queerness and transness in live works.

The way we invite and engage the more-than/human through dance and performance can enable and render capable (or not) bodies, things, beings, classes, and races. Thus, central to the concerns of this investigation is *how* I relate with more-than/human kin, human communities, and with the material, psychic, vital and atmospheric elements of each marginal urban place. I especially warm to those bodies, things, beings, classes, and races that are marginalised, overlooked or invisibilised by colonisation, cisheteronormativity, and capitalism.

Promiscuous Emplacements refers to the way I engage with the more-than/human, through multiplying connective encounters that by their very nature are acts of promiscuity and perversity. The more-than/human encounters of my work are endlessly proliferating, yet

¹³⁶ Barad, "Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings," 387.

discerning, and with “queer self-birthing” capacity and agency.¹³⁷ The quality of promiscuity in my performance work, also links to Audre Lorde’s notion of ‘the erotic’ as power (1978).¹³⁸ Sometimes amorous, always pleasure-seeking; I engage the plurality of multispecies love. This is a dance of erotic energies, potency and promiscuous powers that circulate through and across surfaces, things, places, beings.

Sensorial perversity

In developing the term ‘sensorial perversity’, I am taking cues from Barad’s transmaterialist notion of ‘perversity’ (2015) as the self-touching, enfolding, and involution of an electron (a simple particle of matter).¹³⁹ I am also guided by Erin Manning’s (2013) work on extrasensory perception and the atypical sensorial processing of autistic folks.¹⁴⁰ I merge and meld ideas from Barad and Manning to speculate on the feltness of queer*trans sensory modes and matters. *Sensorial perversity* sees queerness and transness as a felt way of knowing, queer and trans acts as innately perverse and unnatural, involuting and unpredictable in substance. My lens of queer*trans/materiality rises to the affectively charged languaging of *perversion*. This enables a research-creation that is steeped in the sub-stance of perversion as twisted, bent, slanty, a methodological framework that Alison Richards (2005) might call ‘meth-odd’.¹⁴¹ I develop sensorial perversion in Chapter Three, as a tendency of *Choreoqueering*, building my approach to queer/ing somatics.

Through this review of Barad and Hayward’s transmaterialities so far, queer*trans/materiality is revealed as a political imaginary (speculative), a felt relationality that is rooted in the tentacularity, perversity and promiscuity of *. The * has undone any perceptual distinction/separation of human and nonhuman, body and place, or nature and queer. Queer*trans/materiality opens pathways for complex, enmeshed and unreliable performances of becoming-with. Following, I describe an example of asterisking in action, where my choreographic practice grows from haptic encounters with a small/overlooked/forgotten thing, recognising my attraction for the seemingly insignificant things and beings of marginal urban places.

¹³⁷ Barad, 388.

¹³⁸ Lorde, Audre, “The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michele A. Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York & London: Routledge, 1993), 339–43, https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11881_Chapter_5.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2paY-OAVJVEzBlaGlitQFnC0kkXcfnTT2i19hC7GkDUTlu-vR6mpHZpKE

¹³⁹ Barad, 399.

¹⁴⁰ Manning, Erin, *Always More than One: Individuation’s Dance*, E-Duke Books Scholarly Collection (Duke University Press, 2013).

¹⁴¹ Richards, Alison M. “Perverse Research Practices,” *Snurb*, March 30, 2005, <https://snurb.info/node/171>

Pinky: the asterisk in choreographies of scale and in/significance



Figure 12: val smith, towards *Queer Dating Sites*, 2018. Image: val smith

Early in 2018, I was rehearsing towards the performance work *Queer Dating Sites* (discussed in the following section). I went on walks through the inner-city streets around AUT campus, noticing and mapping things and places I was attracted to. Every more-than/human dance, however small or unplanned, was an event worth considering; worthy of choreographic attending. One auspicious day, I encountered a pink plastic diamante in the shadowy and mossy space outside and behind the glamorous Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland Art Gallery.

i am attracted to a single pink plastic rhinestone; an asterisk; a straggly foil; a lone sequin; a holographic tendril

perhaps detritus from a pride parade, drag show,

a late-night fuck and suck, or walk of shame?

practice notes 15: 2018

Engaging the starfish antics of asterisking, I am tentacularly radiating a vibe, rippling and reaching to connect with this single pink sequin (Figure 11). This somatic exchange with the discarded rhinestone, sparked in me an affectively charged desire for someplace else, beyond trans hatred and violence, past queer phobic paranoia. The rainbowy tendencies of

queer*trans/materiality's promiscuity were awakened! I sensed and rippled with the spark(l)ing and smoking of this minor encounter in the arising thirst for a generative reforming of society. A dance begins, one that imagines the queer futurity of micro plastics. This was to be a fleeting, flickering dance (see *co-shimmering* Chapter 3).



Figure 13: val smith, *co-shimmering*, 2022. Screenshot of video: val smith

[Video of co-shimmering](#)

In durations of dwelling with the marginal urban place I selected for the live work *Queer Dating Sites*, I attuned to the feltness of each inter-species encounter or relating with respect and openness. Attuning-with builds familiarity and trust with the more-than/human. No matter how little or short the encounter, or how seemingly insignificant the thing or being, it felt important, of value. Elevating the status of overlooked more-than/human exchanges, played a role in reimagining the substance and economy of dance.

From Barad's trans*materiality view that all matter is promiscuous and perverse (2015), attending to this small pink plastic thing, this actant of the dance, re-generates the messy agential queer connections of more-than/human relationality. This event reflects the stickiness of the asterisk: a longing to connect to something meaningful. The simplicity of this choreographic assemblage of human and thing is refreshing, yet complicated, an intimate more-than/human enmeshment.

The glint, shimmer, mangle, matt
Fold crease flap – all these alluring qualities of the discarded and dirty
The colour and crumple
Worn, blistered, dissolving, decaying
Absorbing the relation vibe tentacularly
passed via haptic and psychic means, intra-cellularly too through osmosis
practice notes 16: 2018

gayYay

I liken the * of queer*trans/materiality to the twink-le of this drag diamante, a fallen body lodged in the cracks of these urban outskirts. In this fleeting relationship with the pink plastic sequin, I see-feel and think-move with the flick and glint of light diffracting off the polish of its surfaces and sharpened edges. The merging of diamante-light and human-body is felt as a material queer/ing of cis/heteronormative spacetime. Both diamante and queer human extend to touch, a tentacular fingery intimacy emerges. We are empowered through touch.

Diffractive pink light rays flickering across, through and beyond
our gay bodies
the light carries both thing and human
with our plastics, fluids, and flesh, we are
inviting blue sky thinking *and* subterranean realities
it is today, as above, so below
a diamante*human communing
practice notes 17: 2018

I call this a glimmering (not to be confused with a glamouring). A human*diamante dance. This more-than/human enmeshment sparks alive a feeling of **gayYay** (a momentary celebration of this queer*trans life).



Figure 14: val smith, *gayYay*, 2022. Screenshot of video: val smith.

[Video of gayYay](#)

The *gayYay* of * signals the potential for trans-forming and re-generation, spark(l)ing capacities that imbue the more-than/human relationality of *Promiscuous Emplacements*. Light, body fluids and tissues meet, touching/not touching across space. An enchantment occurred in this dance, suggesting a more-than/human mystical realm. This glimmer of hope for something other, something trans-formative moved through my performance practice

(see Dolan 2015, on the utopian potential of live performance).¹⁴² What if this dance with the pink sequin, had the power to disrupt binarised categories and boundaries of inside/outside, man/woman, nature/queer, as well as human/nonhuman?

We have seen the * of queer*trans/materiality, with its wink to promiscuous matters, sensorial perversity, gayYay, trans-forming and re-generating, starfish antics, and haptic relationality. This is a typographical symbol with much more value than simply being the 'little star' on your computer keyboard.¹⁴³ * radiates imaginative, desiring and affectively charged queer*trans connections with overlooked, discarded or invisibilised things. Writing and dancing with the affect and qualities of more-than/human encounters is an improvisational wondering/wondering (Barad 2015). The political imaginary of asterisking is carried into the performance event *Queer Dating Sites*, an exploration of intimate relatings with a marginal urban place and the more-than/human things, surfaces and elements of this location in central-city Tāmaki Makaurau.

¹⁴² Dolan, Jill. *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre* (Minneapolis: University of Michigan Press, 2005), https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/S0307883306002100/type/journal_article

¹⁴³ If we, like Oscar Wilde, look to the stars whilst lying in the gutter, perhaps our dreamy optimism and the proliferation of stars ***. *. ** in this inquiry, might enable a queer*trans cosmology to emerge. See Wilde, Oscar, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1997.

Queer Dating Sites: emerging more-than/human relations



Figure 15: val smith, *Queer Dating Sites*, 2018. Image: val smith

This more-than/human relationality is we and permeable¹⁴⁴
(rooted in reciprocity and a love for the more-than/human)
practice notes 18: 2018

One of the early performance iterations of this inquiry, *Queer Dating Sites* (Feb 2018) was presented as part of Auckland Fringe Festival.¹⁴⁵ I invited an intimate number of people into the participatory experiment designed to explore the choreographic provocation: “What if we could date this site?”¹⁴⁶ Through this discussion of *Queer Dating Sites*, I will explain how the larger socio-cultural context, material and discursive elements of the selected place, and asterisking (a perverse approach to Navel Radiation), are both activated choreographically,

¹⁴⁴ Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *A Dialogue On Love* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1999), 106.

¹⁴⁵ My use of the term ‘site’ in the title of this work reflects where I am at this early stage in the research. I later prodded at and questioned the whiteness of the notion of ‘site-oriented’ practice, because of the anthropological inferences of the term. This reflection on site and site-oriented practice led to further critical explorations of terms such as ecologies, environment, land, whenua, and place, valuing Indigenous perspectives on terminologies, and engaging a critical whiteness approach. Later, I settle on a consideration of ‘place’ as a source of nurturing and nutrition at every level, and at times, an intimate friend.

¹⁴⁶ Part performance, part workshop, part panel discussion, *Queer Dating Sites* explores relationships between bodies and places to offer small audiences a facilitated experience of intimate encounters with invisibilised urban spaces.

and how this work led to the emergence of an ethico-political approach. As the title suggests, my inquiry is open to the possibility of more-than/human intimacies.

Material and affective textures, and institutional restrictions

We are surrounded by concrete walls and chrome railings, gravel, discarded things, crisped leaves, pipes and draining, architectural edges, and atmospheric elements.
practice notes 19: 2018

The selected marginal urban place was a small semi-confined space underneath the external stairwell of a towering concrete institutional building within AUT campus grounds.¹⁴⁷ This marginal urban place was juuuust out of sight, it's walls visually obscuring the performance from the eyes of students and staff, and the endless stream of passers-by. We were located near to the city centre, and as such there was a cacophony of sounds, smells, and the unpredictable movements of pigeons, cars, and peoples.¹⁴⁸

The space is a little too small for all of us to fit into easily.
Because of this we accidently touch and feel awkwardly close.
Promiscuity and tentacularity are edging into the social situatedness of this performance, with love, and the possibility for gayYay.
practice notes 20: 2018

Inside the space, we were somewhat cocooned, the predominant sensorial impression is that of the differently textured grey surfaces (bumpy, dense, cold, smooth), contrasted with slivers of bright blue sky viewed through the crevice and crack of architectures. I am drawn to this place because of its call for potential intimacy. It is in the shadow of the institution; it feels slightly private and sort-of-safe; there is a slight sense of naughty-ness thrown in as it also feels out-of-bounds.

Gay Shame & BDSM materials as contributing players/actants/performers

Before the event, I gathered materials as contributing players/actants/performers. These included: pink blankets, sheets, and pillows; gloves (latex, cloth, rubber, leather, lace); thick cloth blindfolds; & personal lubricant. I considered these materials part of the work's critical-creative assemblage. They are suggestive of queer sex positive practices and BDSM, also advocating actively for clear boundaries, communication, play, trust, and negotiation (through facilitated open enquiry).

¹⁴⁷ This location is just outside WE Building on St Paul Street, Tāmaki Makaurau.

¹⁴⁸ This early selection of a 'marginal urban ecology', reflects wanderings/wonderings near to, and around the peripheral spaces of AUT city campus. This place is very close to my PhD studio, but, like any university campus, out-of-the -ordinary engagements onsite come with rules and restrictions. Transgressions of these rules come with regulatory consequences, as is revealed when campus security arrive in the middle of the performance to shut it down.

February is Pride season in Tāmaki Makaurau.¹⁴⁹ I responded to this by celebrating GAY SHAME! (Halperin and Traub 2019; Halberstam 2005). *Queer Dating Sites* speaks to that which lies beneath the drive to transform queerness from perversion to a proud identity. In this work, loving attention was drawn to the disgusting, the dirty, and the dark; that which is forgotten or buried under the glitz of the Pride Parade and hidden within the shadows of this urban place, relegated insignificant within this Academic Institution. This is a celebration of the disreputable sexual histories, and dissident gender identities, reclaiming shame as productive.¹⁵⁰ It is also for me a nod to the activist groups in the Bay Area of Turtle Island/US, who organise under the rubric Gay Shame “to critique the consumerism of gay pride festivals.”¹⁵¹ An openness to experimental playing emerged, sensorial relation forms between human & human, human & more-than/human (beyond the couple dyad).¹⁵²



Figure 16: val smith, *Queer Dating Sites*, 2018. Image: Peter Jennings (edit: val smith)

¹⁴⁹ Pride season in Tāmaki Makaurau, 2-18 February 2018, see <https://2018.aucklandpride.org.nz/>

¹⁵⁰ Halperin, David M. and Valerie Traub. Eds., *Gay Shame*, Pap/DVD edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

¹⁵¹ Halberstam, Jack/Judith. “Shame and White Gay Masculinity,” *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (84-85) (December 1, 2005): 219, https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-23-3-4_84-85-219

¹⁵² Sociologist Ellen Lamont 2017 points out that, “queer people often explicitly seek to undermine conventional relationship practices.” Lamont, Ellen. “‘We Can Write the Scripts Ourselves’: Queer Challenges to Heteronormative Courtship Practices,” *Gender & Society* 31, no. 5 (October 1, 2017): 624, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243217723883>

Desiring and pleasuring fields of support

I utilised somatic processes to bring attention to the array of affective materiality and discursive forces. The performance began with arriving and settling into place. Introducing the pink sheets, gloves, blindfolds, and lubricant, attendees familiarised themselves. I held space and time for people to get comfortable, then invited everyone to lie down, side by side. We wrapped ourselves in the pink sheets to facilitate a soft/ening, resting, spreading and release of our body weight with gravity into the concrete floor (and further subterrains). They are also part of the menagerie of materials that invite people into an improvisational wandering/wondering (Barad 2015).

We are working to sense the meeting place of body and city.

We are moving with feltness as co-constitutive kin.

We are interconnected through the materiality of place, but not limited to a physical touching.

practice notes 21: 2018

The tentacularity of *Queer Dating Sites* exceeded the physical realms of our human experience of place. We were imagining the reach of bodies to sky, to wall, to drain. Activating the asterisk, we were inviting and welcoming the meta-physical radiance of multi-centred bodies in relation, moving in relation to affective and psychic realms as well as material. Through the somatic choreography we were reaching, yielding, and rippling, producing proliferative connections and an openness to &&& relations with the more-than/human.

Soft/ening the asterisk body

Asterisking in *Queer Dating Sites* invited multi-directional processes of soft/ening, resting, and slowing. I activated this through guided sensory and touch-based exercises that worked to counter fear, and anxiety, and facilitate a soft/ening of the body at the place of meeting with the city. I suggested partnered somatic tasks to activate *bodies-in-relation* (this involved two humans for this work, to safeguard each other). The tasks that we moved through were supported by a handout as a visual aid (Figure 20) that combines digital drawings, quotes and poetics (flotsy is elaborated in Chapter 3), as well as theoretical quotations, and descriptions of the tasks. As we softened into the enmeshed relationality of humans and more-than/human entities, beings, elements, and things through the felt and sensorial experiences, we were able to listen to the meeting place of body and city surfaces, as sensation, movement, experience.



Figure 17: val smith, *Dating a marginal urban place*, 2022. Screenshot of video: val smith

[Dating a marginal urban place video](#)

Access, safety, protection for queer and trans bodies

Aware of the potential inaccessibility and discomfort in inviting human attendees to lie down on concrete, i offer physical support. pillows for extra comfort, blankets, and sheets for cosiness. pink sheets specifically, as a meditation on softness and trans femme-ininity.

practice notes 22: 2018

As well as foregrounding a celebration of Gay Shame, *Queer Dating Sites* also gestures at a lack of safe public places for rainbowy folks to gather in the central Auckland cityscape, and the city's more dispersed urban and suburban centres.¹⁵³ With few places to go to safely engage in acts of affection, intimacy, romance, or sex (even gay bars are not safe spaces these days), creating our own spaces for getting together and hooking up has become essential.¹⁵⁴ Physical assault, discrimination, sexualised attacks, and harassment are real threats (in public and private spaces). The desire to hide and not be seen is rooted in very valid fears; for trans and gender non-conforming folks, visibility and not passing can compromise safety. Fear can serve a useful function in this regard, to keep us safe and protected.¹⁵⁵ Anticipating the possible fears, uncertainties, and psychological discomfort of attendees the pink blankets, sheets, and pillows are offerings of care, protection, and support.

¹⁵³ *Queer Dating Sites* also signalled the inadequacies of online dating apps for queers, gender diverse folx, and relationship anarchists.

¹⁵⁴ Safety is especially lacking for POC trans women and gender variant people. Cases of sexual assault at Family Bar on Karangahape Road were being reported at the time of making *Queer Dating Sites*, which concerned me.

¹⁵⁵ However, both fear and openness can coincide differently depending on who we are and our histories, and the situation.

Sheets are a thin but soft cushioning. my hope is to reduce the hardness of the material city surfaces and faux-protect us against the unwanted touches of dirt or dust (humour is integral, poking fun at our fears of the messiness of earth). A sheet provides an ironically thing separating layer but is quickly felt then as a cosy layer (a haptic pleasuring). The feeling of homely safety is desired and unfolded in the processual experience of wrapping/being wrapped, and then laying down (an immediate feltness of temporary belongggginnng).

practice notes 23: 2018

Amorous reciprocity: expanding more-than/human loves and intimacies

Queer Dating Sites prods at an anthropocentric view of what constitutes dating. The promiscuous explorations of this work invite an amorous reciprocity, a love-based relationality that extends to include the more-than/human. This receptive and generous quality is soft/ening the premeditated shape of our human-human relation forms, and our presumed categories of what and whom we are or might become.

This reciprocal love that we typically savour for other human persons, makes room for other, less certain intimacies of care and affection. We collectively drew attention to the unnoticed or unseen qualities of this place (a vibrant ecology teeming with life). As a result, *Queer Dating Sites* invoked wonder and curiosity around the small details, the beauty of it all.

More-than/human intimate relations were emerging. Whilst our asterisking was radiëally reaching, and proliferating, the choreographic practice was also yielding to warmly welcome, receive information, simply perceive what as occurring here and now. *Queer Dating Sites* activated queer*trans/materiality as reciprocal and love centred. Polyamorous ways of relating arose; moving away from dyad structures, I noticed triads, quads, non-hierarchical polycules.¹⁵⁶ An amorous form of reciprocity springs from spaces inside and outside the body, a love not bound to the physical space of the human heart: love from cloud, from foot pressing wall, from the sound of footsteps, love from the tickle of fern or moss, from skull on rock. Activating a permeable we, the yearn to connect with each other in meaningful ways (human, more-than/human, and environment at large) was present and palpable.

¹⁵⁶ Polyamorous means many loves. For polyamory relationship structures, see for example Sullivan, Stephanie, 'Polyamorous Relationship Structures', *Affirmative Couch* (blog), 23 January 2019, <https://affirmativecouch.com/polyamorous-relationship-structures/>

Consensuality

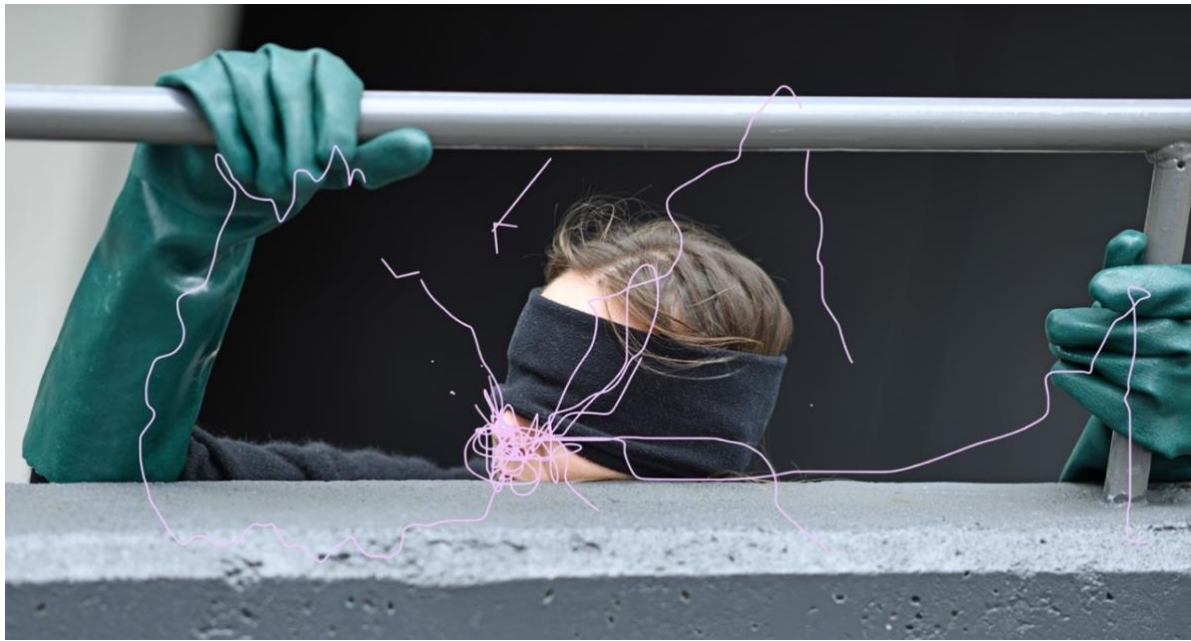


Figure 18: val smith, *Queer Dating Sites*, 2018. Image: Peter Jennings

In the promotional image for *Queer Dating Sites* (Figure 12), we see an ephemera of haptic sensing draw digitally over a photo of this marginal urban place (*flotsy*). I activate a touch that moves with and beyond fingers and hands. I avoid grasping. This is an open-ended haptic sensing, a sensing that does not seek to know. A touch not limited to prescriptive handholding, nor the petting of hetero-typical dating. This form of haptic sensing recalls the empowerment of asterisking, the rippling and radiant multidirectional movements, and multi-centres of the asterisk. It also conjures questions regarding an ethics of touch.

Queer Dating Sites considers an ethics of touch with the more-than/human. A playful (yet serious) question emerges of what consent between human and more-than/human in intimate engagements might look like in the context of performance. How might we negotiate consent (beyond verbal communication) with the more-than/human? Would we know if we were receiving a yes or a no, from materials, surfaces, things or architectural structures? *Queer Dating Sites* addressing these questions through dance, exploring a haptic and kinaesthetic knowing and negotiation. Adding gloves and blindfolds to the mix of haptic relationality adds further complexities (Figure 14).

Consent and diverse forms of sensuality are integral to this work, melded in the term *consensuality*. Resting-with place, we move with the more-than/human at the “pace of trust” (brown 2019).¹⁵⁷ This means that we were attentive to the speed at which things, beings and

¹⁵⁷ brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017).

bodies move at. This is significant in the negotiation of consent with the more-than/human actants of performance works. Building trust takes time.

We (human and more-than/human) arrive with place slow/ing, togethering at the speed of respectful tentacularity. We did not know or try to pre-empt the pace at which we may feel safe, open, or creative. Experiential tasks involving physical contact, are offered in the spirit of the asterisk's promiscuity (to invent, imagine, improvise). I build on these questions and an improvisational approach to intimacy, care and protection in later works (*sex/es on site (v1)*, *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)*, discussed in Chapter 3), also refining the *Choreoqueering* techniques *Queer Clean(s)ing* and *Queer Napping* (Chapter 4).

The meta-physical reach of *: im/materialities of typographical kinship space

Queer Dating Sites explored *how* human and more-than/human things, materials, surfaces, and elements might engage and exchange if on a date. Applying a queer*trans/materialist lens to choreographic practice presented a challenge to cis/heteronormative courtship norms, ideas that have been enforced through settler-colonialism, unsettling oppressive beliefs about *who* or *what* we should date. Somatic processes of arriving and soft/ening to listen to haptic and affective meetings of surfaces, bodies, and things, with work led to an experience of more egalitarian relation forms and performance practices, bringing the human and more-than/human into an amorous togethering.

These experiments into more-than/human relationality of *Queer Dating Sites* diversify notions of queer intimacies to pry apart the anthropocentrism of romantic behaviours, relationship forms, and courtship practices. The emerging more-than/human intimacies included non-linear relation forms and structures such as polycules and *amorous reciprocity*. At the same time, felt experiences of more-than/human intimacies with/in the marginal urban place, and the more-than/human materials, surfaces and elements were not necessarily rooted to romance, nor bound by physical realms.

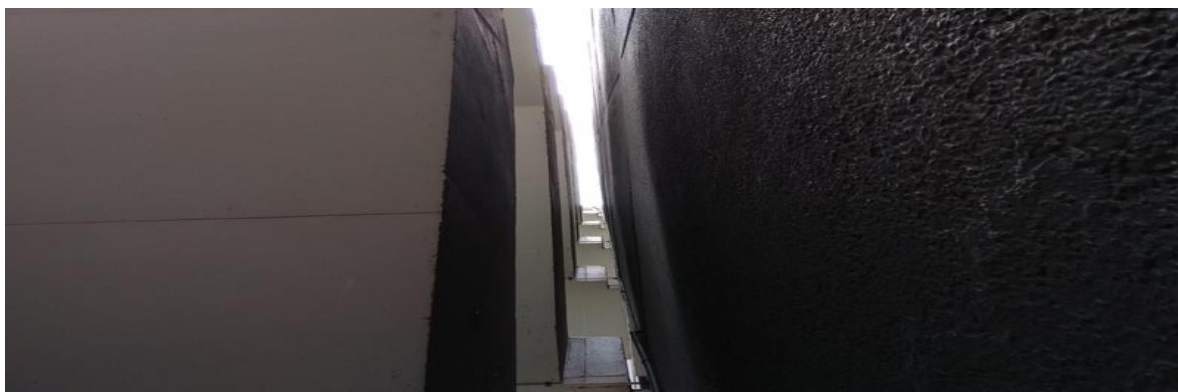


Figure 19: val smith, *Queer Dating Sites*, 2018. Image: val smith

Arriving and settling with the small group of human participants allowed an awareness to emerge of the textures, density, tones, and affect of the marginal urban place. Lying down

with a side-by-side relationality (Figure 13) was a powerful experience of human-human intimacy which allowed time to relax and drop into a felt pace for allowing trust and openness. This contributed to a challenge to colonial relation forms which separate the more-than/human from the human experience.

The asterisk turns to the slash: from connection to the yearn for belonging

We have seen that the asterisk can signal my rainbowy yearning for community connection, *and* the desire to be seen, heard, and loved for who I am as queer and trans non-binary. This yearning has a complex relationship with the desire for belonging as a white immigrant to Aotearoa. I reflect on the question of where I belong in the world, as Pākehā with English and Irish ancestry, as queer and trans non-binary, and as a performance practitioner where I locate my practice. To what lands do I affiliate now, and how? These questions initiate my conception of the slash. I describe my slash inquiry in the following Part II of this chapter, forming a Pākehā approach to accountability and reciprocity in the context of the settler-coloniser state of 'New Zealand'. Queer*trans/materiality underpins this inquiry into the intersectional complexities of what it means to be and belong in Aotearoa.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ In this paragraph, I respond to and build from questions posed by Tada Hozumi, initiator of the field of cultural energetics (nee Cultural Somatics), in which he considers the impacts of intergenerational trauma. Hozumi, Tada, 'Cultural Energetics', *Tada Hozumi* (blog), 2022, <https://tadahozumi.com/cultural-energetics/>

Queer Dating Sites – Task 1

BLIND DATE

(a social engagement between two that have not previously met)

Key words: unfamiliarity, beginnings, meeting, communication, relationship, algorithms, possibilities, romance, exploration

Notes on Dating a site, how to recognize non-verbal consent? Is it possible?

Even remote space can be subject to heteronormative surveillance –where wilderness can be a vast field of homoerotic possibility -

(Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010, p. 3)

- ☐ In pairs – one person to do a blind date, other person to witness and care
- ☐ Blind date person chooses a blindfold and glove/s for safety/comfort
- ☐ Witness/care person to lead blind date person to some *thing* that they might like to touch-hold-caress // sniff // taste // hear //move with
- ☐ Spend some time allowing this – keep them safe
- ☐ Talk about what you experienced
- ☐ Switch roles – select glove/s that you desire

#sexy #goingout #dating #locationlocationlocation #queerdatingsites



Queering Space in Choreographic Time - val smith

Figure 20: val smith, *Queer Dating Sites* handout, 2019

Part II: Slashing

I am slashing, as in proliferating the / // /// /

but is this just a straight-forward mark making of a line placed between, as a multiplying divider as either/or?

practice notes 24: 2021

The slash is contentious.¹⁵⁹ Prickly. Typographically, it is typically conceived as a separator. It is often seen as placing extra emphasis on the space between two concepts. A pushing out of the gap between an us and them.¹⁶⁰ When considered as a marking of space between Indigene and settler-coloniser, strong views exist as to why the slash produces such a gap and further separates, aligning difference with division. Further discourse tips and counters these views, explaining why the slash marks a relationality that recognises and values both cultures.

In my inquiry, I look to destabilise and reconsider notions of the slash as barrier and separator. I repurpose the slash for assembling a framework for *response-ability* (Haraway 2016). My performance thinking-moving builds on the notion of *Pākehā response-ability* (Bell 2014; Ream 2020, 2021; Bell and Ream 2021). They, in turn, have built on Haraway (2008, 2011, 2016) who applies care-fullness when facing issues of colonialism and racism. A *Pākehā response-ability* in my view centres on an ethics of relating, valuing accountability, reciprocity, care-fullness, and respect in the Aotearoa context of Māori/Pākehā relationality.

The slash, as will be revealed, informs my engagement with tangata whenua, Māori land, and places in performance-making, as well as grounding my approach to collaborative practice (bttm//bottom). I follow the prompt to “Be Tau, at peace, with your position”, one of the suggested qualities from Tina Ngata’s guidelines for Tangata Tiriti (2020).¹⁶¹ Focusing on the relationship between Māori and Pākehā tauwi peoples beholden by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, this ethics of co-relating also becomes enmeshed with my more-than/human kinship explorations, as will be discussed here and in Chapter 5.

I write in relationship with several scholars of the hyphen and slash of Indigene/settler-colonist relationships, positions that I am drawn to, including educator-authors Kuni Kaa Jenkins (Ngāti Porou) and Alison Jones (Pākehā) (2008), who articulate the hyphen as “a

¹⁵⁹ The slash is most often used to represent exclusive or inclusive, or division, and fractions.

¹⁶⁰ I am thinking about Alison Jones’ (2012) description of “the complex place at the Self-Other border.” Jones, Alison, ‘Dangerous Liaisons: Pakeha, Kaupapa Maori, and Educational Research’, *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 47, no. 2 (2012): 104.

¹⁶¹ Ngata, ‘What’s Required from Tangata Tiriti’.

difficult but always necessary *relationship*".¹⁶² Their collaborative work informs the later slash of Jones (2020) as uncomfortable yet insightful, difficult but necessary.¹⁶³ I also look to views on the hyphen and slash that embrace multiplicity, such as Jenkins and Jones (2008); writer Cassandra Barnett (Ngāti Raukawa) whose articulation of the hyphen's capacities for a surrender to "the state of being multiple" with all its differences (2015)¹⁶⁴; and artist Rebecca Hobbs (2017), who offers a (re)mapping of the hyphen-space; a peer-to-peer collaborative framework that advocates for "multiple situated and embodied viewpoints".¹⁶⁵ I look to the slash for its capacity to hold "a space of potent tensions" (Jones 2020); for "embracing multiplicity" (Barnett 2015); for bringing instability, fluidity and uncertainty (Giffney and Hird 2008); and for "the disturbance of the familiar" (Somerville 2016).¹⁶⁶

As with the asterisk, I utilise somatic experimentation to reimagine the typographical symbol of the slash (/) as a critical-creative marker. The slash is activated as a somatic subversion of colonial logics, which provides a different set of capacities from asterisking's perversion of cis/hetero logics. As will be discussed, I playfully adapt Cellular Breathing (Bainbridge Cohen, 2008, 2018) to explore the potentiality of a breathing semi-permeable slash. I also discuss the slash as a social and cultural marker (also with reference to the asterisk) in relation to the work *Queer Failure Walk* (2017). I begin however, with my critical-creative reconsideration of a view of the slash as divider or barrier, to examine its leanings towards multiplicity, plurality, and reciprocity.

Multiplicity, Plurality, Reciprocity

The slash is a punctuation mark
the divide symbol
which some Pākehā perceive as divisive or threatening.
practice notes 25: 2021

¹⁶² Jones, Alison and Kuni Kaa Jenkins, "Rethinking Collaboration: Working the Indigene-Colonizer Hyphen," in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, by Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln, and Linda Smith (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008), 475, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385686.n23>

¹⁶³ Jones, Alison. *This Pākehā Life: An Unsettled Memoir* (Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books Ltd, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.7810/9781988587288>

¹⁶⁴ Barnett recognises her "multiple selves" as "only separate and distinct according to my cognitive thought processes." Cassandra Barnett, 'Kei Roto i Te Whare/on Housing' (St PAUL Street 2015 Curatorial Symposium: Practice, Place, Research., Tāmaki Makaurau, 2015), 24, https://stpaulst.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/14988/2015-Curatorial-Symposium-papers_ST-PAUL-St-Gallery.pdf

¹⁶⁵ Hobbs, Rebecca Ann. "Ngā Puia o Ihumātao (The Volcanoes of Ihumātao)" (Aotearoa, Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau, 2017), 51, <http://rebeccaannhobbs.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Hobbs-DocFA-Thesis.pdf>

¹⁶⁶ Somerville, Margaret. "Queering Place: The Intersection of Feminist Body Theory and Australian Aboriginal Collaboration," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 38, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 14–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714413.2016.1119640>

As the conjunctive ‘or’, the slash sets up an exclusive divide. Countering this, my view of the slash sees an indicator of multiple meanings, and multifaceted perspectives and identities. I see the slash as an ineffective separator, rather than a complete or tidy division.

The / for me, represents a material-discursive slipping and sliding. The slope of the leaning slash offers a streamline pathway for the undoing of binaries and certainty. This is a slash that advocates for reciprocal exchange across and between. It informs negotiations of difference and worldviews, opening an active space of critical reflection.

The slash facilitates cross-cultural exchange, whilst also safeguarding tangata whenua sovereignty over language, culture and knowledge. The slash can also hold to account the dominant voice, that being white and Pākehā in my inquiry. I am not seeking mutuality in my embrace of the slash, nor do I wish to soften or reduce the impact of “structural power differences” or deny difference of perspectives and histories (Jenkins and Jones 2008).¹⁶⁷ Multiplicity, rather than mutuality, is preferred.

In their collaborative work, Jenkins and Jones (2008) recognise that Indigene and settler-coloniser are names that discursively produce each other. Speaking to the context of Aotearoa, they elaborate on how Māori and Pākehā “form identities created in response to the other.”¹⁶⁸ The slash, for Jenkins and Jones, is a recognition of difference, constructing a respectful space of distinction and plurality, holding the possibility for more than one set of values and meanings. This is a positioning that respects the ontological distinctions of Māori and Pākehā, and the multiple (creative) ways of knowing embedded in a society.

The slash as productively in-tension and a creative force

Of significance to this research, Alison Jones shifts focus from the hyphen to the slash in *A Pākehā Life* (2020), to examine further how this typographical space between, “marks an ongoing tension”.¹⁶⁹ She redefines the space between the two terms Māori and Pākehā as productively in-tension. Resonating this view, when engaging tangata whenua in collaboration, we don’t need to ‘get on’ all the time, nor have a single harmonised view.

¹⁶⁷ Jones and Jenkins, ‘Rethinking Collaboration’, 476.

¹⁶⁸ Jones and Jenkins, 421.

¹⁶⁹ Jones, Alison. *This Pākehā Life: An Unsettled Memoir*, 23. Discussing the “double name” of Maungakiekie (officially marked as Maungakiekie/One Tree Hill in 2014), for Jones, the slash joins, as a doubled space, with more than one meaning. Different histories are called into being with this view. Jones states: “I could not escape the contradictions, those doubled elements, and nor did I want to. They made me who I was.” (p 188) Building her understanding of what it means to be Pākehā, tension is seen as fundamental, positive and alive, likened to “a firm handshake, or a steady gaze between two people”. (p 9) Jones’s position motivates my digging into the discursive but also material elements of the slash of Māori/Pākehā, as a potent and lively trans-cultural space of respectful and reciprocal exchange.

Valuing multiplicity, I consider the negotiation of distinct voice, co-authorship, power, inequality and privilege in Māori/Pākehā relations important to practice.¹⁷⁰

In Chapter 4, I will discuss how my friendship-based approach to collaboration, *bttm//bottom*, utilises a double slash to hold space for multiplicity, for distinct voices to emerge and be realised, whilst remaining open to the potent and necessary tension of difference (without pushing away any affinity and the insights that come with it). Reimagining the slash generates an energy in me that drives anti-colonial thinking, concerns, and views (also see Chapter 5 for a Māori/Pākehā collaboration).

I am interested in a felt experience of the slash (entangled through with materiality and discursivity). This leads me to investigate the possibilities of a queer*trans/materialist activation of the symbol. I do this through experimenting with the somatic practice of Cellular Breathing (Cohen 2008, 2018). The following section of writing, entitled *A sub-version of Cellular Breathing*, resonates views of the slash as “productive and creative” in the context of Indigenous/non-indigenous relationships (Somerville 2016), and the hyphen as a creative coming together “capable of facilitating multiple situated viewpoints” (Hobbs 2017).¹⁷¹ A poetic insider voice is at play in my activation of the typographical mark. This voice tests ideas and correlations against the more formal language of academic theory and referencing.

A sub-version of Cellular Breathing: the trans-missive slash

I liken the slash, if it is actually a dividing barrier, to the failure of the Crowne Plaza atrium barrier in Tāmaki Makaurau in 2021 (sheets of Perspex set to contain the spread of Covid-19), through which airflow was not able to be contained.¹⁷² The movement of respiratory droplets (airborne micro aqueous bodies), passed over the open-ended Plaza barrier causing a stir in the media. Work was later done to extend the Perspex, and finally to remove the gaps, by sealing the Plaza closed.

The slash symbol, similarly, cannot be closed off.¹⁷³ It is a short straight mark, an open-ended line, with top and bottom end points. The slash then, *allows* for contagion and leaking through movement over or around these extremities of the mark. In Cellular Breathing, explained below, I explore and open up a felt sense of the slash of Māori/Pākehā.

¹⁷⁰ Jones and Jenkins, ‘Rethinking Collaboration’, 473.

¹⁷¹ Hobbs, ‘Ngā Puia o Ihumātao’, 72.

¹⁷² Martin, Hannah, ‘Covid-19: Crowne Plaza Atrium Barrier Extended, Sealed as Leak Inquiry Continues’, *Stuff*, 24 August 2021.

¹⁷³ To close off a slash would require a dramatic bending of the straight line to achieve a loop. I note that Cohen 2018 uses the circle as the spatial symbol for Cellular Breathing (2018a, p 70).

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (2008) describes Cellular Breathing as “the first organic pattern of living cells – the exchange of gasses through the ebb and flow of fluids passing through membranes.”¹⁷⁴ It is another pre-vertebrate pattern of the Basic Neurocellular Patterns within Bainbridge Cohen’s Body-Mind Centering (BMC). Activating Cellular Breathing in practice, I lay down, settle, arrive with place, and notice breath filling and emptying my lungs. Then, I open my awareness to the travel of breath through the body: to throat, belly, arms, feet, face, brain.¹⁷⁵ Cellular Breathing is always shifting between a fluid expansion, condensing, and yielding. My awareness of the movement of breath becomes more subtle over time. I begin to perceive the rhythms of expanding and condensing in all areas of the body down to the minuteness of the cells.¹⁷⁶ The two phases of Cellular Breathing become more apparent, described by Bonnie as ‘external respiration’ or lung breathing, and ‘internal respiration’, “breathing in the cells”.¹⁷⁷

I learn from Bainbridge Cohen that some molecules can diffuse across cell membranes, and others not. This diffusion occurs through an ebb and flow of fluids and osmosis. The double-layer membrane of cells enables transmission as needed and required.¹⁷⁸ This bodily breathing provides nutrients to every single cell of the body (estimated by researchers as 37.2 trillion).¹⁷⁹ Through my felt experiences of Cellular Breathing, I imagine the membranous structure of a cell and the skin of the body as protective *and* allowing, sensing for the passing of fluids, molecules, and gases across the cell ‘skin’ (a double-layer plasma).

Developing this imagery of Cellular Breathing in relation to the slash symbol, I see a membrane-threshold. The / is an ineffective separator, more akin to the semi-permeability of the cell membrane. The functioning of this slash, from a queer*trans/materialist perspective, is felt and corporeal, conceptual and political. Allowing and protecting from the passing of

¹⁷⁴ For more on Cellular Breathing see Cohen, Bonnie Bainbridge. *Sensing, Feeling and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering*, Second Edition (Northampton, MA: Contact Editions, 2008), 160-161. And Bainbridge Cohen, Bonnie, *Basic Neurocellular Patterns: Exploring Developmental Movement*, 2nd ed. (USA: Burchfield Rose Publishers, 2018), 69–112.

¹⁷⁵ Working with the idea of breathing with the felt rhythm of ‘in and out’, cycling between external and internal (Bainbridge Cohen 2018a), I experience the expanding and condensing of Cellular Breathing as omni-directional.

¹⁷⁶ Cellular Breathing in my experience is a flow emerging of sensing and feeling cells condensing and expanding, our breathing patterns and rhythms as a foundational awareness. All our trillions of cells are breathing. Fluids are moving inwards and outwards and stilling, reflecting the three phases of cellular breathing. The first phase is inhalation, an extension and expanding; then exhalation, a condensing; and thirdly yielding, a stilling and balancing in relationship with gravity and weight. Occurring at the level of every cell of the body, and in all the fluids, the fluid passing of oxygen and nutrients moves from the outer membrane towards the nucleus, into each cell. Bainbridge Cohen, Bonnie, *Sensing, Feeling and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering*, Second Edition (Northampton, MA: Contact Editions, 2008).

¹⁷⁷ Bainbridge Cohen, *Basic Neurocellular Patterns: Exploring Developmental Movement*, 84–92.

¹⁷⁸ I utilised Cellular Breathing in a previous live work, *This is a Trans-World* (2011), as a facilitating process for engaging in an embodiment of gay shame, which gave rise to the experience of how the double membrane sees-feels. Looking out from the inside (membrane), and in from the outer. I build on this work in *slashing*.

¹⁷⁹ Bianconi, Eva et al., “An Estimation of the Number of Cells in the Human Body,” *Annals of Human Biology* 40, no. 6 (November 2013): 463–71, <https://doi.org/10.3109/03014460.2013.807878>

gases, fluids, molecules, objects, ideas, values, and culture. I surrender to the flow and release membranes, organs, cells, and fluids with the draw of gravity towards the earth's core. I find this activation of the slash to be grounding. The slash brings me into my bodily experience, and a place to stand as Pākehā.

Slashing is a process that will be revealed in discussing the work *Queer Failure Walk*, where I engage the semi-permeability of the double-membrane slash, and its breathable and grounding capacities as queer*trans/materiality in practice.

Slash as a choreographic space of meeting for Māori and Pākehā

Can words, meanings, matters, and stories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous also pass across and through the slash? What is the significance of this?
practice notes 26: 2021

I propose the slash as a choreographic space of meeting, opening the possibility for cellular breathing between Indigene/settler-coloniser, or Māori/Pākehā in the cultural context of Aotearoa. This slash-space upholds the necessity for protection as well as allowance, as and when desired, prioritising the desires and tikanga of tangata whenua, iwi and hapū.¹⁸⁰ The semi-permeable slash-as-barrier can choose to prevent or admit the flow or exchange of life/breath, and various nutritional molecules including oxygen. Similarly, matters and meanings can move around its edges, or across and through its membrane-thresholds. I suggest this semi-permeable slash allows (and protects from) the reciprocal passing of mātauranga Māori and Pākehā knowledge as stories, views, opinions or otherwise. Such a space of exchange possibilises an address of the forces and concentrations of life in Māori and Pākehā ways of knowing.

¹⁸⁰ I refer to the meaning of hapū, as kinship group, clan, tribe, “the most significant political unit in pre-European Māori society.” Taonui, Rāwiri, ‘Tribal Organisation - The Significance of Iwi and Hapū’, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, 8 February 2005, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/whakapapa-genealogy/page-1>

The slash as threshold between human and more-than/human might intersect, for example, with tapu,¹⁸¹ mana,¹⁸² hau,¹⁸³ wairua,¹⁸⁴ mauri,¹⁸⁵ and other complex mātauranga Māori concepts that carry many meanings.¹⁸⁶ Assuming cultural spiritualities are embedded in English words too, for example with the concepts of vitality, essence, potentiality, power and authority, there is potential for meaningful learning and exchange.¹⁸⁷

Non-Māori in Aotearoa (as tourists or guests) do not have the right to walk over the sacred whenua or maunga to feel its powers. We do not need to touch it to come to know it's mana and wairua. Let's feel the mauri of mountains from a far. Listening at the feet of leaders.¹⁸⁸

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Invoking a reciprocity of the slash carries response-ability for me as non-Indigenous. I am thinking about the capacity and right of mana whenua is to uphold cultural boundaries and tikanga,¹⁸⁹ such as rāhui,¹⁹⁰ as and when desired or needed. My take on Pākehā response-ability currently is to avoid demanding behaviour, respect boundaries, to sit with my

¹⁸¹ I primarily refer to Manuka Henare (2001) here, who outlines tapu, mana, mauri, hau, wairua, as fundamental spiritual and metaphysical concepts, that reflect a Māori philosophy of vitalism. Each concept, he says, can carry multiple meanings. Tapu is described as “a cosmic power embedded in all things” linked to the notion of Mana by Henare, as “being with the potentiality for power”. Mana couples with “the idea of awe and sacredness”, seeing that tapu can mean restrictions and prohibitions. Henare, Manuka. “Tapu, Mana, Mauri, Hau, Wairua: A Maori Philosophy of Vitalism and Cosmos.” in *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community*, ed. J. Grimm (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 207.

¹⁸² Mana is a form of presence and authority, prestige, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma. “Mana is a supernatural force in a person, place or object.” Te Aka Māori Dictionary, ‘Mana’, Te Aka Māori Dictionary, accessed 30 July 2021, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/14983>

¹⁸³ Hau: breath of life. I refer to Tia Reihana-Morunga and Carol Brown (2020) who explore Hau as a “living archive of breath” in the context of Performance Research. Brown, Carol and Tia Reihana-Morunga. “Hau,” *Performance Research* 25, no. 2 (February 17, 2020): 69–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2020.1752579>

¹⁸⁴ The wairua is “a spirit akin to a soul.” Henare, 2001, 209.

¹⁸⁵ Henare (2001) describes mauri as “a unique power, a life essence, a life force, and a vital principle.” He also refers to leader of Tai Tokerau Sir James Henare in an articulation of mauri, as “an interactive life force.” Henare, Manuka. “Tapu, Mana, Mauri, Hau, Wairua: A Maori Philosophy of Vitalism and Cosmos.” in *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community*, ed. J. Grimm (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 206.

¹⁸⁶ Acknowledging the reduction that occurs with my use of the complex mātauranga Māori concepts listed here.

¹⁸⁷ Later in Chapter 5, I look to Irish Gaelic concepts as a way to think about what I could bring to the table-slash of Māori/Pākehā knowledge exchange as Celtic (Irish & English ancestry). I propose the potential for a vitalising intermingling of such energies and materialities cautiously (despite it already being underway). Acknowledging that this potential for flow between, may be opening a door for cultural appropriation, white washing, and indicative of white entitlement.

¹⁸⁸ I am thinking about the rāhui imposed by Whangaroa hapū over Maunga Taratara as a no-climb zone. See Perich, Bronson, and Harata Brown, ‘Maunga Taratara Declared No Climb Zone after Tourists Disturb Ancient Bones’, TVNZ: Te Karere, 2022, <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/te-karere/home/maunga-taratara-declared-no-climb-zone-after-tourists-disturb-ancient-bones>

¹⁸⁹ For more on Māori values, tikanga, see Mead 2016. Mead, Sidney M. *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori Values*, Revised edition. (Huia Publishers, 2016).

¹⁹⁰ A ritual prohibition on “a place, part of a river, part of the foreshore and on certain resources.” Mead, 2016, 1.

discomfort, and adhere to tikanga that increases the comfort of Māori participants. Whilst acknowledging this will shift and develop over time, in my performance practice this includes for me the adherence to any rāhui on place; a care-full consideration of tapu, place and bodies; creating a welcoming and reciprocal space of exchange; holding space for pepeha, introductions and to make connections face-to-face; and sharing food together.

The slash of this research, points to important claims for self-determination and autonomy in the context of Aotearoa, such as the design of the Tino Rangatiratanga flag in 1990;¹⁹¹ the passing of the Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Relationship Registration Bill in 2021 that recognised the right of self-identification for takatāpui, transgender, and intersex people of Aotearoa (right of self ID); and the establishment of a Ministry for Disability Issues and work being done by local activists towards body sovereignty and rights for persons with disabilities.

The un-knowing of the slash

I explore next the live work *Queer Failure Walk*. I experience a bodily activation of the slash as grounding, whilst also revealing qualities of un-knowing. I lean into the tipping and slipping of the slash through a poetic playfulness that opens space for unlearning whiteness, and for care-fully considering *how* to Pākehā better. Working to unsettle the steadiness of the settler-colonist (starting with me), my discussion of *Queer Failure Walk* negotiates the slash as a means of un-knowing, as in an unsettling of the settled and sedimented (Muñoz 2015).¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ By Marsden, Hiraina, Jan Smith and Linda Munn. See Dewes, Te Kuru o te Marama, 'The Enduring Legacy of the Tino Rangatiratanga Flag', *Spinoff*, 6 February 2022, <https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/06-02-2022/the-enduring-legacy-of-the-tino-rangatiratanga-flag>

¹⁹² Muñoz, José Esteban. "Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms: The Sense of Brownness," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, no. 2 (May 9, 2015): 209–10, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/581600>

Queer Failure Walk: slashes and land stories



Figure 21: Queer Reading Group, *Queer Failure Walk*, 2017. Image: val smith



Figure 22: Queer Reading Group, *Queer Failure Walk*, 2017. Image: val smith

Queer Failure Walk (04 December 2017) was a collective walking project co-curated with Richard Orjis (Pākehā).¹⁹³ We conceived this as an end-of-year celebration event for our shared initiative *Art & Design Queer Reading Group*.¹⁹⁴ Queer Reading Group (for short) was the first of several projects growing from our friendship-based collaborative practice (I

¹⁹³ Richard and I met in 2017, as cohorts of AUT's School of Art & Design PhD programme. We started working together straight away. Our collaborative practice is trans-disciplinary, reflecting our different training and practice. Richard trained, teaches, and works in relation to the visual arts domain, through collaborative curation and the exhibition of artifacts. Whilst my background is in Contemporary Dance; my practice works across performance, pedagogy, and performance writing.

¹⁹⁴ Work and projects that we co-create include *Bttm Manifesto* (2018-ongoing); the three-day event *Bottom Methodology* (2019); *Queer Failure Walk* (2017) and *Walk of Shame* (2018) both collective events for Queer Reading Group; *Read*, a queer zine-making workshop (2018); and the conception and development of *Queer Pavilion* (realised by Orjis in 2020). Richard describes some of the projects we have developed in his/their thesis. See Orjis, Richard, 'Below, Behind, Across: Bttm Methodology and Queer Representation in Contemporary Art' (Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2021), <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/14319>

discuss our practice as *bttm//bottom* in Chapter 4).¹⁹⁵ Discussion about queer theorist Jack/Judith Halberstam's book *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) was an important catalyst to *Queer Failure Walk* and other collective walking projects emerging from the Queer Reading Group, including *Walk of Shame* (2018).¹⁹⁶ Members of the group were invited to contribute an action to *Queer Failure Walk* responding to the notion of 'queer failure', following Halberstam. Six people attended *Queer Failure Walk*, an event of intimate friendship and the sharing of stories and perspectives through artistic contributions.

Queer failure becomes a core value, integral to the way I work (and fundamental to collaborations with Orjis). I respond to Halberstam's articulations of queer failure as a celebration of non-normative modes of kinship and relations; anticolonial work; and a refusal to acquiesce to capitalism's insistence on legibility and productivity.¹⁹⁷ Queer failure plays out through my contribution to *Queer Failure Walk* in exploring the vulnerability of lying face down, and bum up, in urban places (refusing art productivity); a surrender to, and exploration of, the subterranean draw of gravity (a non-typical human-place relationality in the context of the marginal urban place).

We met under the shade of a huge settler-colonial tree in Rangipuke / Sky Hill / Albert Park¹⁹⁸, a volcano and site of significance for mana whenua.¹⁹⁹ We shared strawberries and bubbly whilst lying on blankets, a picnic-like space of social leisure and relaxation.²⁰⁰ We invited

¹⁹⁵ Through our shared interest and inquiry into theories of queer failure (Halberstam 2011) and queer ecology (Mortimer-Sandilands 2010), Richard Orjis and I initiated the Art & Design Queer Reading Group in August 2017. The reading group was a space to discuss queer theories pertinent to artistic research with rainbowy art students and staff across several tertiary departments and institutions (Elam, AUT, University of Auckland's Architecture and Dance departments). The initiative was focused around bi-weekly meetings, then extended to include special events, including *Queer Failure Walk*.

¹⁹⁶ Halberstam, Jack. *The Queer Art of Failure* (North Carolina, United States: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹⁹⁷ Halberstam, 2011.

¹⁹⁸ This triplet of names is formed by Robert Sullivan in the poem 'Kawe Reo / Voices Carry'. This place also carries other names. See Paula Green, 'Poetry Shelf Review: Robert Sullivan's Tūnui | Comet', *NZ Poetry Shelf* (blog), 20 May 2022, <https://nzpoetryshelf.com/2022/05/20/poetry-shelf-review-robert-sullivans-tunui-comet/>

¹⁹⁹ Ngāti Whātua o Ōrakei are generally regarded as the current mana whenua of this place, however this is complex, and many other iwi also whakapapa to this whenua. Finding Māori placenames is one important aspect of my approach to place-situated practice, bringing Indigenous/settler, specifically Māori/Pākehā relations, into critical consideration. Generally, I use the Indigenous name/s ahead of the settler versions, positioned alongside each other with a comma between to indicate the distinct cultural perspectives and stories they hold. This land, known by some as Rangipuke is contested, with a complex history that I am not privy to as Pākehā. There are different names given by different iwi over time to this place, holding distinct stories of significance and references which are beyond my understanding. Names that I learn include, but are not limited to, Te Wai Ariki, Waihorotiu, Rangipuke, Te Reuroa, and Mangahekea.

²⁰⁰ From a lapsing memory, Richard suggested this was a good spot to meet, with shade and comfort, easy to locate. As my recollection flickers, I re-member rainbowy graffiti on the tree, ephemera strewn at the tree's feet-roots. There were ephemeral traces suggestive of a witchy ritual with candle wax, glitter and soot, charcoal dust, magic vibes.

people to lie back and look to the skies, acknowledging the historical papakāinga²⁰¹ and ridgeline known as Rangipuke through felt experience.²⁰² Sensing the rich histories of the whenua on which we lay on, we set off on *Queer Failure Walk*, meandering from place to place, moving down, up and along the crests and valleys of this now urbanised whenua. As we walk, I do not forget what Haraway (2016) describes as the cultural histories of who and what lives and dies, and how.²⁰³

Wanting to avoid the erasure of Māori histories, it becomes important to Richard and me to seek out and remember the stories carried by Māori placenames. As a collective of participants in *Queer Failure Walk*, we consider together how the whenua, lands, awa, rivers, maunga, mountains, rākau, trees, and specific places that we walk across, or pause and dwell with, hold various stories sacred to tangata whenua.

Following an improvisational pathway, we conclude the walk in a green-space park known today as Emily Place Reserve in colonial terms, and Te Rerenga Ora Iti, a name given by Ngāti Whātua.²⁰⁴ Te Rerenga Ora Iti was once a headland with at least one pā and involved many battles over time, commemorated by the name.²⁰⁵

Following Alison Jones (2020), I preference the use of the two place names with a slash between, as Te Rerenga Ora Iti/Emily Place Reserve, to recognise the two names, Indigenous and settler-coloniser, invoking the productive and potent in-tensions of the slash (uncomfortable yet insightful, difficult but necessary).²⁰⁶ The dominant coloniser voice is held to account with this slash, whilst also reminding us of the principles of partnership and reciprocity inherent to Te Tiriti o Waitangi through the semi-permeable slash-membrane.

Volcanoes, the foreshore, and the other political forces activated by Rebecca Hobbs

Artistic contributions to *Queer Failure Walk* from the Queer Reading Group were diverse, involving resting in place together, listening to stories, and participating in actions and activations. Each activation offers context, histories, forms of sociality, and diverging politics. I remember artist-educator Rebecca Hobbs (Pākehā) speaking to us of Tāmaki Makaurau

²⁰¹ Papa kāinga denotes a communal Māori village, original home. See Te Aka Māori Dictionary, 'Papa Kāinga', Te Aka Māori Dictionary, accessed 30 July 2021, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=papa+kainga>

²⁰² Acknowledging there will be other Māori names holding different iwi stories.

²⁰³ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 28.

²⁰⁴ The headland's tip was also named Point Britomart by settlers at one time, another story of this plural place. As with Rangipuke / Albert Park, this is a site of significance for mana whenua and all iwi affiliated with this whenua.

²⁰⁵ Te Rerenga Ora Iti ('the leap of the few survivors') is a name that commemorates one of many battles fought over this land, regarding one story of an incident around 1680 when Ngāti Whātua drove Ngāti Huarere over the headland cliffs. It is now 'reclaimed land' also named Fort Street by British colonisers.

²⁰⁶ Jones, *This Pākehā Life: An Unsettled Memoir*.

volcanoes and stories of the foreshore, which once lapped at the foot of Te Rerenga Ora Iti. This activation reflects on the controversy of the Foreshore and Seabed Act, concerning the rightful claim of Māori for title. Notably we stood under ancient and vibrant Pōhutukawa, trees sacred to Māori. This work is uplifting and honouring of this land as Māori land.

I also recall the tactile detailing of a spelling mistake on the 'Emily Place obelisk plaque' revealed through the queer failure activation, led by Richard. This queer reading of the obelisk's signage represents a settler-colonial storying of Emily Place Reserve.²⁰⁷ Orjis reconsiders this colonial marker through a destabilising queer lens, suggesting what Halberstam might name "a quiet losing" (a gentle encirclement of failure).

Presented consecutively, these two activations sit alongside each other, aligning with my view of the slash; embracing multiplicity, valuing difference, and illustrating the plural meanings embedded in the materiality of place from both Māori and Pākehā perspectives. In Hobbs' activation we are led to consider the moana and whenua as values for Māori, the ongoing efforts by Māori for language revitalisation and the work involved in gaining recognition for Māori placenames (and as an official language of Aotearoa).²⁰⁸ Orjis' work stimulates the multifaceted perspective of a queer settler-colonist, which I read as a care-full consideration of how colonisation influences a Pākehā queer and gender diverse urban experience.

I see both works to be developing a collective settler awareness. The slash of Māori/Pākehā is evident in the alignment of the two works, an alongside-ness and breathability that upholds the generative creativity of this Aotearoa-specific relationality, an ongoing site of potent tension (Jenkins and Jones 2008, Jones 2020). *Queer Failure Walk* embraces the complexity of cultural histories, and the multifaceted viewpoints of different peoples, encouraging Pākehā to be accountable for our part in ongoing settler-colonial processes (seeking to unsettle the settler).

²⁰⁷ I learn later that the obelisk is a memorial to Rev. John Frederick Churton of St. Pauls Church. The original memorial, a taller obelisk, dates to 1855. It was demolished along with the church in 1885. The story of obelisks intensifies as I look deeper into its genealogy. Originally of Egypt, the structures symbolised the sun god Ra, characterized by four-sides and a square base that tapers into an "isosceles pyramidion" at its peak. Initially obelisks symbolised rebirth and were used as funeral monuments. Their meanings and functions have shifted and changed across times and cultures. For more information on the plaque and obelisk see Heritage New Zealand, 'Churton Memorial: Emily Place And Shortland Street, Emily Place Reserve, Auckland', *Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga* (blog), 24 June 2005, https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/563?fbclid=IwAR1WmWvnKR9BwQ4WJD6GSV9OuSzw5Q60Wq_wAqv6Ye0eXpz8Ot5-HJ7-IY

²⁰⁸ The English language is incorrectly believed to be the rightful official language of Aotearoa/New Zealand (a belief that is still strong). In fact, three languages have this formal status: Māori, English and New Zealand Sign Language.

Slashing fence dynamics – a more-than-marginal performance of sensing subterranean realities



Figure 23: val smith, *slashing*, 2022. Screenshot of video: val smith

[Video of slashing](#)

My own contributing action to *Queer Failure Walk* invites the group to move towards, and contemplate, a seemingly dis-regarded strip of land that runs above and along the edge of lower Grafton Gully motorway. I am checking and responding to the material-discursive cacophony of white settler society and detritus of capitalism in this marginal urban place: Grafton Gully motorway; a metal fence running alongside the motorway; an assemblage of congealing trash and plastics; piles of displaced rocks; a grimy drain; a distant view of harakeke and puriri, streams of cars passing at speed; seagulls and pigeons; walking and jogging pedestrians; sounds of the city; clouds and other atmospheric elements.²⁰⁹

Selecting places for each performance iteration is a process of critical and sensuous exploration. I am interested in the capacities, powers, and potentials of each place and its beings and things, as well as how the material-discursive elements might be activated (and sometimes disrupted) through collective actions of bodily sensing and feeling. I consider this place, like others, a ‘marginal urban place’ as it appears to be overlooked and under-utilised by the colonialist and capitalist machine. The things, beings and qualities of this place, including its colonial grasses and weeds,²¹⁰ provide a contextual window for critically considering the slash of Māori/Pākehā as a relationality informing my performance-making.

²⁰⁹ This list of things, beings, and components of this marginal urban place are seen as active contributors in the performance and entangled through the constitutive elements of encountering place.

²¹⁰ I am taking note of how the tangle of colonial weeds are left to run rampant, unchecked, and how their proliferation oppresses native species. Disappointing, yet also somehow compelling.

Let us surrender to the sweet draw-l of gravity, so we might fall into the rhythm and folds of this land, as our cells/selves.

Let's at-tend to the potentiality of this place *as is*. paying notice also to the not-yet-queer of here, a potentiality perhaps tangible only in fleeting glimpses. or as speculative meetings in passing.

The feeling of queer is arriving.

Sinking into a face down, bum up. we sing, into this opening intimacy, the queerness of a dirt/dirty down under, sensing forward-backwards the unseen creatures and futures of our queer lives. a performance felt only through these subterranean more-than/human realities.

practice notes 28: 2017

I turned my attention to the waist-high metal safety fence running parallel to the motorway, and the thin strip of land on the 'other' side of the fence. I am attracted to this fence-slash, perhaps because of the imminent sense of danger, with a ten-metre drop straight down to the motorway a few feet away from the fence. Situated on the edge of the dominating Grafton Gully motorway and Institutional city scape that is Auckland University, and Auckland Hospital, I consider this fenced marginal urban place a small retreat, despite its risks. This place (not yet bulldozed or built up for accommodation) is across the road from Pukekawa, now a recreational park known as the Auckland Domain.²¹¹ The place feels, to me, somehow 'away' from the press of cis/heteronormativity, and the hegemonic regulating forces of settler-colonial society.²¹²

We walk towards and arrive on the 'safe' side of the fence having diverted off the paved walkway that directs pedestrians around and away from this sliver of land.

practice notes 29: 2017

I am initially attracted to the fence as a physical manifestation of the slash, sensing how it invokes protection and *not* allowing, as well as inviting a transgression of this emplaced boundary (Figure 19). The fence is designed as a guard, cautioning humans of the danger of a potential fall. I relate to this fence, to sense and consider the ongoing settler-colonial land grab for resource for generating capital, and colonial capitalism's measuring and marking of property.

²¹¹ I notice the linear form of pedestrian movements from home to work to sites of leisure and pleasure. I see and feel the subsuming of land through expropriation, extraction and exploitation as profitable private property by settler-colonisation and its sidekick, capitalism.

²¹² Thought, who am I to suggest this as Pākehā? My view is partial and white.

Sensing for the queer*trans futurity of more-than/human relations (remembering Muñoz)

My activation began by pausing to remember the passing of cultural theorist José Esteban Muñoz.²¹³ We moved close together, quietly, softly, remembering this queer ancestor's critical and poetic powers. I am reciting a poem I wrote for Muñoz (an accomplice to Halberstam's queer failure), words that invoke his blue-sky vision of 'queer futurity' (2009).

...the feeling of queer is arriving...
this space is not-yet queer yet also brimming
with the potentiality of future queer utopias and identifications.
practice notes 30: 2017

This poetic commemoration creates a portal to be close to Muñoz. The text *Cruising Utopia* (2007) guides me in my speculative practices and informs the embodiment process that follows this recital.²¹⁴

'Face down, bum up' - a Pākehā queer orientation to place

Let's lie down with the more-than/human beings, entities, forces, and atmospheric elements present on and in this land today.
practice notes 31: 2017

In rehearsals on my own, I transgressed the suggested boundary, climbing the fence to test my subversion of Cellular Breathing, as the somatic process of *slashing*. The land becomes a skin membrane for my slashing. I began by settling into place, enacting a slow recline. I was slow/ing and soft/ening my body with the comforting draw of gravity. The proposition to lie 'face down, bum up', led to breathing with the dirt/y, the soil, and all its many queer and trans creatures, gases, and micro-particles. This action responds to Halberstam's refusal to acquiesce to capitalism's legibility, calling in "what looks like inaction, passivity, and lack of resistance in terms of the practice of stalling the business of the dominant."²¹⁵ I am also responding to the rules and policing of queer and trans bodies, behaviours, and sex acts in this city. However, as I am slow/ing and soften/ening with eyes down, I notice the vulnerability of having my back body exposed without sight. This is an uncomfortable experience on my own that activated a fear in me. I stuck with this psychological discomfort.

The more I relaxed, the more open and permeable I became, the more I was able to sense the liveliness under this weedy and rocky terrain. I breathe, sense, feel and listen to the

²¹³ Muñoz passed away four years before this performance in December 2013.

²¹⁴ Muñoz writes: "Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain. Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present." Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

²¹⁵ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 88. I pick up and extend on un-productivity and in/action in *Queer Napping* iterations, Chapter 4.

energies and stories of this place, Māori land, experiencing the vitality of this environment through my Pākehā cells and membranes. Expanding and contracting, following the flows and ebbs of this sub-version of Cellular Breathing, I am forming connections with the subterranean more-than/human life.

As a queer/ing action, slashing presses against the monolithics of state, capitalism and Pākehā societal rules around what is expected behaviour in this urban place, defying what is deemed ok and not ok to do here (a christian and very straight and white perspective). During the live work, I invited the group to join me in climbing over the fence to stand to see what it felt like on the 'other' side. Some did, some didn't. I had planned to invite everyone to lie down (face down, bum up). However, in the moment, it didn't feel right to ask. Too presumptive? Too white queer? Too rushed, too soon? Maybe tooooo off-centre for the group at that time?²¹⁶

This queer orientation of face down, bum up remains a queer fantasy for a sub-
versive choreographic togetherness, however this slashing imaginary opens a bttm
portal for the queer futurity of my practice.

practice notes 32: 2017

My sense from this was that the "pace of trust" (brown 2019) needed to have been already established, a slowing already underway. The action of collectively lying face-down, bum up, was left aside to be tested in future iterations, or relegated to the margins of this research.

Stories, whenua, post-performance reflections

Sense yourselves in place. Notice the mauri of place, of whenua. Meet with the
subterranean creatures and matters, the root systems of plants. Commune and
speak with the air and light, the waters driven underground. Find a space for
speaking about the dirty and the slash.

practice notes 33: 2017

This land holds stories unknown to me. And perhaps none of my business. This performance action gives rise to many questions about engagements with the stories of place as Pākehā. What stories move through the root systems of native and colonial species, through mycelium networks, or through the trickle of water underground? I wondered whether stories could pass across matter, between species, through atmospheres? How might I recognise and acknowledge mātauranga Māori, whilst keeping check on the Pākehātanga I am embedded in, and the privileges that affords me?²¹⁷

²¹⁶ I was aware this action may exclude participants for different reasons, including tikanga or inaccessibility, or psychological discomfort. This action was not completely outside of the realms of comfort for me however (I often lie face down on the dance studio floor or in outdoor spaces).

²¹⁷ Pākehātanga emerges from the relationship with Māoritanga. Jellie, Maria. "The Formation of Pākehā Identity in Relation to Te Reo Māori and Te Ao Māori" (Masters Thesis, Christchurch, University of Canterbury, 2001), https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/961/thesis_fulltext.pdf?sequence=1

Between Waiparuru, Symonds Street Cemetery and Te Toangaroa/Mechanics Bay

I originally perceived this unassuming strip of land as a marginal urban place, and a representation of ‘the dirty’ from a queer*trans Pākehā perspective. This is not the meaning or narrative attributed by Māori however. Unknown to me at the time of initiating this research, this place is adjacent to Waiparuru stream, another site of significance for Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and other iwi affiliated to this whenua.²¹⁸ I learn that Waiparuru means “shady or gloomy waters,”²¹⁹ a stream that now runs from western head of Grafton Gully at Symonds St Cemetery and enters a stormwater system that leads to Waitematā Harbour.²²⁰ Where Waiparuru meets Waitematā is a place known as Te Tōangaroa to mana whenua and named Mechanics Bay by settler-colonists. Knowing this now, I would engage differently, consulting with tangata whenua before engaging with this place in performance practice, to acknowledge and remember Waiparuru and these stories of place, and take note of any tikanga and mātauranga Māori regarding this particular whenua and awa.²²¹

Reflection on performance events, after the fact, becomes another key strategy for building a critical settler awareness, and taking time to plan for best practice in future events. These questions and critical observations feed forward into further performance iterations. I work to develop present and future critical settler awareness and cultural acknowledgements.

Summary of Chapter 1: queer*trans/materiality, a disruptive connector

In *Queer Dating Sites* we have seen how the asterisk of ‘queer*trans’ calls queerness and transness into a vibrant social space for more-than/human encounters and relations. This work build a safe/r critical-creative space where rainbow folk might gather and mingle in outdoor urban places with some protections in place. The somatic processes of *Queer Dating Sites* highlighted the complexity around what is needed to make different marginalised communities of people feel ok about lying down, relaxing, soft/ening, and becoming open and available to connect with the more-than/human, especially with regards to intimacies. The asterisking of *Queer Dating Sites*, a tentacular process, opens up haptic sensing and the

²¹⁸ These are lands on which I am honoured to stand. I do not forget mana whenua are the kaitiaki of this whenua, caretakers who protect, guard, and maintain the whenua for future generations.

²¹⁹ Simmons, D. R. “George Graham's Maori Place Names of Auckland,” *Records of the Auckland Institute and Museum* 16 (1980): 11–39, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42906272>

²²⁰ The location of this event was downstream from a place-making project produced by cabal (founding artist, Caroline Robinson) called *Maumahara Mo Waiparuru – Remembering Ancient Pathways* (2003), the project is marking and remembering Waiparuru. <https://www.thebigidea.nz/showcase/199759-maumahara-mo-waiparuru>

²²¹ In recognising this motorway as adjacent to a significant streambed, I remember the work being done that recognises awa, rivers, and streams as more-than-human entities to achieve justice within the freshwater realm (remembering the legal status awarded Whanganui River as a human being, a living entity).

possibility for engaging meta-physical realms through more-than/human interaction, extended in Chapter 5 in *ill grow back* and *Songs for Birds*.

Queer Failure Walk has explored a Pākehā response-ability, embracing and embodying the semi-permeability of the slash and the relationship of Māori/Pākehā as necessarily reciprocal, whilst seeking to expand a collective settler awareness. This work moves towards an undoing of the tidy and problematic division of human/nonhuman, perhaps an impossible task through a Pākehā lens. My reimagining of the slash however contributes a multi-faceted perspective of more-than/human relationality, involving the queer*trans/materiality of many things, including plastic bottles, whenua, fences, harakeke, grasses, puriri and pigeons. As implied in this writing, the felt relationality of slashing also awakens a reimagining of collaboration as a more-than/human practice (also see *bttm//bottom* Chapter 4).

Building on what was realised through the asterisk of *Queer Dating Sites* and the slash of *Queer Failure Walk*, queer*trans/materiality reaches-radiates as a sense of possibility, hopefulness, and resiliency for our rainbowy art generations and communities to come. I invite you to reach and ripple with the care and affection of the asterisk in a nearby marginal urban place. Let's breathe together in the meeting space of the slash, exploring and acknowledging the limitations and possibilities of inter-cultural and well as inter-species exchange. Queer*trans/materialism, as a disrupter of categories, invites a celebration of more-than/human cutty-cutty past and future, life and death, whilst always remembering the histories of who and what gets to live and die, and how (Haraway 2016).²²²

The next chapter reviews performance practitioners and practitioner-researchers who are addressing materialisms, posthumanist concerns, and the turn to the nonhuman internationally in the broader field of Performance Studies. I also align my queer*trans/materialist paradigm and approaches to more-than/human performance, as a contribution to this field.

²²² Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 28.



Figure 24: val smith, *Queer Failure Walk* (flotsy), 2017.

2. Let's meet in the myriad: practitioners of more-than/human performance

Let's listen, see, feel, dance with queer and trans as sacred,
environments communing with the more-than,
and
feed the already notations of what is imagined beyond 'nonhuman'.
with garden. kitchen. bathroom. Bedroom.

Let's perform with the clouds the stars the slightest of breezes
these godly queers, these ancestral trans bodies,
as that which touches the blessed in the mundane
and cosmological
we are knowing FEELING-with without needing to *know*.
practice notes 34: 2021

There are many artist practitioners, practitioner-researchers, and theorists, currently working globally to undo the anthropocentric conditions inherent in much of contemporary performance operating within a white settler society. Shifts in thought and possibilities for more-than/human relations and methodologies are fast emerging. There are practitioners from various disciplines who come at multispecies kinship through a view on human capitalist destruction, global climate change and ecological crisis, many influenced by Haraway's 2016 description of the Chthulucene epoch.²²³ Some examples of work include geographer Jennifer Marshman's *Communing with Bees* 2018,²²⁴ Sebastian De Line's (Haudenosaunee-European-Asian) contemplation of Indigenous and Tranimal relations,²²⁵ Anna Tsing's mushrooms and the promise of cohabitation,²²⁶ the *Decolonizing Nature* of T. J. Demos (2016)²²⁷, and Charis Boke's communication with plants from the field of herbalism.²²⁸ This chapter suggests that the focus on the climate crisis can be supplemented by other ways of thinking-moving, such

²²³ Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, First edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2016).

²²⁴ Marshman, Jennifer, "Communing with Bees: A Whole-of-Community Approach to Address Crisis in the Anthropocene," *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 9, no. A (May 16, 2019): 87–110, <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2019.091.029>

²²⁵ De Line, Sebastian, "A Generous and Troubled Chthulucene: Contemplating Indigenous and Tranimal Relations in (Un)Settled Worldings," *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 14, no. 2 (September 2018): 83–106, <http://gjss.org/sites/default/files/issues/chapters/papers/GJSS%20Vol%2014-2%206%20De%20Line.pdf>

²²⁶ Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

²²⁷ Demos, T. J. *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09528822.2013.753187>

²²⁸ Boke, Charis. "Plant Listening: How North American Herbalists Learn to Pay Attention to Plants," *Anthropology Today* 35, no. 2 (2019): 23–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12496>

as performing multispecies kinships from queer*trans matters, disability justice, and egalitarian politics.

This chapter is organised in three parts, through which I examine the overlaps of artistic works and activations that engage three different materialisms – vital/new, Indigenous, and queer. I review performance works that engage the more-than/human in relation to these overlaps, and the theoretical frameworks that inform and guide their bodily practices. It is noteworthy that I encounter all but one of the works discussed in this chapter intertextually (not in-person), through academic articles, Facebook posts, websites and internet pages which include photos, videos, recordings, and artist statements.

The first section considers practitioner-researchers who build relationships with rivers, trees, plants, pets, and animals. I look to works by artist-researcher Minty Donald (Scottish), and artist, researcher, and pedagogue Annette Arlander (Finnish Swede), that draw primarily on Jane Bennett's vital materialism (2010). I provide a close examination of their rituals of meeting and greeting in an iteration of Donald's ongoing project *Guddling About* (2013—), and Arlander's series *'Performing with Plants'* (2017-2020), whereby she questions what it means to collaborate with plants and trees. I discuss the white bias of this first literature review with a predominance of non-Indigenous practitioners. Despite this, I still recognise the worth of their work since they represent a form of practice that has been marginalised in Academic canons of performance, and by masculine expressions of environmental art, gestures that include, "the massive earthworks done in remote sites in the American West in the 1970s."²²⁹

My emphasis in the mid-section is on Indigenous Māori perspectives on engaging and relating with nonhuman things, beings, and entities in performance and sound works. I consider the ontological struggles Indigenous researchers face, being different for Indigenous and white scholars (Jones & Hoskins 2017). I also consider the concepts and language used; ways of seeing and knowing; and the critical and creative emphases of inquiries undertaken.²³⁰ I look at works by Tru Paraha (Ngāti Hineāmaru, Ngāti Kahu o Torongare, Ngāti Te Tarawa, Ngāpuhi-nui-tonu, Israel/Palestine), Louie Zalk-Neale (Ngāi Te Rangi, Pākehā), and Rachel Shearer (Pākehā, Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga a Māhaki, Ngāti Kahungunu) for how

²²⁹ Ross, Stephanie, 'What Is Environmental Art?', *IO-The Internet Magazine of Applied Aesthetics*, no. 1-Environmental Art (Summer 1998), <https://www2.helsinki.fi/sites/default/files/atoms/files/io1998.pdf> Examples given in this article are by Michael Heizer, Robert Smithson and Walter de Maria.

²³⁰ Many Indigenous thinkers, who are engaging their own ontologies, do not refer to the notion of the 'more-than-human.' Some do though, see Yates 2021. Yates, Amanda Monehu, 'Transforming Geographies: Performing Indigenous-Māori Ontologies and Ethics of More-than-Human Care in an Era of Ecological Emergency', *New Zealand Geographer* 77, no. 2 (2021): 101–13, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nzg.12302>. Works by the practitioner-researchers that I consider explore concepts such as whakapapa in Te Ao Māori to encapsulate the interconnectedness and relatedness of all things (preferencing Indigenous language and concepts, Te Reo Māori in Aotearoa).

they are incorporating and working through Māori ontologies and materialisms, enacting engagements with whakapapa, mātauranga Māori, and Māori cosmologies.

I examine Zalk-Neale's performance work *'I dug a hole and they sprinkled sand in it'* for the exhibition *GLOSSY LEAF kiss* (2021); Shearer's audio installation work *Te Huri Wai* (2021); and Paraha's choreographic work *KARE; kind artificial real experience* (2016). I analyse how these artists, who are operating within and without the Academic canon, possibilise decolonising methodologies in the fields of Practice Research, also posing critical-creative challenges to the 'new' of new materialism.

In the third section of the chapter, I review exemplars of queer materialist choreographic work by Keith Hennessy (born in Ontario) who lives in Yelamu/San Francisco, and Jeremy Wade (Euro-American, now based in Berlin, Germany). I refer to *Future Clinic for Critical Care: Dance the Accessible Ritual Tools* (2019), a collaborative workshop co-led by Jeremy Wade and collaborator Tanja Erhart. I am interested in their engagement with the queerness of object-human relationships to uplift disability justice and consider how they activate the vitalities and agencies of things through improvisational scores and somatic explorations that centre collective care practices. I also discuss *The Spiral of Fortune (7 of Birds): A laboratory of political witchcraft* (2019), also a collaborative workshop co-led by Keith Hennessy and Michael J. Morris. Their speculative approaches for engaging the vital materiality of things through tarot and witchcraft are examined, as ways of safeguarding and vibrating matters of queer importance. An analysis transpires where I see their choreographic thinking contributing materialisms deeply rooted in queer bodily knowledge, propelling vitalities of queer feltness in dance, and transformations of care and ritual.

I also work to make sense of where my own practice and queer*trans voice fits in, and what my perspective might contribute to an emergent field of queer more-than-human thought²³¹, and to queer materialist performance practice. An important focus for this chapter becomes to address the need for more queer and trans materialist perspectives in the field of Performance Studies.

Rituals of meeting and greeting – vital materialities

Initially many encounters stood out to me from a plethora of performance works emerging that are bringing awareness to humancentric thinking (rooted in white philosophies) and prying apart dualisms such as human/nonhuman, human/nature, and nature/queer. The current research of Professor Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca for example, *Performance Philosophy and Animals: towards a radical equality* (2019-2022) examines how theatre and performance can be sites of intimate encounters, allowing for the emergence of new forms of inter-

²³¹ I refer here to the common use of the term in Performance Studies with two hyphens, i.e., more-than-human.

species communication.²³² This work builds on Cull Ó Maoilearca's 2015 research regarding inter-species collaboration, which moves towards a horizontality of human and nonhuman working relations.²³³ One resulting article from the project so far, written by Cull Ó Maoilearca (2019), discusses the ethics of inter-species performance with a focus on empathy in UK-based performance company Fevered Sleep's work *Sheep Pig Goat*.²³⁴ In another example, *Performance for Pets*, an ongoing project by Krõõt Juurak (Estonia) and Alex Bailey (UK), explicitly addresses and considers the interests, senses, cognition, and attention of pets as audiences.²³⁵ The work of New York based Swedish artist andrea haenggi provides an ethico-political platform for "radical care practices" of relevance to this study, whose *weedy choreography* explores performances with other species. I am drawn to haenggi's exploration into plant-human relations as a "multispecies commoning".²³⁶ I am particularly interested in the ongoing project *Multispecies Care Survey* (2020) by collective Environmental Performance Agency (initiated by haenggi in 2017), proposing steps and protocols for building a more-than/human community.

Minty Donald and water-human interrelations

Minty Donald addresses the contemporary turn to the nonhuman through 'site-specific experiments.' As well as creating works independently, Donald has been presenting performances with rivers and other watercourses with regular collaborator, Nick Millar, since 2010. They refer to ecological thinking and its paradoxes (emerging through new, vital, and feminist materialisms), as pivotal to their practice, ascribing the other-than-human with

²³² Cull Ó Maoilearca, Laura. "Performance Philosophy & Animals: Towards a Radical Equality," *Performance Philosophy & Animals: Towards a Radical Equality*, 2019-2022, <https://www.performingradicalequality.com/about>

²³³ Cull Ó Maoilearca, Laura. "From Homo Performans to Interspecies Collaboration," in *Performing Animality: Animals in Performance Practices*, ed. Lourdes Orozco and Jennifer Parker-Starbuck (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 19–36, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137373137_2

²³⁴ Cull Ó Maoilearca, Laura. "The Ethics of Interspecies Performance: Empathy beyond Analogy in Fevered Sleep's *Sheep Pig Goat*," *Theatre Journal* 71, no. 3 (2019): E-1-E-22, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.2019.0077>

²³⁵ The project was initiated in 2014 and based in Vienna. This project builds ethical approaches to creatively engaging pets (mostly cats and dogs) in performance culture (their human companions are still invited but the experiences of pets are primary). Ulrich, Jessica. "Art for Animal Audiences," *Performances for Pets*, October 1, 2017, <http://www.performancesforpets.net/text>

²³⁶ See for example the performance *Teaching a Human the Urban Weeds Alphabet* (2019), where haenggi explores communicating with spontaneous urban plants to "cultivate weedy vegetal being in our-selves." haenggi, andrea, 'Teaching a Human the Urban Weeds Alphabet', *Weedy Choreography*, 2019, <https://weedychoreography.com/teaching-a-human-the-urban-weeds-alphabet/>

agency is seen to be “always circumscribed by our human intent.”²³⁷ Through projects framed as Practice Research, they describe human-water interrelations as a ‘meeting’.²³⁸

Living, Working, Playing with Water (2017-18); *Watermeets: Hamburg* (2017); and *Guddling About* (2013–) carry out experiments and actions that consider the water of various waterways as an active agent and more-than/human force. They purport to devise collaboratively on, with, and for various waterways in performances, including *High-Slack-Low-Slack-High* (April 2012) and *Bridging Part 1* (November 2010).²³⁹ These works also cultivate an attentiveness to the characteristics of human-water inter-relations, in the artists’ words to “take seriously the vitality and agency of all matter” (building on Bennett 2010).²⁴⁰ I am interested in how their approaches to engaging human-environment interrelations gives ‘voice’ to the nonhuman.²⁴¹ I focus my discussion on the ongoing project *Guddling About* (2013–), engaging performance iterations through online photo-essays, video excerpts, and various journal articles.

Guddling About, Water Carry

In *Guddling About*, the artists engage River Clyde in the City of Glasgow;²⁴² other rivers in Scotland; the Bow River (and its tributaries in Turtle Island/Canada); and watercourses in Australia, England, Germany, Finland, and Spain.²⁴³ I bring my own queer*trans/materialist lens to an examination of this project, recognising my read as divergent from the artists’

²³⁷ Minty Donald, ‘Guddling About: An Ecological Performance Practice with Water and Other Nonhuman Collaborators’, *GeoHumanities* 5, no. 2 (3 July 2019): 597–601, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2373566X.2019.1652106>

²³⁸ Minty Donald, ‘Entided, Enwatered, Enwinded: Human/More-than-Human Agencies in Site-Specific Performance’, in *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things*, ed. Marlis Schweitzer and Joanne Zerdy (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 118–31, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137402455_9

²³⁹ Donald, 2014, 118.

²⁴⁰ Minty Donald, ‘Minty Donald’, Performance Ecology Heritage, 11 May 2018, <https://performanceecologyheritage.wordpress.com/portfolio/minty-donald/>.

²⁴¹ Donald, Minty. “Guddling about: Experiments in Vital Materialism with Particular Regard to Water,” *Performance Research* 20, no. 2 (March 4, 2015): 34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2015.1026723>

²⁴² I notice the artist has written about Glasgow and its river’s industrialisation from early-19th century in a 2015 article. I become interested in the etymology of River Clyde to locate other names the river may have been given. I find the Scottish Gaelic name Abhainn Chluaidh, the Arran Gaelic name of An Riobhar, Clut or Clud (by the Britons) and Clota (Romans), and a connection to Clōta, a local Celtic goddess. In this search for the river’s names and stories, I gain a glimpse into a long history of invasion into Scotland (British and Roman Empires), and the shifts of cultures, languages, and names over time, including Celtic and Cumbric (Common Brittonic language) from medieval times. In the contested histories of Scotland, Scots are considered by some at once colonisers and the colonised. This tendril of the inquiry reminds me of the economies of naming, and the violence of colonial re-naming. Thinking about Donald and Millar’s guddling methodologies has me wondering what more I might learn about my ancestral knowledge and cultural roots, in studying their performance works and other artists whose work is rooted in those lands.

²⁴³ Donald, Minty. “Guddling About: An Ecological Performance Practice with Water and Other Nonhuman Collaborators,” *GeoHumanities* 5, no. 2 (July 3, 2019): 596, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2373566X.2019.1652106>

intentions, meanings, and reflections, and remembering I encounter these works intertextually across various media, not in-person.

Water Carry (2015) is one of the many experiments of *Guddling About*. I note that ‘guddling’ is a Scots language word with watery connotations.²⁴⁴ In this work, the artists follow simple tasks: “Scoop water from the Bow River with cupped hands; Carry the water in your hands as far as possible from the river; Stop when there is no water left in your hands.”²⁴⁵ This flow of actions is described by Donald as an experiment in vital materialism, activating the “fuzzy boundaries of human-water inter-activity.”²⁴⁶ These are activations of coming together with the nonhuman, to ‘meet’ and ‘greet’. I am curious to know where the water and humans meet, what occurs there, and how the more-than/human relationality was initiated or revealed.

I locate an interactive essay that discusses *Guddling About* and *Water Carry* and includes photos and a list of descriptive details of the artists’ experiences and efforts.²⁴⁷ I pick out some descriptive details from this essay to generate a felt impression of the work (through my selective reading). The artists ‘felt’, ‘thought’, ‘sensed’, and ‘were struck by’: the colours and flow of the river; “the silt mingled with water”; the softness and smoothness of the water; the stony riverbank; the signs of people living rough.²⁴⁸ I note they predominantly centre somatic, affective, ecological, and sensorial noticing of the environment, whilst they also engage with “water as matter and metaphor” (as Donald states).²⁴⁹

As a tentacular and critical-creative reader of this interactive essay, I pay attention to video footage that indicates where the liquid bodies of human and river meet as performance. What I see-feel in my initial viewing of the work is a human figure bending to cup water with both hands. This initial perception opens out as I attune with the feltness and materiality of the more-than/human performance, *Water Carry*.

²⁴⁴ Guddling is both a verb and noun. The verb meaning: to act in an undirected way, to mess about; to catch fish by hand, groping under stones and riverbanks where they lurk. The noun: a mess or a tangle. See Donald, Minty, ‘Guddling About’, Performance ecology heritage, 4 December 2017, <https://performanceecologyheritage.wordpress.com/portfolio/guddling-about/>.

²⁴⁵ Donald, ‘Guddling About’, 2015, 37.

²⁴⁶ Donald, Minty. “The Performance ‘Apparatus’: Performance and Its Documentation as Ecological Practice,” *Green Letters* 20, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 259, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14688417.2016.1191998>

²⁴⁷ Donald, ‘The Performance “Apparatus”’, 2016.

²⁴⁸ Donald, ‘Guddling About’, 2015.

²⁴⁹ Donald, ‘Guddling About’, 2019, 595.

Moving from river, across urbanised terrains, they carry water in hands. still carrying whilst crossing road, then in walking pavement. my affective attention is with the trail of drips, liquid falling through fingers, from hands, splashing on ground. a performance of dispersing river away from source, from life? river liquid reforms, recomposing itself in meeting with new matter, new terrains (self-birthing?). different surfaces impact the tones and shapes of water stains, varying shades of grey, and shadowy blobs. then, suddenly from liquid-bloom to a disappearing.

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This performance writing (a form of *flotsy*, see Chapter 3) differently situates *Water Carry*. I am questioning the agency afforded the more-than/human co-performers of this iteration of '*Guddling About*'. Their more-than/human 'voice' is felt (by me) as uncertain, an outsider-observer, not privy to the haptic unfolding. This appears as a meandering human-water meeting of anarchic proportions. River Clyde leaks, sprays, disperses, spreads, and evaporates through porous surfaces – skin, tarseal, rock, soil (reminding me again of *flotsy*, see Figure 23 & 24). Whatever is being exchanged between the meeting of human and nonhuman actants is sensed (by me) as a haphazard trailing, demarcating by their own human intent, as the artists put it.²⁵⁰

This *Water Carry* experiment of the *Guddling About* series posits a horizontal more-than/human relationality. To 'meet' moves toward the cooperative, the reciprocity, generating mutual exchange. This work goes some way toward unsettling hierarchical forms of performance relations, however, there is further yet to go to topple the divide of human/nonhuman. What is still needed in order that audiences might hear the voice of the River Clyde, see-feel its affects? I see another significance of this work in its unsettling of the concepts of 'site' as static or circumscribed, and of 'materials' as fixed and inert.²⁵¹ *Guddling About* theorises 'site' as nonstatic, through a foregrounding of the dynamic interplay of wind, water, tide, and humans, working to promote an ecological perspective.

Considerations of settler-coloniality, raising settler awareness

Informed by my own inquiry into place and Indigenous ontologies, I become curious about the Indigenous histories of the places and rivers that *Guddling About* engages.²⁵² *Guddling*

²⁵⁰ Donald, 2019, 597–601.

²⁵¹ Donald, 'Entided, Enwatered, Enwinded', 2014, 119.

²⁵² I am curious to learn more about River Clyde because of my ancestral links to Scotland via my Irish grandfather's name McCabe (mercenaries that are considered to have migrated to County Cavan from the Western Isles of Scotland). Smith, Michelle K., 'Tracing Your Irish Ancestry - the McCabe Clan', Irish Central, 2021, <https://www.irishcentral.com/roots/genealogy/irish-ancestry-mccabe-clan#:~:text=The%20McCabes%20came%20to%20Ireland,Battle%20of%20Aughrim%20in%201691>

About was initiated in 2013, in Makhabn, otherwise known as Calgary, Alberta.²⁵³ I learn that Makhabn is the Blackfoot name for what settler-colonialists named Bow River. Makhabn is within Moh-kíns-tsis, which is where another iterative experiment of *Guddling About* occurs, called *Water Borrow*, on the traditional territories of Blackfoot, Cree, Stoney, T'suut'ina, and Slavey (also known as Treaty 7 territory).²⁵⁴ The violence of colonial re-naming and exploitation of human life and the environment impact us (Ghosh 2021).²⁵⁵

Donald writes about how *Water Borrow* is influenced by the Indigenous practices of the Mother Earth Water Walkers. Instigated in 2003, Mother Earth Water Walkers are “two Anishinawbe women who walked the perimeter of the Great Lakes in Canada and North America to raise awareness of water pollution and to campaign for improved water conditions in areas where First Nations peoples live.”²⁵⁶ Donald raises settler awareness by acknowledging that *Water Borrow* could be an arrogant cultural appropriation, or “glib”.²⁵⁷ Donald also references Indigenous scholars who maintain that the animist spiritualities of Indigenous communities offer productive counters to white ideologies.²⁵⁸

What excites me more in terms of raising settler awareness, is how Donald and Millar seek out their own languages and rituals for interactions with water (whilst still acknowledging and respecting Indigenous practices). This leads to experiments at some of the tributaries that join the Bow River, whereby they meet and greet in ways that “felt authentic” and familiar to them as urban Scots, such as “hello Corral Creek, nice to meet you.”²⁵⁹ Asking for permission in their own cultural way, then pausing and listening for an answer; their salutation to non-human agency is playful yet sincere. They call this “strategic anthropomorphism”.²⁶⁰ There is a

²⁵³ To preserve and improve understanding of Indigenous culture and language, Stoney Tribal Administration manager Bill Snow calls for the change of Alberta place names with traditional Indigenous names (2017), see CBC News, ‘Indigenous Name Changes for Alberta Places Is about Preserving Culture, Language, Says First Nations Manager’, CBC News, 15 November 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/stoney-tribal-administration-alberta-calgary-names-1.4403132>

²⁵⁴ Indigenous peoples of this land include Blackfoot who refer to the river as Makhabn (river where the bow reeds grow). Moh-kíns-tsis is how Blackfoot know the traditional territory, now referred to as Calgary in ‘Alberta, Canada’. There are other tribes with other names for their lands and waterways (Cree, Stoney, T'suut'ina, Slavey). See Wilcox, Meg, ‘7 Names for Calgary before It Became Calgary’, CBC News, 3 December 2015, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-names-elbow-1.3345967>

²⁵⁵ Ghosh, Amitav. *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*, First edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

²⁵⁶ Their work for earth justice, to safeguard the preciousness of water, is now a national and international campaign, The Water Walkers. Donald, ‘Guddling About’, 3 July 2019, 601–2.

²⁵⁷ Donald, Minty. “Guddling About: An Ecological Performance Practice with Water and Other Nonhuman Collaborators,” *GeoHumanities* 5, no. 2 (July 3, 2019): 602, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2373566X.2019.1652106>

²⁵⁸ Donald cites the work of Deborah Bird Rose (2017) who proposes that animism unsettles White dualisms of nature/culture, human/nonhuman, which “separate humanity from other life-systems and support humans’ treatment of the biosphere as a resource for exploitation.” Donald, 602.

²⁵⁹ Donald, 602

²⁶⁰ Donald, 602

link between their approach to asking and listening for an answer, and my development of an approach to *consensuality* in performance, where I explore consent with more-than/human actants through sensing and embodied listening (see discussion of *Queer Dating Sites*, Chapter 1 pages 69-70). There is also a connection with this approach and my take on Pākehā response-ability in which listening and learning is important (also see Chapter 1, p 64).

Annette Arlander and performances with plants

A posthumanist perspective prompts us to rethink the notion landscape and to consider how the surrounding world consists of creatures, life forms and material phenomena with varying degrees of volition, needs and agency.²⁶¹

Annette Arlander's performances also work at undoing paradigms of separation and humancentric modes of engagement in performance. Her works are care-full considerations of what it means to collaborate with landscapes, the weather, and plants. Performances are conceived alongside more-than/human entities in projects such as *Performing Landscape* (2012),²⁶² and *Performing with the Weather* (2018).²⁶³ Like Minty Donald, Arlander draws predominantly on white scholarship with regards to posthumanism and new materialism (including Alaimo 2010, 2016; Barad 2007; Braidotti 2013, 2019; Haraway 2008, 2016) to consider the possibilities of uplifting more-than/human agencies and vitalities through performance research.²⁶⁴ I address what Arlander proposes as a central task for artists today; to rethink our relationship to "those other life forms with whom we share this planet", and to create art that questions existing conventions and habits in our human relationship with trees (implying the ecological crisis of our times).²⁶⁵

In this review, I focus on the co-extensive projects *Performing with Plants* (2017-2020) and *Meetings with Trees* (2020-2022), significant to my investigation for how they co-operate and perform with plants (especially trees). I engage with the work through a website hosted by Uniarts in Helsinki,²⁶⁶ a blog by Arlander that serves as a portfolio for the *Meetings with Trees*

²⁶¹ Arlander, Annette. "Performing with Plants," Uniarts Helsinki, January 10, 2020, <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/performing-with-plants/>

²⁶² Arlander, Annette. "Annette Arlander: Performance Landscape," *Performing Landscape*, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://annettearlander.com/>

²⁶³ Arlander, Annette. "Performing with the Weather," *Global Performance Studies* 1, no. 2 (January 15, 2018), <https://gps.psi-web.org/issue-1-2/gps-1-2-5/>

²⁶⁴ Arlander is also developing modes of more-than-human communication: such as in *Writing to Trees*. Arlander, Annette, 'Writing to Trees', *Meetings with Trees*, 2021, <https://meetingswithtrees.com/2021/08/28/writing-to-trees/>

²⁶⁵ Arlander, Annette. *Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees In Johannesburg and Environs*, ed. Christo Doherty (Johannesburg, South Africa: Arts Research Africa, 2020).

²⁶⁶ Arlander, 'Performing with Plants', 2020.

project;²⁶⁷ and an online research catalogue that consists of video documentation, images, presentations, publications, exhibition works; and further iterations of the research dissemination.²⁶⁸

Meeting with Remarkable and Unremarkable trees

Meeting with Remarkable and Unremarkable trees (2018-2019), is one iterative tendril of these broad projects, a title which calls my attention to the significance of meeting with *unremarkable* trees.²⁶⁹ I see a resonance between this idea and my own interest in marginal urban places, which relates to the unproductive functions of queer failure (Halberstam 2011).²⁷⁰ In this series, Arlander locates and spends time with individual unremarkable trees, poses for the camera with them, framing performance for video, and recorded voice and writing letters 'with and to' trees.²⁷¹ There is much information to be gleaned just from the names of iterations of *Meeting with Remarkable and Unremarkable trees*:

- *Swinging in a Pine by the Barracks (Pinus sylvestris) in Örö*
- *Year of the Ox – On the Lowest Branch, a birch (Betula pubescens) on Harakka Island*
- *Listening with an Aspen (Populus tremula) in Mustarinda*
- *June with the Spruce of Independence (Picea abies) in Kaivopuisto*
- *Day and Night with a Mountain Birch (Betula pubescens ssp. Czerepanovii) in Kilpisjärvi*
- *Dear Mountain Birch (Betula pubescens ssp. Czerepanovii) in Kilpisjärvi*

I note the classifications of species, cultural names of places, and particular relational actions that bond Arlander and tree.

Orientations and Withness

Skimming and scanning the proliferation of materials from sources, I notice that in videos and images Arlander often positions herself with her back to or side on to the camera (she never faces the camera). I pay attention to how her bodily attunement is *with* the tree. Simple actions, gestures and bodily orientations favour a care-full *withness* (sitting in, standing next to, reclining on, reaching up, a hand resting on a branch, facing towards the tree or to the

²⁶⁷ Annette Arlander, 'Meetings with Trees', Meetings with Trees, 2020, <https://meetingswithtrees.com/2021/08/28/writing-to-trees/>

²⁶⁸ Annette Arlander, 'Performing with Plants - Att Upträda/Samarbeta Med Växter', Research Catalogue: An International Database for Artistic Research, last modified 2022.

²⁶⁹ Arlander points out that the title alludes to the photography book *Meetings with Remarkable Trees* (1996) by Thomas Pakenham, and the project forms a counterpoint to it, questioning what is worthy of attention or not. See

²⁷⁰ See Halberstam's 2011 discourse regarding the refusal to acquiesce to capitalism's insistence on legibility and productivity, discussed in Chapter 1.

²⁷¹ Arlander, 'Writing to Trees', 2021.

distant horizon). Arlander and tree are always within close range of each other (close enough to touch via various limbs-tendrils, fingery-branches).

In *Day with the Firethorn Rhus* (2020),²⁷² I see Arlander standing closely next to a tree with two trunks, head resting against one trunk, one arm wrapping to embrace the other. A focused bodily listening is underway, transpiring through apparent stillness. The performance moves with the passage of tree time. A single stripped back human gesture remains throughout a long performance duration. I imagine the experience of this duration an intimate encounter of deepening connectivity, perhaps transformational with the feltness of time passing in human-tree touch. The haptic temporality of Arlander's more-than-human²⁷³ relations reminds me of 'queer temporalities', a concept introduced by queer and trans Jewish artist-scholar Jaclyn Pryor (2017). A softening to the shift and change in elemental touch and witness of light, air, moisture, and temperature, characterises the slippage of Pryor's queer temporalities.²⁷⁴

Multispecies futures?

The works of these artists provide active contributions to vital/new materialist thought, to Practice Research that deals with multispecies collaborations, and more-than-human relationality in Performance Studies. Without taking away from or diminishing the value of these challenges to anthropocentrism – I am still curious how else we might activate interconnected multispecies relations beyond vitality and agency?

The works of Donald and Arlander implicitly and at times explicitly address global climate change and the ecological crisis of our times. My own line of inquiry and investment in de-anthropocentrising performance grows out of an interest in forming more egalitarian relations, intimacies, and ways of communing with the more-than/human, and concerns for queer and trans matters. I am reminded of Environmental Performance Agency's *Multispecies Care Survey* (2020), a project that asks, "In a time of pandemic crisis, how do we re-value what care means for all living beings?"²⁷⁵ My interest does not originate from a concern for the climate crisis, yet this crisis is also directly implicated in the same oppressive, extractivist, and anthropocentric forces that would impose colonial cis/heteronormativities on queer sexualities and non-cis genders.

²⁷² A performance in Nirox Sculpture Park in Johannesburg. Arlander, 'Performing with Plants - Att Upträda/Samarbeta Med Växter', 2016.

²⁷³ Arlander's use of the term more-than-human with two hyphens.

²⁷⁴ Pryor, Jaclyn. *Time Slips: Queer Temporalities, Contemporary Performance, and the Hole of History* (Evanston, United States: Northwestern University Press, 2017).

²⁷⁵ Environmental Performance Agency, 'Multispecies Care Survey: In a Time of Pandemic Crisis, How Do We Re-Value What Care Means for All Living Beings?', Environmental Performance Agency (EPA), 2017, <https://multispecies.care/>.

Indigenous materialisms – Whakapapa, Hau, Te Pō

Hoskins and Jones (2017) remind us that within a Māori ontological frame, “all beings and objects are experienced as having mana, a form of presence and authority, and a ‘vigour, impetus and potentiality’ called mauri”.²⁷⁶ Indigenous ontologies, as they point out, “never had a nature-culture dualism.”²⁷⁷ Mātauranga Māori concepts such as mauri and mana are complex, Hoskins and Jones suggesting they “name the intra-connectivity of the human and non-human worlds.”²⁷⁸ I have noted in the introduction of this thesis the white oversight of Indigenous materialities. In this section I explore Indigenous materialities in action, by Aotearoa-based Māori artists working in different mediums and genres.

There are a growing number of practitioner-researchers, Indigenous to Aotearoa, who are incorporating and working through sovereign ideas and paradigms related to mātauranga Māori, Māori cosmologies, and Te Ao Māori. Amanda Yates for example, proposes the term *more-than-human whanaunga* (2021), to locate Māori ontologies and an ethics for ecological care and well-being.²⁷⁹ I consider here the works of three Māori artists residing in Aotearoa who are offering vitalising perspectives on whakapapa, hau, and Te Pō through performance, audio, visual art, and choreographic works: Louie Zalk-Neale in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Rachel Shearer in Tāmaki Makaurau, and Tru Paraha also in Tāmaki Makaurau. Because Indigenous performance works are more likely to be experienced live rather than remotely, I looked more closely to local examples. Perhaps indicative of our current Covid-19 enculturation, there are only two works discussed in this chapter that I have encountered live in Aotearoa: Tru Paraha’s *KARE; kind artificial real experience* (2016),²⁸⁰ and an excerpt of Rachel Shearer’s *Te Huri Wai*, which is played in a collaborative online presentation with Janine Randerson.²⁸¹

I start with an examination of Zalk-Neale’s performance work *‘I dug a hole and they sprinkled sand in it’* for the exhibition *GLOSSY LEAF kiss* (2021). Zalk-Neale has embedded the notion of whakapapa into the bodily explorations of this work acknowledging queerness through

²⁷⁶ Hoskins and Jones’ 2017 quoted text is from “Mauri ora: the dynamics of Māori health” (Durie 2001 p. x)

²⁷⁷ Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones, ‘Non-Human Others and Kaupapa Māori Research’, in *Critical Conversations in Kaupapa Māori*, ed. Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones (Wellington, Aotearoa: Huia Publishers Ltd, 2017), 79, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5087445>

²⁷⁸ Hoskins and Jones, 80.

²⁷⁹ Yates, Amanda Monehu. “Transforming Geographies: Performing Indigenous-Māori Ontologies and Ethics of More-than-Human Care in an Era of Ecological Emergency,” *New Zealand Geographer* 77, no. 2 (2021): 101–13, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nzg.12302>

²⁸⁰ I also participate in iterations of this work as a performer providing an ‘insider’ insight and experience of the artist’s materialist tendencies and interests.

²⁸¹ Randerson, Janine, and Rachel Mary Shearer, “‘Hau: Energies in Phase Change’ Energies Panel.” (Conference presentation, Society for Literature, Science and the Arts (SLSA) Conference, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA., October 30, 2021), <https://easychair.org/smart-program/SLSA2021/index.html>

whakapapa, and atua as portal. I then look to Shearer's audio installation work *Te Huri Wai*, made in collaboration with dancer Cathy Livermore (Kai Tahu, Waitaha, Kati Mamoe) for the exhibition *Light enough to read by* (2021). This work activates a whakapapa paradigm that positions the interplay of hau in *Te Huri Wai* as carrying the Waitaha winds. Finally, Paraha's work *KARE; kind artificial real experience* (2016) is discussed, as an example of a choreographic engagement with Māori cosmologies. Paraha's exploration of thingness and positioning of the inhuman/unhuman considers choreographics beyond vitality, proposing a "shadow side" to vibrant new materialisms, turning instead to ontologies of Te Pō (Pō consciousness).²⁸²

Louie Zalk-Neale and queerness through whakapapa

Queerness is not new. This is an expression of our past, present and future beyond binary gender and sexuality. Through whakapapa we find our deepest roots in the natural world, where we ground ourselves and move freely as a queer abundance.²⁸³

Louie Zalk-Neale (Ngāi Te Rangi, Pākehā), (they/them/ia), is a takatāpui, transfeminine artist who works in performance and costume, recently creating live works that foreground queerness through whakapapa. This view initially reminds me of the view of architect Elisapeta Heta (Ngātiwai, Waikato Tainui, Sāmoa, Tokelau) who speaks of the intertwining of architecture and knowing yourself, saying "we are whenua, we are the land. My relationship to whenua is complex, it's entangled up in who I am" (2021).²⁸⁴ Zalk-Neale works from the premise that queer people can whakapapa to atua²⁸⁵ and tipua²⁸⁶, informed by the scholarship of Elizabeth Kerekere (2017). They also practice with a lived understanding that whakapapa encapsulates the notion of the more-than-human.²⁸⁷ In this discussion, I am also attentive to a

²⁸² Paraha, Tru. "Speculative ChØreographies of Darkness" (Thesis, Auckland, University of Auckland, 2019), 67, <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/49320>

²⁸³ Louie Zalk-Neale, 'GLOSSY LEAF Kiss. Connor Fitzgerald & Louie Zalk-Neale', Blue Oyster, 4 April 2021, <https://blueoyster.org.nz/exhibitions/glossy-leaf-kiss/>

²⁸⁴ Responding to the question of why Indigenous peoples fundamentally struggle with the term 'placemaking', Heta suggests this is because "we don't make place, place makes us." See Rzepecky, Sophie, and Elisapeta Heta, 'Learning from Land: An Interview with Elisapeta Heta', Pantograph Punch, 19 March 2021, <https://pantograph-punch.com/posts/learning-from-land>.

²⁸⁵ The concept of atua is often translated as ancestors and/or gods. Atua is also described as primeval ancestors with influence over particular domains. See Kupu o te Rā, 'Atua Māori', Kupu o te Rā, accessed 29 May 2022, <https://kupu.maori.nz/huinga/Atua-Māori> Also see Keane, 'Traditional Māori religion – ngā karakia a te Māori - Ngā atua – the gods', Te Ara, 5 May 2011, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/traditional-maori-religion-nga-karakia-a-te-maori/page-1>

²⁸⁶ Kerekere's position is that "takatāpui construct their identity through whakapapa and 'tūpuna takatāpui' – ancestors and historical figures who had fluid genders or sexuality or who embodied both male and female." Kerekere, 'Part of The Whānau', 2017, 46.

²⁸⁷ "I read Elizabeth Kerekere's doctoral thesis which briefly mentions that queer people can whakapapa to tipua which are spiritual beings that can change form and gender, which really pieced a lot of it together for me!", personal communication with the artist, 17 February 2022.

call Zalk-Neale makes in an interview with Artspace Aotearoa (2021) to keep queerness at the forefront when considering their art practice.²⁸⁸

I dug a hole and they sprinkled sand in it

In this writing, I look at two performance works made in collaboration with non-binary transfeminine artist Connor Fitzgerald: *'I dug a hole and they sprinkled sand in it'* for the opening of the exhibition *GLOSSY LEAF kiss* (4 March-10 April 2021) at Blue Oyster Art Project Space, Ōtepoti/Dunedin, and *GLOSSY LEAF kiss Performance* at Woodhaugh Gardens. The second iteration was performed for the bed of Ōwheo awa, a river that runs through an urbanised location within University of Otago campus grounds.²⁸⁹ The artists' Zalk-Neale and Fitzgerald examine the entanglement of queerness and 'the natural world' through material engagements with the rocky bed of the river. Whakapapa provides a portal of richness and rootedness for the artists' relatedness with Ōwheo,²⁹⁰ known in settler-colonial terms as Water of Leith.

In the iteration at Blue Oyster Art Project Space, Zalk-Neale prepares to perform with Fitzgerald through karakia, and a ritualistic tipping of cold water over their head.²⁹¹ I imagine this process an immersive summoning of the energies, entities, and intensities of performance. It is important to mention again that I did not see this live work in-person. I read and absorb fragments and glimmers of the work via the internet, as is often the way when engaging with performance events at a distance or across oceans. In this case I look to the artists' FaceBook and Instagram posts, videos posted online and shared, and written reflections by another author (Pickens 2021).²⁹²

Zalk-Neale and Fitzgerald are folded down on the floor in the centre of the main gallery space, facing a quiet assemblage of rocks, clay pot, candles, adornments bound in rope. This kneeling meditation opens the performance *'I dug a hole and they sprinkled sand in it'*. I read a gentle assembling of witches; I see robes, bangles, braids, nails and skins; I sense a queer ceremonial bonding of human and more-than-human. Fitzgerald embodies visceral poetry and a ceramic vessel, earthen clay both soooo spiky and yet soooo smooth.

²⁸⁸ Artspace Aotearoa, *Artspace Aotearoa Emerging Artists Series: Louie Zalk-Neale* (Tāmaki Makaurau, 2021).

²⁸⁹ *GLOSSY LEAF kiss Performance* (20 March 2021), see Zalk-Neale, 'GLOSSY LEAF Kiss. Connor Fitzgerald & Louie Zalk-Neale'.

²⁹⁰ Recalling a local Māori chief Wheo. Ōwheo awa is within the lands of Kāi Tahu ki Otago.

²⁹¹ Adapted from a post by Zalk-Neale on FaceBook, a description of what occurred in preparations for *'I dug a hole and they sprinkled sand in it'* on 9 April 2021, includes "I find cold water is good for really getting me to embody myself more intensely." <https://www.facebook.com/looouie>

²⁹² Pickens, Robyn Maree. "The Restorative Potential of Earth-Centred Practices," Auckland Art Gallery, December 6, 2021, <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/article/the-restorative-potential-of-earth-centred-practices>

I notice how gender and sexuality arrives through the performance by their intimate relationships with the materials. This relatedness evokes a feeling of the preciousness underway, a cherished sharing of self-birthing. Seeing each other; being seen collectively. The lovingness of the haptic exchange becomes apparent; tender qualities of touching ‘body adornment pieces’; a reciprocal adorning and caressing; bodies, words, and pieces cared for. I write performatively to collate feelings, fragments and glimmers. I imagine myself a poet in the audience of *I dug a hole and they sprinkled sand in it*:

A threading of the holding stones, bound in the wairua of tī kōuku ropes (twisted live; lively twistings). attending audience are woven too, touched, tied, and anchored into the performance, a suspended sculpture of interconnectedness. delicate threadings are the connective tissue of whakapapa throughout. māori time systems lean in and out too. a dexterous fingering sees ropes tethering a forwards and backwards together. counterbalancing for a precarious future of quiet moons.
practice notes 36: 2022

This rendering of my partial experience of the live work recalls the tentacular qualities of the asterisk, a haptic, sensuous and multi-centred seeing-feeling performance. Felt belonging is enacted through tī kōuka twisting, drawing wairua through atua and tipua portals. Author Robyn Maree Pickens offers another reading suggesting the restorative potential of the earth-centred practices of *I dug a hole and they sprinkled sand in it* (2021). For Pickens, the work invokes wellbeing, described as “connections with the earth in a time of crisis.”²⁹³ Pickens refers to the foraged plant dyes, tī kōuka leaves, muka (flax fibres), found remnants – shells, twigs, and stones, and clay as ‘earth-based materials’. This visceral list informs my imagining of textures felt, people holding materials, and all the queerness twisted and woven through the work’s whakapapa. The fluidity of tūpuna takatāpui in action. My sense is of a ritual of fluid connectedness and collective revitalisation. Coming back to the premise that queer people whakapapa to atua, Zalk-Neale affirms a restorative reading of the work, stating that “atua act as a portal to resiliency”.²⁹⁴

I consider the trans materiality of the artist also twisted into the queer artefacts. Transfemininity becoming-with the gentle fibrous sculpture, held in the softest of more-than/human hands. The use of clay to make small objects, and tī kōuka leaves to twist as rope, has a material immediacy when it comes to connecting takatāpui with ancestors, atua, tipua and earth. Whakapapa also presides in the sonic explorations of Rachel Shearer, who platforms activations of hau through sound installations.

²⁹³ Pickens, 2021.

²⁹⁴ Personal conversation with the artist, 17 February 2022.

Rachel Shearer and sound work, whakapapa and the mauritanga of hau

Rachel Shearer (Pākehā, Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga a Māhaki, Ngāti Kahungunu), is an audio and visual artist, whose exploration of sound spans 30 plus years. Shearer's work includes practices of installation, experimental music, academic research, audio visual work, site-specific work, and collaborations with practitioners of moving image and performance. Her site-specific audio works include an iteration of *Te Oro o te Ao, The Resounding of the Earth* (2018), produced in the lava caves of Tāmaki Makaurau. Whakapapa for Shearer is “a way to read and ‘tell’ a site.”²⁹⁵ The four “sonic rituals of listening to the earth” of *Te Oro o te Ao*, make up an eight channel surround-sound composition in a ‘black box’ performance space, the result of Shearer's PhD research, a key source for my writing.²⁹⁶ Sonic installation works, include *Wiriwiri* (2017)²⁹⁷ transmitting the feltness of ‘cosmopolitical concepts’ such as mauri and hau through solar affects (Shearer and Randerson 2021).²⁹⁸ This work is discussed at length by Shearer and Randerson (2021 and 2017) who consider how the piece contributes to a growing number of artworks that treat the sun as alive,²⁹⁹ and “a life force, and a threat to life.”³⁰⁰ I am drawn to Shearer's sound works for how they extend the notion of more-than/human through mātauranga Māori as integral to the interconnected kinship system of whakapapa.

Te Huri Wai

The first iteration of *Te Huri Wai* at The Physics Room, Ōtautahi/Christchurch (2021), a seven-channel sound installation made in collaboration with dancer Cathy Livermore (Kai Tahu, Waitaha, Kati Mamoe). This work also recently finished exhibiting at Te Tuhi Gallery (2022),

²⁹⁵ Rachel Shearer's 2018 research *Te Oro o te Ao: The Resounding of the World* offers an Indigenous rendering of materialist strategies and practices from a mātauranga Māori perspective, with an emphasis on the materiality of sound, listening, environment, and perception. Māori ontologies are articulated by Shearer as “ways of living and understanding the world”. She also offers valuable commentary in this research on the avoidance of Indigenous perspectives on vitalism in Academia. Shearer, Rachel Mary. “Te Oro o Te Ao: The Resounding of the World” (Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2018), 13, <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/11712>

²⁹⁶ Shearer, Rachel Mary. “Te Oro o Te Ao: The Resounding of the World”, 14.

²⁹⁷ *Wiriwiri* (2017), was an installation involving stereo audio, a photovoltaic panel, and customised electronics for Oceanic Performance Biennial ‘Heat: Solar Revolutions’ at Te Uru Gallery, in Titirangi, Tāmaki Makaurau. Referencing the trembling hand in Māori performance called wiri, the tremble of life, *Wiriwiri* is responsive to generative variables in light and heat by oscillating volume. This is an acknowledgement of Tānerore, the personification of shimmering heated air that rises from the ground. Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, ‘Heat: Solar Revolutions’ (Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, 2017), <https://www.teuru.org.nz/teuru/assets/File/HEAT%20Exhibition%20Programme.pdf>

²⁹⁸ Randerson, Janine and Rachel Mary Shearer, “Dark Sun: Solar Frequencies, Solar Affects,” in *Animism in Art and Performance*, ed. Christopher Braddock (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2017), 67–88.

²⁹⁹ Meaning the sun is an animate being with mauri, life force, vital essence.

³⁰⁰ Randerson and Shearer, ‘Dark Sun: Solar Frequencies, Solar Affects’, 67.

curated by James Tapsell-Kururangi for *Ata koia!* Through the glimmering effects of dispersed intertextual sources, I encounter the “registers of ihi, wehi and wana” of Shearer’s sound events.³⁰¹

The seven speakers of *Te Huri Wai* (2021) in The Physics Room, were dispersed across a split chambered room.³⁰² In the exhibition statement, Shearer positions the hau, breath of life, of collaborator Livermore, as carrying the Waitaha winds.³⁰³ The Waitaha winds “announce themselves”, speaking of ancestors still in “important positions in connection with this world.” Warm voice-breath-winds tell the whakapapa of the weather in Waitaha, an acknowledgement of Kāi Tahu narratives. Representing the ordered patterning of the Waitaha winds (and waters), genealogically linking hau by kinship to the spirits of gods, as the breath of personified winds.³⁰⁴

I hear haunting, twisted wind-water voices that are whistling and crashing in the gallery space, moving from north, south, west, east to north-west. The material and acoustic qualities of the room are activated through the design. I see this as a performance ritual that activates the sacred directions, where the Waitaha winds and whakapapa are re-forming, adapting to change, through collision with gallery walls, windows, cracks, floors (evoking a fluid apocalyptic crumbling).

In The Physics Room podcast (Episode 24), Shearer describes the way Livermore sets about performing in the studio, moving through each of the different winds, physically changing and shifting, noting how body and voice alters with each new wind.³⁰⁵ The transforming of the material aspects of place, gallery, as oxygen, light, matter is a necessary inter-change.

Shearer, in a collaborative presentation with Janine Randerson (*Hau: Energies in Phase Change*, 2 Oct 2021), articulate the personified winds of *Te Huri Wai* as “a being, a form of life energy”.³⁰⁶ Mātauranga Māori extends notions of energy through concepts such as mauri and the hau, which they position as “integral to the Māori relational and metaphysical

³⁰¹ See Shearer (2018) for a discussion of the relationship of ihi, wehi, and wana to her artworks and performances. Shearer, Rachel Mary. “Te Oro o Te Ao: The Resounding of the World” (Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2018), 27, <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/11712>

³⁰² Shearer, Rachel Mary, et al., “Light Enough to Read By,” July 11, 2021, <https://physicsroom.org.nz/exhibitions/light-enough-to-read-by>

³⁰³ Hau, like other Māori concepts carry a complexity of meanings, in this case, it refers to the breath, the wind, the vital essence.

³⁰⁴ Tau, Te Maire, ‘Ngāi Tahu - The Genealogy of the Land’, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand* (blog), February 2005, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/ngai-tahu/page-5>

³⁰⁵ Physics Room, ‘Art Not Science - Episode 24 - Rachel Shearer’. Rachel Shearer. Accessed 18 November 2021, <https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/art-not-science/art-not-science-episode-23-Li13-OVTJPb/>

³⁰⁶ Randerson, Janine and Rachel Mary Shearer, “‘Hau: Energies in Phase Change’ Energies Panel.” (Conference presentation, Society for Literature, Science and the Arts (SLSA) Conference, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA., October 30, 2021). See <https://easychair.org/smart-program/SLSA2021/2021-10-01.html>

dimension of ‘things’.”³⁰⁷ Whakapapa is utilised by Shearer to understand interconnectedness of humans, nonhuman beings and things, describing her work as “sonic explorations of energetic and informational becomings”.³⁰⁸

Among other things, whakapapa is a holistic ‘genealogical’ network within which everything that exists is connected. Māori relations to the universe, and earth within it, are thought of as a complex inter-related family. Non-human sentient beings *and* inanimate things are personified, placing an emphasis on all phenomena as ancestors or relatives.³⁰⁹

Shearer and Randerson (2021) consider the manifestation in the work *Hau* as phase changes of hau, breath, in te ao Māori, the Māori world. In relation to whakapapa as “non-human elements of the ‘natural’ world is considered to be ancestors or extended family members, a relational ontology that is often incompatible with colonial and scientific regard of winds and waters as ‘natural resources.’”³¹⁰

Within the environments of Shearer’s sound work *Te Huri Wai*, the interconnected kinships and systems of whakapapa, and conceptions of mauri and hau, are experienced as alive, breathing energetic relations. Relational Māori ontologies are extended through Shearer’s installation and performance, which activates the metaphysical dimensions of an entirely interconnected more-than/human family.

Tru Paraha and dark materialism, Pō consciousness and a kumara

Tru Paraha (Ngāti Hineāmaru, Ngāti Kahu o Torongare, Ngāti Te Tarawa, Ngāpuhi-nui-tonu, Israel/Palestine) is a choreographer, director, and writer, creating works of experimental dance, theatre, performance writing, and audio-visual works relating to a range of interests including tātai arorangi, horror, speculative fiction, and astrophysics. Performance projects include *Whiro*, *ORO* live installation (2021); *The gloaming* (2019); *5th Body* (2018, 2019, 2021); *blackOut* (2018); and *KARE; kind artificial real experience* (2016).³¹¹ All contribute a macabre scene of more-than/human performance, a deadness-reanimated, questioning and extending a current focus on an optimistic vitalism and future-forward agencies of the nonhuman. Paraha centres the study of darkness in recent works, exploring thingness and the ahuman beyond vitality. The live work *KARE; kind artificial real experience* (*KARE*) is the

³⁰⁷ Randerson and Shearer.

³⁰⁸ As opposed to white science, which is an objectification of nature, where the earth is seen as inert and separate, and therefore for the benefit of human use (Shearer 2018).

³⁰⁹ Shearer, Rachel Mary. “Te Oro o Te Ao: The Resounding of the World” (Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2018), 13, <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/11712>

³¹⁰ Randerson and Shearer, ‘SLSA2021’.

³¹¹ Their published poems and writings also proliferate within the internet and in print, including Blackmail Press; Puna Wai Kōrero: An Anthology of Māori Poetry in English; Poetry New Zealand; Tatai Whetū: Seven Māori Women Poets in Translation.

focus of my discussion, which I experience in-person, and as a performer in an iteration of the work.

KARE; kind artificial real experience

KARE is presented in a ‘black box’ performance space (Kenneth Myers Centre), which is envisioned by Paraha “an immersive non-place, a nomadic campsite”.³¹² A dimmed environment; a convergence of bodies; Paraha summons Te Kore (The Great Nothingness, The Empty Void), inciting nameless meta-physical flesh-spaces in this work.³¹³ The architectures of Te Pō (Darkness Perpetual, the Unknown) are constructed through philosophies of whakapapa, rendered by Paraha in an episodic performance of human-thing shadows. The abyss of darkness becomes “vague gestures” – I drip ink blood, machete chop to hair, and drags body.³¹⁴ When there is enough light to fathom the horrors, we see-feel dead girl, cardboard boxes, jumping lamby-bodies, and islands of brown vinyl and foam. This choreography of darkness, is a place to sit in a “re-membling of blackout wānanga.”³¹⁵

One scene in the middle of this performance, poetically interrogates the thingness of a kumara, a root vegetable of great value to Māori.³¹⁶ Paraha’s activation of the single sweet potato is monstrous and magnetic. A bite excites, then a mouth/ing of kumara in a two human “kis/sing scene.”³¹⁷ I feel the expanded thingness of kumara across the room, the feeling of hugeness, the stretch of mouth; delicate balance of teeth, tongue, lip, foot, tilt, rotate. I read the mouth-kumara meeting as a materialist form of cave-dwelling, to move through the mouth of the cave, and enter the realms of darkness as a performance lingering.

Paraha acknowledges the kumara’s “post-vital powers” bursting the bubble within the nonhuman turn to non-critically rest into Bennett’s 2010 themes of vitality and agency. Instead, Paraha draws on a Māori cosmo-genealogy where ‘Darkness begets The Life Force’, to suggest an opening for choreography to embrace darkness, rather than perpetuating and dwelling in the realms of light through citing Bennett.³¹⁸ *KARE* resists the ‘new’ of Bennett’s vital materialism, preferring a dark materialism for its nuance of black space, darkness, and blackness. Paraha’s Pō consciousness, glistens with the blood of human and nonhuman

³¹² Paraha, Tru. “& Darkness,” in *Undisciplining Dance in Nine Movements and Eight Stumbles*. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 124.

³¹³ Paraha, “& Darkness,” 125.

³¹⁴ Memories of my role as performer in *KARE*.

³¹⁵ See Paraha’s reference to these nocturnal marae-based wānanga, facilitated by Ngāpuhi language experts. Paraha, 124.

³¹⁶ Adds, Peter, ‘Kūmara’, *Te Ara: The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, 24 November 2008, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/kumara>

³¹⁷ Paraha, T. “Speculative ChØreographies of Darkness” (Thesis, Auckland, University of Auckland, 2019), 71–73, <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/49320>

³¹⁸ Paraha, “Speculative ChØreographies of Darkness”, 109.

perpetrators in the darkness of *KARE*'s black box theatre.³¹⁹ I see Paraha's resistance of Bennett's optimistic 'new' materialism as productively critical, a smart take on the overabundance of practitioners-researchers reverberating the buoyancies of vital materialist thought.

Indigenous disruption to colonial kinetics

Paraha's work unsettles a continuum of colonial pedagogies and the "highly illumined spectacle of dancing bodies" within white dance traditions.³²⁰ Their erotic yet monstrous kumara act in *KARE* invites a decolonial viewing of "another kind of life."³²¹ Tangata whenua concepts of Te Pō, hakapapa geneologies, and methodologies rooted in a Dark Materialism conceived within "nonhuman environments"³²² ensure Paraha's performances "retain a certain obscurity" and im/materiality.³²³ Zalk-Neale and Shearer meanwhile, regard whakapapa as the co-constitution of whenua and people, applying this Indigenous non-dualistic perspective to performance and sound works. Shearer refers to mauri, hau and whanaungatanga, rendering the materiality of sound, listening, environment and perception; whilst Zalk-Neale contributes a queer vitalism rooted in the whakapapa paradigm.

Reading and witnessing the works of Zalk-Neale, Shearer and Paraha informs an ethic of Pākehā response-ability in my work, with the intention to build more settler awareness (ongoing practice) through the last phases of this research. I recognise whakapapa as a way of understanding whenua as interconnected, and tangata whenua as protectors of the land. I see a need for more critical whiteness perspectives that explicitly address white oversight of Indigenous ontologies and materialisms in Performance Studies. In the next section I explore examples of queer materialities in performance works that move with and from more-than/human realms.

Queer materialities – speculative rituals, queer matters and collective care

Queer performance artists, and practitioner-researchers, are taking up the turn to the nonhuman in developing approaches to activate more-than-human relations in performance through a queer perspective. I encountered Keith Hennessy's collaborative performance and

³¹⁹ Paraha, Tru. "Colluding with Darkness," *Performance Research* 23, no. 2 (February 17, 2018): 49–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2018.1464754>

³²⁰ Paraha draws on Sloterdijk, Peter. "Mobilization of the Planet from the Spirit of Self-Intensification," *TDR/The Drama Review* 50, no. 4 (December 2006): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1162/dram.2006.50.4.36>

³²¹ Paraha, 2019, 74.

³²² Paraha, 2019, 22.

³²³ Paraha, 2019, 48.

pleasure-seeking queer practices at an dance improvisation festival on Turtle Island/US in 2009.³²⁴ Some recent themes of Keith's queer performance work include: fake healing (2014)³²⁵; queering intimacy and consent culture in Contact Improvisation (2010³²⁶, 2020³²⁷); shamanic performance (2014³²⁸, 2010-2017³²⁹); and anti-racist practices (see TRY Project 2021-2022³³⁰).

Following Hennessy's work, I became aware of the experimental queer choreography of Hennessy's colleague and friend, Jeremy Wade. They share a history of living and dancing in the Bay Area of California (Wade is now based in Berlin), both integral to the artist-run collective space that was 848, an important catalyst for experimental queer practices in the Bay Area (see Hennessy 2013³³¹). I am drawn to Wade's mobilisation of the materiality of queer dance, queers, and queerness in a dance setting (for example *Death Asshole Rave Video* 2019³³²; and *You Ok Bitch??* 2020). Also relevant to my inquiry, Wade has been working for several years within the realms of disability culture, developing collective care strategies in the context of artistic practice (see the symposium *Take Care*, 2017³³³, and *The Battlefield Nurse*, a drag lecture performance, 2019³³⁴).

This section of writing firstly examines the political strategies for care and choreographic thinking in the workshop *Future Clinic for Critical Care: Dance the Accessible Ritual Tools* (2019) by Jeremy Wade and Tanja Erhart.³³⁵ I then investigate the centring of queer bodies and ideas in Keith Hennessy and Michael J. Morris's workshop *The Spiral of Fortune* (7 of

³²⁴ Hennessy led a politically motivated workshop in West Coast Contact Improvisation Festival (WCCIF), Berkeley 2009.

³²⁵ Hennessy, Keith, *Fake Healing (Mission St. / Clarion Alley)* Keith Hennessy, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_arXhDdm2k

³²⁶ Hennessy, Keith, 'Improvising Contact, Queering Intimacy - Keith Hennessy | Touch & Play Festival', 2010, <https://2010.touchandplay.org/index.html@p=808.html>

³²⁷ Patel, Vivek, and Keith Hennessy, 'Keith Hennessy and Vivek Patel in Conversation about Consent Culture in Contact Improvisation Symposium, Earthdance 2020', 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/effortlessspirituality/videos/10156680485321791/>

³²⁸ Hennessy, Keith, *Bear/Skin (Market Street)* Keith Hennessy, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xC4tfVXP50>

³²⁹ Hennessy, Keith, *Turbulence (a Dance about the Economy)*, 2017 2010, Performance, 2017 2010, <http://circozero.org/archive#/turbulence>

³³⁰ Hennessy, Keith, et al., *TRY*, 2022 2021, Performance, 2022 2021, <http://circozero.org/try>

³³¹ Hennessy, Keith, "848: Queer, Sex, Performance in 1990s San Francisco (Article Draft)," Circo Zero, May 13, 2013, <http://circozero.org/writing-rants/2013/05/848-queer-sex-performance-in-1990s-san.html>

³³² Wade, Jeremy, *The Future Clinic for Critical Care Presents: You Ok Bitch??*, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/410538387>

³³³ Wade, Jeremy, 'Take Care Symposium' (Symposium, No Limits Festival, Berlin, 2017), <http://takecare.no-limits-festival.de/en/>

³³⁴ Wade, Jeremy, 'The Battlefield Nurse' (beursschouwburg, Berlin, 2019), <https://beursschouwburg.be/en/events/we-love-you-opening-weekend/jeremy-wade-the-battlefield-nurse/>

³³⁵ Wade, Jeremy, and Tanja Erhart, "Future Clinic for Critical Care: Dance the Accessible Ritual Tools," ImPulsTanz Archives, ImPulsTanz, 2019, <https://www.impulstanz.com/en/archive/workshops/2019/id3953/>

Birds): A laboratory of political witchcraft (2019).³³⁶ Both workshops occurred across 3 days in July 2019, as part of the Impulstanz Festival programming in Vienna, which I attended. Through these discussions, I also work to locate my own *Promiscuous Emplacements*, queer*trans/materiality approach, and *Choreoqueering* techniques, exploring where my practice fits and what my work may possibilise within the fields of queer performance and Performance Studies.

Jeremy Wade & Tanja Erhart, a critical materiality grounded in care and disability politics

I participated in *Future Clinic for Critical Care: Dance the Accessible Ritual Tools* alongside 25 other people, predominantly dancers with disabilities. The material being addressed centred disability equity through explorations of human-object relations. Led by Wade and Erhart, we were asked to select and bring along an 'object of significance' to each day of the workshop. Some people made use of their manual, electric or all-terrain wheelchairs (and other mobility devices including canes) as trusted objects for access, travel, and movement. Others, like me, came with smaller objects that would fit into a bag or pocket, ranging from little treasures to books and personal items. All objects were important and dear to us as participants, to be activated in the workshop as 'ritual tools'.

Across the three days we were guided through improvisational scores and somatic movement explorations to engage affectively and materially with our chosen ritual tools. Wade and Erhart provided a lot of space for our self-determined choices, valuing difference and unique perspectives. We each arrived with a history, carrying into studio practice our unique voice, language, terminologies, and dance practices. My key interest in this review of Wade and Erhart's workshop, is how their inquiry into human-object relationships, held within the collective environment, contributes to a critical-creative means of exploring care and centring disability justice. I address this through my reflections as a participant and practitioner-researcher by referring to practice notes that I took in the workshop, and the flotsy (anarchival pieces) that I produced through the workshop duration.

Wade and Erhart nurtured a space of equity and accessibility through movement explorations that spoke to notions of 'grounded consent', 'negotiating needs', and the requirement of care and patience 'on your own terms and conditions'.³³⁷ We regularly circled up to reflect and discuss what emerged through practice, checking in, offering listening and support. The scores and movement explorations created parameters for us to develop a relationship individually and collectively with the objects of significance/ritual tools. All these

³³⁶ Hennessy, Keith, and Michael J. Morris, 'The Spiral of Fortune (7 of Birds): A Laboratory of Political Witchcraft', ImPulsTanz Archive, 2019, <https://www.impulstanz.com/en/archive/2019/workshops/id3946/>

³³⁷ Personal communication, from practice notes taken during the workshop.

methods combined worked to establish agreed upon terms of practice within the group, rooted in care, trust-building, and experimentation.

Day 1: building a relationship with your object of significance

On day 1 of *Future Clinic for Critical Care: Dance the Accessible Ritual Tools*, I selected the Impulstanz Festival ID badge and lanyard as my ritual tool. The badge was something we were all required to carry with us throughout the festival as an entry pass for workshops. In this sense I brought a queer*trans/materiality lens to my engagement with the workshop, interested in the ID badge as an object of *in/significance* (following Halberstam's queer failure 2011). The familiar length of neck cord, a firm shiny clip, the see-through plastic slip; a form and function so recognisable, yet taken for granted. I was interested in how the material textures and qualities of this object tended to be overlooked, despite spending so much time touching, holding, and twiddling with it (mostly unaware haptic interactions). What might be possible in engaging the ID badge in affective, sensuous, tentacular, and perverse dance explorations?



Figure 25: val smith, *Future Clinic for Critical Care* (Day 1), ID badge and lanyard, 2019.

Wade and Erhart led us in long durations of moving-with our ritual tools independently, building kinaesthetic forms of relating, then shifting into 'duet' and 'ensemble' practice forms.³³⁸ Initially, I spent time getting to know my ritual tool through all the sensorial

³³⁸ 'Duet' and 'ensemble' are anthropocentrically driven terms from the contemporary dance field, that speak to how we compose through relationship structures.

capacities of asterisking and semi-permeability of slashing available to me involving sensorial perversity, consensuality, listening and reciprocity as and when it felt right to do so (see Chapter 1). My ritual tool was teeming with textures, edges, density, and light-weightedness, I also noted its' propensity to curl, fold, click, roll, and collect (dust and hair). I utilise asterisking to attune with this object's exciting tightening tendencies through dance. Then I incorporated slashing with object and place, locating the potential for sliding across floor at great speed, the ritual tool achieved great distances. After some time, the ID badge no longer felt as separate from me; similar experiences of merging and blurring were noted by other participants in their relationship with the ritual tools.³³⁹

Activating the ritual tools in ensemble forms, we were led through explorations of spatial dynamics amongst the group, such as the spectrum of proximities – from close to far away. The combination of Festival ID & val contributed feisty surprises of de- and re-attachment, interspersed with long silent 'movements', of intimately resting-together, to distant assemblages of more-than/human relationality.

³³⁹ Personal communication during workshop check-ins.

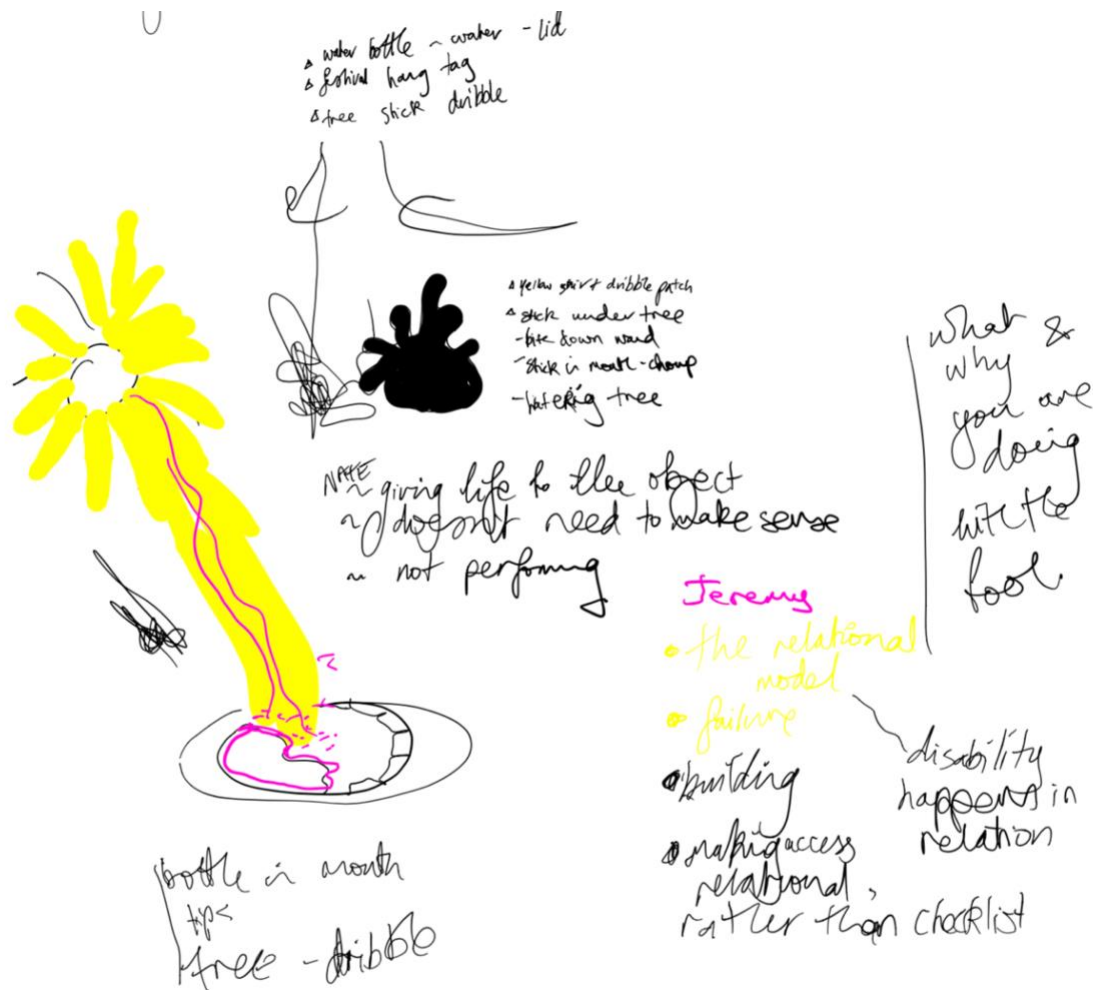


Figure 26: val smith, Future Clinic for Critical Care (Day 2) anarchival pieces, 2019.

These human-object dances gained momentum across the three days of the *Future Clinic for Critical Care: Dance the Accessible Ritual Tools*. On the afternoon of the last day the group became a fast-moving long train that linked all the humans and mobility devices. We formed a momentous assemblage of socio-cultural meanings. One participant described witnessing a fleeting ensemble of all the powerchairs in the room as becoming monstrous, a twisted ritual of “engaged bodies” (recalling Stryker’s 2008 ‘monstrous selves’, which reinforces the affinity and relationship between Disability and Transgender Studies).

This workshop offered a queer materialist form of composing human-mobility device dance. The more-than/human experiments centred disability equity, joining in with the provocations of Aotearoa dance artist Suzanne Cowan (2017).³⁴⁰ The agencies and vitalities of the ‘objects of significance’ were brought to life, not manipulated by us, the human dancers, but felt to

³⁴⁰ Cowan, Suzanne. “Choreographing through an Expanded Corporeality” (Thesis, ResearchSpace@Auckland, 2017), <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/36942>

be alive with and within us. The choreographic forms and approaches that emerged through the *Future Clinic for Critical Care* were at once floppy and disengaged, stropky and actively resisting. We were together-producing a queer more-than/human dance that managed to represent an intra-active co-production (Barad 2007), as well as valuing the multiplicities and differences of this collective embrace of disability equity.

An unspoken queer materiality

Queer materiality in the workshop, whilst unnamed, was clearly felt and communicated by Wade's palpable affordances, terminologies, and ways of being. In turn, this afforded me and other folk a sense of safety to be more of who we were (disabled, queer, trans), and to delve more deeply into the queer sensuality of human-object relations as they unfolded in the dance. Moving intimately together without fear of reprimand, or dread of queer, crip, or body shaming.

The significance of Wade and Erhart's thing-relationships shifts a humancentric historical model in performance and theatre that understands props as appendages to the performance proper (see Kirkkopelto 2016³⁴¹ and Zerdy & Schweitzer 2014³⁴²). Wade and Erhart open possibilities for relating co-extensively and collaboratively with mobility devices and other objects of significance/ritual tools in dance practice. Their emphasis on "inclusive accessible futures", holds a forward-focused practice for better, more equitable worlds. As well, their work demands a flatter ontology of relations between mobility devices, things, and humans, to likely inform dance making practices and practices of care in performance in a myriad of ways.

Keith Hennessy & Michael J. Morris, a thingly political witchcraft

I also participated in the 3-day workshop *The Spiral of Fortune (7 of Birds): A laboratory of political witchcraft*, during the 2019 Impulstanz Festival in Vienna, co-led by Keith Hennessy³⁴³ and Michael J. Morris.³⁴⁴ This workshop reflects a confluence of their independent work (see footnotes 325 & 326) in a shared practice of 'political witchcraft' that addresses complex

³⁴¹ Kirkkopelto, Esa. "Joints and Strings: Body and Object in Performance," *Performance Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (July 29, 2016): 49–59, <https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2016.2170>

³⁴² Zerdy, Joanne and Marlis Schweitzer, *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things* (England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

³⁴³ A well-regarded innovator of queer performance, Hennessy is a practitioner-researcher and self-described witch whose work navigates improvisation, ritual, collaboration, and protest as tools for investigating political realities. Hennessy lists inspirations that include anarchism, wicca, contact improvisation, and critical whiteness. See Hennessy, Keith, 'Circo Zero Performance: Keith Hennessy in Collaboration', Circo Zero, accessed 1 June 2022, <http://circozero.org/about>

³⁴⁴ Morris is a scholar, practitioner and witch who has theorised ecosexualities in performance, and whose practice centres astrology, tarot, and Wiccan ritual practices. See their PhD dissertation: Morris, Michael J., 'Material Entanglements with the Nonhuman World: Theorizing Ecosexualities in Performance' (PhD, Ohio, The Ohio State University, 2015), https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_olink/r/1501/10?clear=10&p10_accession_num=osu1435325456

socio-political issues through dance. They lead us in an immersion into “dance divination”, “queer becoming”, “collaborative world-making”, and “magick, healing, activism, discourse, and ritual”.³⁴⁵ Hennessy and Morris refer to a plethora of influences, cited and activated, including the speculative multispecies scholarship of Donna Haraway (2016a, 2016b); adrienne maree brown’s *Pleasure Activism* from the field of Generative Somatics (2019);³⁴⁶ and the widely read text by Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* (2010). Whilst Bennett’s vital materialism of humans and the more-than-human was not the focus of their workshop, the influence of a political ecology of things was a clear theme or thread in our shared dance inquiries.³⁴⁷

The workshop rebounds the premise that Morris (2015) cites in their Doctoral thesis: that queer sexuality (all sexuality) and the more-than-human world are already entangled. Hennessy and Morris lead us into full-bodied experiences of dwelling with human-thing relations (noting the terminology shift from Wade and Erhart). They drew heavily on witchcraft practices, particularly tarot and Wiccan ritual. We also engaged in improvisation scores of fake healing, mostly in pairs and small groups, with an emphasis on experiences of transformation, intimacy, and experimentation. These processes occurred through the mornings, then built on in the afternoon. Afternoons would involve half or whole group improvisations, with a strong element of performance witnessing and holding space for vulnerable experience and relational encounters.

Ropes, tarot and sex-positivity

Hennessy and Morris invited us to engage with things lying around the edges of the studio, that we drew into the workshop practices. They also brought to the studio a selection of things from their personal belongings, long lengths of ropes, and several decks of tarot cards (all queer, sex positive, political and feminist aligned). These things were dispersed on the studio floor, and we were invited to walk around noticing what we were personally drawn to. We attune, stood close, held the things, responded in movement, then moved on. There was

³⁴⁵ Personal communication, from notes taken during the workshops.

³⁴⁶ Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, First Edition edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2016).

³⁴⁷ In another part of this workshop, an improvisation is framed in trio-form using a thick length of rope tied to form a loop, and two human bodies. The score is to keep the rope continually moving for 20 minutes without using our hands at all. This experiment opens space for an intense psycho-material engagement. In my trio experience, we negotiated the physically demanding task by leaning, sharing weight, turning, and counterbalancing. Keeping the loop alive, the visceral strain wears at our fragile human skins on neck, chest, face, and waists. Affective frictions arise. The strain and sweat increases over time. The continuous looping and turning becomes trance-like over time for me, as a durational action that is involved and immersive. I am deeply moved; we are all three connected viscerally. Something transformative occurred through the struggle, through the discomfort and effort.

no obligation to stick with one thing.³⁴⁸ I found this approach to build on what was already underway in the environment: the liveliness, a socio-political materiality, and what I would term a *Choreoqueering*, a queer form of choreography.

In another section of the workshop, we spent time talking about and holding tarot cards, receptive to the iconography of different decks, and discussing feminist witchcraft practices. Hennessy and Morris adapt the format of a tarot reading for small group dance experiments. This is a haptic moving reading that composes with bodies, items of clothing and other personal items scattered around the space. Human-thing relations emerged within spontaneous spatial and temporal dynamics, an expanded and intuitive tarot play. The queer*trans/materiality of what occurred in these tarot readings is hard to describe in words, I liken the experience to Barad's (2012) suggestion that queerness may occur "in the very nature of spacetime mattering."³⁴⁹ There were other scores rooted in elements of witchcraft that opened a ritual space through non-prescriptive means, we collectively invoked the elemental forces for example, whilst walking in relation to the directions. In one moment, the pentacle patterning of our walking pathways sets an intention for love, magick, and the potency of queerness in our work. I think of this as a seeing-feeling emergent approach that senses with an 'ensemble mind'. It felt like an amoebic collective tentacularity, akin to what Haraway (2016) refers to as fingery, fibrous, matted, probing and swelling beings, as well as nets, networks and critters, whose wayfaring movements are critical.³⁵⁰

The material engagements of *The Spiral of Fortune (7 of Birds): A laboratory of political witchcraft* continue to entangle with the tendrils of my dance life. At that time, what transpiring through participation in Hennessy and Morris's workshop was an invitation to present work in the queer performance event called ImpulsTranz, a yearly adjunct to Impulstanz Festival, where I shared an iteration of *Offline Onsite Hookups (v2)*.³⁵¹

Queer performance practitioners such as Wade and Erhart, Hennessy and Morris, are delving into vital materialism and the agency of things, yet still centering the importance of human concerns and narratives in their workshop intentions and live works. These works are displacing the centrality of the human in collaborative worlding making, ritual, and dance

³⁴⁸ Drawing on Nancy Stark Smith's principle of 'grazing' in *The Underscore*, which reflects Hennessy's long history with Contact Improvisation. See Stark Smith, Nancy, and David Koteen, *Caught Falling: The Confluence of Contact Improvisation, Nancy Stark Smith, and Other Moving Ideas*. (Northampton, MA: Contact Editions, 2008).

³⁴⁹ Barad, Karen. "Nature's Queer Performativity*," *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, no. 1–2 (March 15, 2012): 29, <https://doi.org/10.7146/kkf.v0i1-2.28067>

³⁵⁰ Haraway, Donna. "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene," *E-Flux Journal* 75 (September 2016): 2.

³⁵¹ *Offline Onsite Hookups (v2)*, July 2019, ImpulsTranz Performance night, curated by Keith Hennessy, UnPlugged Bar, Vienna Austria. Supported by ImPulsTanz Festival.

divinations, whilst also care-fully resisting what a ‘proper body’ looks like and can do.³⁵² I note a need for more queer and trans voices in more-than-human performance and scholarship.

This is where I fit!

Promiscuous Emplacements adds to this field of queer materialism, bringing a queer*trans/materialist perspective and Choreoqueering techniques for engaging in more-than/human relationality. It is at the relatively unmapped confluence of Performance Studies, Queer and Transgender Studies, and the nonhuman turn, that this research project sits, with my focus on approaches to more-than/human intimacies and communing in performance. Within the field of Performance Studies, Rebecca Schneider (2015) has mapped the shift in practice at the intersection with new materialism, from assigning agency exclusively to humans. She notes the correspondence of this shifting with queer theories, Indigenous Studies, and feminisms, with Mel Y. Chen’s *Animacies* (2012), as Schneider discusses, being an important catalyst in this regard. I also locate the recent work of Harris & Holman Jones (2019) who consider the juncture of performance, affect and the more-than-human in *The Queer Life of Things*,³⁵³ providing a useful intersectional analysis. There is so much more to know however.

In my reach for non-anthropocentric terms and conditions for queer dance and performance processes, I consider attempts to make human activities more-than/human to be ironic. Even so, in the context of queer performance, spectacle and representational human conditions are being unsettled through considerations of more-than/human relations. Language and materiality also rub up against each other in my work. The friction of these uncomfortable relationships provides a furtive space for my queer somatic experiments to flourish (Queering Somatics, Chapter 3). Such experiments begin to stir and unravel anthropocentric assumptions of somatics in a sense, reimagining my choreographic work. In this way, I also find the opportunity to challenge the notion of a natural or neutral body (building on George 2014).³⁵⁴

Summary of Chapter 2: Let’s expand Indigenous, queer and trans materialisms and methodologies

In this chapter, I have discussed how Māori practitioner-researchers break open the discourse regarding materiality from that of more-than/human ‘agency’ and ‘vitality’, to Indigenous ontologies of whakapapa, Te Ao Māori and Te Pō or dark materialism. The

³⁵² Luciano and Chen, ‘Introduction: Has the Queer Ever Been Human?’, 183.

³⁵³ Harris and Holman Jones, *The Queer Life of Things*.

³⁵⁴ George, Doran. “A Conceit of the Natural Body: The Universal-Individual in Somatic Dance Training” (UCLA, 2014), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2285d6h4>

ontological discourse shifts and expands to consider the nuanced relations of mātauranga Māori, such as a choreographics of Pō consciousness, live portals connecting takatāpui to atua, and the sonic personifications of mauri and hau that I have found in the works of Paraha, Zalk-Neale and Shearer.

I have called for work that increases critical awareness around the settler-colonial hegemonies inherent to white philosophies and monolithic dualisms underpinning more-than-human thinking, practice, and research. Indigenous materialisms are still overlooked, often ignored for their value. More scholarship regarding the contribution Indigenous practitioner-researchers are making to more-than/human explorations is needed.

Whilst there is a multitude of takes on vitality and agencies in a growing field of more-than/human approaches to making live work (Donald, Arlander, haenggi, Cull Ó Maoilearca, Juurak & Bailey are only a few examples), queer and trans voices are few. I acknowledge that the contributions of Morris 2015, and Harris and Holman 2019, are paving the way in this regard. This chapter argues that more-than/human things, beings, entities, and atmospheric elements are as important as people in a formulation of queer*trans performance, and that a critical focus on their involvement and contribution in performance is in need of further inquiry.³⁵⁵ Despite the vitalising contributions of Wade and Hennessy (and collaborators), I have found there to be a need for more critical writing on queer and trans practitioners who are engaging materialities. These practitioners, and my own practice offer some thought towards how we might involve more-than/human relations in the landscape of queer performance. I offer queer*trans/materiality and an array of *Choreoqueering techniques* to this nexus, queer*trans and more-than/human methodologies that I outline in the next two chapters.

³⁵⁵ See Luciano and Chen (2015), who discuss the work of Chicana lesbian photographer, Laura Aguilar, to argue the displacement of the centrality of the human in queer studies, stating the nonhuman is in need of inquiry (p 184).

3. Choreoqueering I: scat-tending and flotsy



Figure 27: val smith, *sex/es on site (v1)*, 2018. Image: Josh Szeto

Choreoqueering is a queer*trans form of somatic choreography that possibilises reciprocal and amorous more-than/human relations. In this inquiry, the *Choreoqueering* methods, approaches, and techniques to emerge are all perverse, proliferative, tentacular and promiscuous (key qualities of queer*trans/materiality). They are also gradual, small, and soft/ening. Knowledge is produced through slow performance experiments that connect and slip across, through and beyond bodies, and what we typically know to be dance.

Choreoqueering centres tenderness, love, care, and trust-building in an approach to a more-than/human performance that engages marginal urban places as *Promiscuous Emplacements*.

The emergence of *Choreoqueering* reflects an iterative address of the key research question: How might a queer choreographic practice delve into more-than/human relations?

Responding to this question (that refines) through practice, I invent and engage a *queering* of Somatics³⁵⁶, resulting in an inventory of *perverse techniques*.

³⁵⁶ When referring to the field of Somatics, I use a capital S, otherwise lowercase is used for somatic practices, processes, experimentation, approaches, methods, and modalities.

Queer*trans/materiality (Chapter 1) is the meta-lens through which *Choreoqueering* emerges. It is from this meta-view that I centre queer and trans matter/s in an interrogation of the nonhuman turn (in the context of Performance Studies). Within the permeable methodology of *Choreoqueering*, I engage and extend approaches to somatic practice (resulting in *scat-tending*, *Queer Clean(s)ing*, *Queer Napping*), an anarchiving of performance (*flotsy*), and friendship-based collaborative practices (*bttm//bottom*). These five perverse techniques are entangled through and informing each other as possibilising strategies; each enables the emergence of the next. Hard to pin down because they are not distinct and discrete, they tend to diversify, or merge and blur into each other.

The techniques are imbued with the critical potency (and sparkle) of queer*trans musings and affirmation. Choreographic ways of knowing connect queer and trans bodies, acts and politics within the emergent research. The techniques of *Choreoqueering* emerge in relation to 'real life' political reforms and policies, socio-political events and political movements.³⁵⁷ Through engaging play, improvisational wondering/wandering, and sensorial perversion, I locate pleasure-seeking and en-joy-ment that proves reparative in my queering of Somatics. I centre a *queer*trans ethics of care* in the somatic experimentation for live works.

In this chapter, I explain my choreographic approach to queering Somatics, situated in relation to recent critical developments in the field. Then, I explain two perverse techniques - *scat-tending* and *flotsy*. *Scat-tending* is described in relation to the works *sex/es on site (v1)*, and *flotsy* in reference to *sex/es on site (v2)* and *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)*. In Chapter 4, the other three perverse techniques *bttm//bottom*, *queer clean(s)ing* and *queer napping* are discussed respectively in relation to the projects *Bottom Manifesto*, *Bttm Methodology* and *Queer Napping Workshops*.

The reader will encounter different kinds of commentary regarding *Choreoqueering*: photos, drawings, performance writing (all forms of *flotsy*), as well as descriptions of the live iterations of *Promiscuous Emplacements* with/in selected marginal urban places, and 'practice notes' to reflect the immersed artist voice. I open this chapter by discussing the contextual location of my queering approach in relation to critical developments in the field of Somatics.

³⁵⁷ In contemporary Aotearoa, this refers to protections and conditions of life after Homosexual Law Reform Act (1986), Human Rights Act (1993), Civil Unions Act (2005), same-sex marriage and adoption rights (2013), more recently the introduction of the Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Relationships Registration Bill (2017), and a global situation of Black Lives Matter, Land Back, Climate Crisis, and Covid 19 lockdowns and mandates.

Queering Somatics

Glistening-with. Sensing these intimate connections; whispering as the more-than/human; to shift, disperse, and deepen with gender.

we are of plants — endemic and invasive

of things — discarded and revered

birds — scavengers and nurtured

animals — wild and trained

of built structures — crumbling, rusting, falling, and holding on

atmospheres and cosmologies — glistening and toxic; dark; enmeshing and organising points and lines

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Choreoqueering is not beholden to the notion of the body as discrete and whole, nor ‘natural’ or of an essentialist ‘nature’. Instead, I build on Barad’s (2015) “queer self-birthing”³⁵⁸ and a “radical undoing of self”³⁵⁹ to imagine queer and trans bodies-in-relation operating agentially. ‘Body’ for me, includes “entangled psychic and physical manifestations” that are “always already a patchwork, a suturing of disparate parts” (Barad, 2015).³⁶⁰ This Baradian self-birthing informs my queering of Somatics to embrace unnatural embodiments and “monstrous re/generations.”³⁶¹ In line with this, through the lens of queer*trans/materiality, *Choreoqueering* differentiates from somatic movement practices that are rooted in individualising. Instead, I lean into somatic processes to activate the felt materiality of queer and trans bodies-in-relation.

In the previous chapter, I identified a need for more critical writing in Performance Studies around queer and trans practitioners who are engaging materialities and more-than/human methodologies. In this chapter, I examine analysis of discourse about Somatics, and observe that many of the underlying paradigms and theories of Somatics also need queering/transing. Friction, tensions, and confusion emerge when bringing together Somatics as a field and queer and trans theories of materiality. However, I see this as an exciting and potent opportunity for inquiry and artistic practice, and to examine the current critical developments emerging in the field. Whilst I do interrogate the tendencies of Somatics to re-individualise, universalise, and to assume the ‘natural’ and ‘neutral’ in dance, my research focus is on creating generative approaches that reimagine Somatics as queer*trans. The

³⁵⁸ Barad, “Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings,” 388.

³⁵⁹ Barad, 411.

³⁶⁰ Barad, 393.

³⁶¹ Barad, 388.

bodily processes and thought experiments of *Choreoqueueing* lean into *perversion* as a queer notion of possibilising somatic practice for social change. I build on Protopapa's notion of 'possibilising' in this sense (2009, 2016), for its offer of a *space of the dance-possible*.³⁶²

Acknowledging the benefits and gaps

The field of Somatics has expanded enormously since the proposal of the term 'Somatics' in the 1970s (see the theories of Thomas Hanna 1973,³⁶³ 1979,³⁶⁴ 1988³⁶⁵). In the history of contemporary dance, Somatics started out as a peripheral practice, then, working its way into the dance world, it has since achieved "widespread recognition as a form of bodily knowledge."³⁶⁶ Somatics has historically placed emphasis on inward-focused self-awareness processes (first-person), 'self-regulating' and 'self-sensing' (Hanna 1986).³⁶⁷ Arguably, the field of Somatics has radicalised a science objective view of the body (third person), in a way that undermines the idea that subjective is unscientific. However, as dance scholar Isabelle Ginot (2010) theorises, whilst Somatics focuses on subjective physical sensation, and "the fundamentally unique experience of each person", the field still utilises white science discourse to affirm and prove its value and legitimacy. For example, Ginot refers to how Feldenkrais Method places Somatics in the grand scheme of the evolution of species.³⁶⁸ Somatics then, as Ginot states, connects subjective experience and objective proof, manifesting incongruous forms and principles.³⁶⁹

It should be also emphasised though, that for dancers and performers, there are many healthful, generative, and transformative benefits to practicing somatic modalities. I do not forget this in my critically queer interrogation of Somatics.³⁷⁰ Benefits to well-being (physical

³⁶² Acknowledging the inherent connection Protopapa's 2009 argument has to Andre Lepecki's book *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the politics of movement* (2006), a discussion of choreographic strategies where "dance's relation to movement is being exhausted." Protopapa, Efrosini. "Possibilising Dance: A Space for Thinking in Choreography" (Roehampton University, 2009), 2.

³⁶³ Hanna, Thomas. "The Project of Somatology," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 13, no. 3 (July 1, 1973): 3–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002216787301300302>

³⁶⁴ Hanna, Thomas. *The Body of Life: Creating New Pathways for Sensory Awareness and Fluid Movement*, Reprint edition (Rochester, Vt: Healing Arts Press, 1979).

³⁶⁵ Hanna, Thomas. *Somatics: Reawakening The Mind's Control Of Movement, Flexibility, And Health* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1988).

³⁶⁶ Ginot, Isabelle. "From Shusterman's Somaesthetics to a Radical Epistemology of Somatics," *Dance Research Journal* 42, no. 1 (2010): 12, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23266984>

³⁶⁷ Hanna, Thomas. "What Is Somatics?," *Somatics: Magazine-Journal of the Bodily Arts and Sciences* V, no. 4 (1986), <https://somatics.org/library/htl-wis1>

³⁶⁸ Meaning the evolution of the species "in accordance with Western society's belief in the objective truth of Science", Ginot, 'From Shusterman's Somaesthetics to a Radical Epistemology of Somatics', 13–14.

³⁶⁹ Ginot, 14.

³⁷⁰ I acknowledge and appreciate the generative contributions and commitment of forerunners in the field, seeing that it is upon the backs of practitioner-researchers such as Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark-Smith and Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen that I

and otherwise) and a sense of 'self' and 'self-care' are broadly cited and discussed in the field (Saumaa 2021³⁷¹; Molloy, Keogh, Krampe and Guzmán 2015³⁷²), as is the potential to generate individual and collective agency (Fortin 2017); injury prevention (Hutt 2010³⁷³); or to increase bodily attention and perception, awareness, and creativity (Weber 2019³⁷⁴). There is also much work that benefits from how Somatics brings the body as 'self' into the commonly reiterated triadic relation fold of 'self, other and environment'.

I have benefited hugely from engaging with various somatic modalities (BMC, Skinner Release Technique, Contact Improvisation, and Authentic Movement have been key in my practice). Somatics has offered me a portal into the rich and creative ecologies of felt bodily experience, enhancing my capacities and awareness in dance and for performance.³⁷⁵ The collective experiences of communing and attuning with other sensing and feeling bodies-in-relation, has been significant and meaningful in my journey as a performance artist. Yet I have also felt the hurtful impacts of Somatic's essentialising views of the 'natural' and 'neutral', constricting ideologies that have impinged on my queer and trans self-birthing and agential operations and movement language.³⁷⁶ It is the impact of these constrictions that lead me to challenge and poke fun at the scientific seriousness of Somatics. Critical developments in the field of Somatics offer a context to locate such provocations.

Critical developments in Somatics: unsettling the 'natural' and 'neutral' body

There are a growing number of critical perspectives in Somatics, articulating how the field reinforces a belief in an individualised whole self; beliefs that uphold essentialising notions of the 'natural' and 'neutral', and asserting a universal (yet white) body.³⁷⁷ I see an urgent need

build my own somatic experimentation and philosophies of choreographic practice. The dedication of these practitioners and pedagogues has afforded me much privilege (as white and able bodied), as well as a spaciousness of the bodily, emotional, and creative experience.

³⁷¹ Saumaa, Hiie. "Dance, Somatics, and Self-Care," *Alternative and Complementary Therapies* 27, no. 1 (February 2021): 44–46, <https://doi.org/10.1089/act.2020.29311.hsa>

³⁷² Molloy, Felicity, et al., "Dance Mobility: A Somatic and Dance Programme for Older Adults in New Zealand," *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy* 10, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 169–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17432979.2015.1032353>

³⁷³ Hutt, Kimberley. "Corrective Alignment and Injury Prevention Strategies: Science, Somatics or Both?", *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices* 2, no. 2 (July 8, 2010): 251–63, https://doi.org/10.1386/jdsp.2.2.251_7

³⁷⁴ Weber, Rebecca. "Somatic Movement Dance Education: A Feminist, Cognitive, Phenomenological Perspective on Creativity in Dance," in *Dance and the Quality of Life*, ed. Karen Bond, Social Indicators Research Series (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 307–24, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95699-2_18

³⁷⁵ I have tuned into the possibilities of kinaesthetic empathy, physical resiliency and responsivity, and perceptual flexibility, gaining deeper understanding about what it means to have a body.

³⁷⁶ I have felt first-hand restricted possibilities for acknowledging and bringing into play my genders and sexualities, as teaching spaces for Somatic practice have often been ignorant, unwilling to learn, and/or not open to cultural critique around exclusivity and inaccessibility.

³⁷⁷ Oppressive notions that exclude access to Somatic practices for BIPOC, tangata whenua, Pasifika, working class, disabled, as well as queer, trans and intersex folks.

for collective responsibility amongst white somatic and embodiment practitioners to centre an analysis on racism and cultural assumptions, as well as to address classism, ableism, and cis/heteronormativity inherent to practices. *Choreoqueering* is my response to such assumptions and to address the need for analysis. My approach works to challenge and undo the oppressive settler-colonial mindset of Somatics, the inaccessibility and cis/hetero norms intrinsic to how spaces are set up, and how somatic pedagogies are designed and delivered. This queering/transing of Somatics is the driving focus of my inquiry and can be seen in the performance works.

Theorisations regarding Somatics that question the assumption of a natural or neutral body, such as the work of Doran George (2014), are particularly pertinent to how my research reimagines dancing bodies.³⁷⁸ My approach also resonates with practitioner-researchers who are refusing the tendency towards ‘reindividualising’ and ‘reinternalising’ the body in favour of regenerating relation-scapes (Manning and Massumi 2019;³⁷⁹ Ginot 2010³⁸⁰). Tada Hozumi provides a much-needed analysis of white imperialism and the embodiment industry from the perspective of cultural energetics (nee Cultural Somatics) (2020).³⁸¹ Meanwhile, Kirsty Alexander and Thomas Kampe (2017) offer an assessment of somatic modalities, from a critical whiteness perspective, identifying historical connections to eugenic and racist dimensions, rooted in domination, exclusion and supremacy.³⁸² All these analyses provide glimpses into the socially and culturally transformative potentials of Somatics, contributing alternative imaginaries for a better, more just somatic world.

My queering of Somatics also relates to other Somatics and Dance practitioners who are proposing terminologies that bring together related intersections of thought from queer and crip theory, feminisms, decolonial thinking, and social justice.³⁸³ I build on recent developments that expand the reach of Somatics in relationship with social justice culture,

³⁷⁸ George, Doran. “A Conceit of the Natural Body: The Universal-Individual in Somatic Dance Training” (UCLA, 2014), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2285d6h4>

³⁷⁹ Somatics Toolkit, “S02 Episode 2: Erin Manning and Brian Massumi on Critical Somatic Individualisation and Why We Need More Movement in University Education and Architecture.” Remember Your Body Series 2, accessed September 23, 2019, <http://somaticstoolkit.coventry.ac.uk/s02-episode-2-erin-manning-and-brian-massumi-on-critical-somatic-individualisation-and-why-we-need-more-movement-in-university-education-and-architecture/>

³⁸⁰ Ginot, ‘From Shusterman’s Somaesthetics to a Radical Epistemology of Somatics’.

³⁸¹ Hozumi, Tada, ‘The Cultural Somatic Paradox: Why We Struggle to Understand Each Other’, *Tada Hozumi* (blog), 5 June 2020, <https://tadahozumi.com/the-cultural-somatic-paradox/>.

³⁸² Alexander, Kirsty, and Thomas Kampe, “Bodily Undoing: Somatics as Practices of Critique,” *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices* 9, no. 1 (June 1, 2017): 3–12, https://doi.org/info:doi/10.1386/jdsp.9.1.3_2

³⁸³ See for example *Queering the Somatic* (2019), a 2-day symposium organised by Dr. Adesola Akinleye and Helen Kindred. Akinleye, Adesola, and Helen Kindred, ‘Queering the Somatic: Interrupting the Narrative’ (Symposium, *Queering the Somatic: Interrupting the narrative*, London, November 2019), <https://www.communitydance.org.uk/DB/animated-library/queering-the-somatic> The symposium includes a keynote by Dr. Thomas F. De Frantz.

including Critical Somatics,³⁸⁴ Generative Somatics,³⁸⁵ Cultural Somatics,³⁸⁶ and Social Somatics.³⁸⁷ More specific examples include the speculative embodiment work of crip culture scholar and performance practitioner Petra Kuppers. Kuppers' body of work includes the Turtle Disco practice that builds experimental communities, and the recent book *Eco Soma* (2022), fast becoming influential on a growing field of ecosomatic practitioners.³⁸⁸ *Eco Soma* combines crip time and a queer form of environmental practice, addressing questions of queer desire and responsibility, and offering approaches to queer interspecies exploration. Later in this chapter, I explore and build on Kuppers and Heit's notion of 'tendings' (2017). Jeremy Wade's workshop *Articulating Disorientation* (2009-ongoing)³⁸⁹ is also relevant here, which challenges the normative and 'natural' formulations of somatic practices through a deconstruction of Ideokinesis, Skinner Releasing, and Authentic Movement (I discussed the work of Wade in Chapter 2). Branching out of Generative Somatics are leaders of note, including Prentis Hemphill (they/them), who utilises embodied practices to identify and address interpersonal challenges, to create change at institutional as well as cellular levels, contributing to the Black Lives Matter movement and founding of The Black Embodiment Initiative.³⁹⁰ Another Generative Somatics practitioner, adrienne maree brown, whose work on *Emergent Strategy* (2017)³⁹¹, and practice of *pleasure activism* (2019), has been influential on this study³⁹². Choreoqueering contributes another term and perspective to this field of research.

³⁸⁴ Driven by Sarah Barnaby (US) and Satu Palokangas (FIN), movement researchers and somatic educators. See Barnaby, Sarah, and Satu Palokangas, 'Critical Somatics', Critical Somatics, 2019, <https://www.criticalsomatics.org/about>

³⁸⁵ Generative Somatics grew out of Somatics & Trauma courses developed by Staci K. Haines (US). See Generative Somatics, 'Generative Somatics: Somatic Transformation and Social Justice', Generative Somatics, accessed 1 June 2022, <https://generativesomatics.org/about-us/>

³⁸⁶ Tada Hozumi challenges the inherent white supremacy of Somatics, and questions the recent growth in politicised somatics promoted through online social networks. See Hozumi, Tada, 'What Does It Mean for a Practice to Be Cultural-Somatic?', *Tada Hozumi* (blog), 16 February 2021, <https://tadahozumi.com/what-does-it-mean-for-a-practice-to-be-cultural-somatic/> A different take on Cultural Somatics developed by Resmaa Menakem addressing racial-cultural trauma through 'Somatic Abolitionism' can be seen at <https://www.culturalsomaticsinstitute.com/>

³⁸⁷ See the work of Carol Swann for example Swann, Carol. 'Social Somatics', Carol Swann, 2022, <https://carolswann.net/social-somatics/> There are others utilising the term Social Somatics too: Martha Eddy, Petra Kuppers.

³⁸⁸ Kuppers, Petra. *Eco Soma: Pain and Joy in Speculative Performance Encounters* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2022), https://manifold.umn.edu/projects/eco-soma?fbclid=IwAR3FxCJ4aom2EPxKkaO_vYbc4e2XEK7BO1aEBwBqj6y2yfRUwDaO-D2ebxw

³⁸⁹ Wade, Jeremy, 'Articulating Disorientation' (Workshop, Berlin, 2019), https://www.facebook.com/events/1105116492992237/1105116502992236/?active_tab=about

³⁹⁰ Hemphill, Prentis, 'Prentis Hemphill', Prentis Hemphill, 2022, <https://prentishemphill.com/>

³⁹¹ brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, 2017.

³⁹² brown's 'pleasure activism' (2019) is a politics of healing and happiness that makes social justice pleasurable. brown, adrienne maree, Ed., *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2019).

A sensorial perversion of Somatics

beyond any neurocellular pattern, experiential anatomy, or other form of somatic
tasking for engaging a scientifically accurate body

let's go cosmological!

practice notes 38: 2019

I engage somatic experimentation in regular 'studio practice', often working and reworking ideas in outdoor spaces on the edges of recreational parks or in the cracks and crevices of the inner city (marginal urban places). I adopt and queer pre-existing somatic processes from modalities already familiar to me: primarily Body-Mind Centering (BMC)³⁹³ and Contact Improvisation (CI).³⁹⁴ In Chapter 1, I explained *asterisking* and *slashing* as two examples of how I do this, perverting Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Basic Neurocellular Patterns of Navel Radiation and Cellular Breathing (2008, 2018).

Ginot (2010) points out that the Basic Neurocellular Patterns relate to a storying of cross-species evolution, setting up "the ultimate legitimization" for experiential anatomy processes. This storying presses the 'universal', 'cosmic' and 'a-historic', which implies that "all humans operate according to these same patterns."³⁹⁵ I challenge this reliance on white science for Somatic's legitimacy. I also question the emphasis on efficacy and the valuing of release for alignment in dance and somatic modalities. My interest is in possibilising processes that destabilise the assumed purpose and function of Somatics, and in developing speculative futurisms for embodiment approaches. Choreoqueering works to uplift the value of queer and trans modes of en-joy-ment, pleasure-seeking and sensorial creativity as somatic processes. I do this through queering the language, imagery, and felt processes of somatic modalities, adapting pre-existing practices through queer and trans social practices, theories, stories and experiences of fluidity.

As artist Alok V Menon (they/them) (2022) reminds us, joy requires improvisation when the world and language wasn't built for you (in an honouring of bell hooks).³⁹⁶ It is the importance of this task of relating with joy in the face of discrimination and judgement that keeps

³⁹³ BMC is a body of work developed by somatic pedagogue Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (see Bainbridge Cohen 2008, 2018).

³⁹⁴ CI is an open-source modality. It defies codification, or any one definition or historical analysis (Hennessy 2008). Each attempt to define CI simply adds flavour to the modality's anarchic sprawl and dispersed pedagogical structures. It is a form of improvisation that explores physicality and physics, often involving contact between two or more bodies (human and more-than/human). Of significance to me in practicing CI is that it works against bodily hierarchies, set gender roles and uneven power dynamics, building on a politics of democracy. Co-founder of the form Nancy Stark-Smith offers one definition of CI (2008) as "based on the dialogues of weight, balance, reflex, and impulse between two moving bodies that are in physical contact." Stark Smith, Nancy, and David Koteen, *Caught Falling: The Confluence of Contact Improvisation, Nancy Stark Smith, and Other Moving Ideas*. (Northampton, MA: Contact Editions, 2008).

³⁹⁵ Ginot, 'From Shusterman's Somaesthetics to a Radical Epistemology of Somatics', 15.

³⁹⁶ Alok V Menon, 'Improvisation Is a Queer Practice.', Instagram, 23 February 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CaS8whmOBMI/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

sparkling with/in me. This leads me to focus on figuring out new ways of relating with each other, and with ourselves, as queer, trans, and other rainbowy types. I explore a more-than/human love that moves across, through and beyond my species and bodies. A practice of loving that is necessary and immanent to my more-than/human relationality inquiry.

Choreoqueering experiments with such felt modes and notions of queer joy, trans pleasure, more-than/human love, and the social passing of these affects in practice. I replace the notion of 'self-sensing' with the idea of *becoming-with* (Haraway, 2008), which becomes embedded in the collective relations and more-than/human kinships of *Choreoqueering*.³⁹⁷ I return to the notion of *sensorial perversity* here (outlined in Chapter 1), to rouse a felt experience of queer*trans knowing in *Choreoqueering*, importantly including atypical sensory modes and matters. I embrace fakery and the non-natural through the felt processes of *Choreoqueering*, exploring scientifically incorrect anatomies, and opening to the possibility of speculative embodiment, monstrous bodies and re/generations (Barad 2005; Stryker 2008). I address through studio practice and in the everyday context, ways of at-tending the socio-political conditions in which we live/work within.

I begin my sensorial perversion of Somatics by queering attention in my performance practice. I call this scat-tending, which I outline below. I draw on (and adapt) Contact Improvisation processes of shifting and layering attention for a more-than/human performance context. Becoming-with, sensorial perversity, and speculative processes synthesise in scat-tending, through a slow/ing and soft/ening dance ontology.

³⁹⁷ Haraway states: "Becoming is always becoming with, in a contact zone where the outcome, where who is the world, is at stake." Haraway, Donna, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 244.

Scat-tending: at-tending the uuddd

Position yourself as one asterisk-element of a more-than/human assemblage.

Listen to the slash through your skin feet hands tongue,
towards the more-than/human voices and emerging desires to touch.

becoming-with the concept-surfaces and thing-beings present t/here.
see-feel what the more-than/human is communicating about a queer futurity for
somatics.

listen through semi-porous membranes,
or tail the trajectory of orifices as portals to other knowings.
move toward more-than/human realms of queerness, worlds of transness,

follow mouths and other holes,
fontanel, third eye, brown eye (*), all eyes³⁹⁸
let's go forth and multiply these sensorial kinships

practice notes 39: 2020

Scat-tending is a somatic process that arrives with marginal urban places through care-full bodily, haptic, and emotional acts of reciprocity, in encounters with the more-than/human. As a Choreoqueering technique, scat-tending requires the work of care-fully reimagining the white binarised divides of human/nonhuman, natural/queer, and nature/culture. *Scat-tending* is also a tongue in cheek reference to the term 'scat', as in animal faeces, inciting a slightly scientific sensibility. In this inquiry, the performance iteration *Scat Hunt* (2020) activates this playful reference to 'scat', utilising humour to break the tension that can arise when drawing attention to poo, or anything related to the anus (see practice notes 38).³⁹⁹

This Choreoqueering technique is activated in performance through promiscuous and tentacular tendencies and leads to the development of a queer*trans ethics of care (discussed in Chapter 4). Scat-tending builds on the creative practices of researcher-practitioners, such as Jeremy Wade's strategies for collective care (2019); Nancy Stark-Smith's practice framework for Contact Improvisation called the Underscore (evolving since 1990);⁴⁰⁰ and builds on the term 'tendings' (Kuppers and Heit 2017).

³⁹⁸ This reference to doing a 'brown eye' (exposing your bum as a gesture of contempt or defiance), sees the asterisk-anus-orifice as connected to all other orifices as sacred and spiritual portals. The hierarchy of value based on what is considered clean/dirty or worthy/unworthy of attention is flattened – made horizontal.

³⁹⁹ *Scat Hunt* for Queer Pavilion (2020) invited teams of humans to hunt competitively for more-than/human scat on Rangipuke/in Albert Park. Queer Pavilion was conceived and developed in collaboration with Richard Orjis in 2018, then produced by Orjis in 2020 for Auckland Pride Festival. See Orjis 2021 for further discussion of *Scat Hunt*. Orjis, Richard. "Below, Behind, Across: Bttm Methodology and Queer Representation in Contemporary Art" (Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2021), 129–32, <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/14319>

⁴⁰⁰ Stark Smith and Koteen, *Caught Falling: The Confluence of Contact Improvisation, Nancy Stark Smith, and Other Moving Ideas*, 90–99.

Tendings

Disability activists Petra Kuppers and partner-collaborator Stephanie Heit (2017)⁴⁰¹ explore ‘tendings’, collaboration, and ‘being in place’ with an emphasis on meeting “the day’s need”.⁴⁰² The tendings of Kuppers and Heit shift and adapt to accommodate pain, living with bipolar disorder, or to support the cultivation of creative modes of self-care. Their approach gives emphasis to pooling resources for “community building and stewardship of self and the environment.”⁴⁰³ Whilst I explore a queering of somatic practice that elevates more-than/human *collective care*, rather than self-care, I honour the importance of their self-care work. I build on the adaptation and flexibility of Kuppers and Heit’s tendings for cultivating support, community and care for one another.

A further influence of *scat-tending* is the strategies for collective care of Jeremy Wade in the 2019 workshop co-led with Tanja Erhart, *Future Center for Critical Care* (2017) as outlined in Chapter One.⁴⁰⁴ They celebrate a messy politics of care at the intersection of disability studies, queer crip theory, performance, and social practice. Significant to this study, their choreographic pedagogies explore support, group experience, ritual, and togetherness.⁴⁰⁵ Scat-tending also embraces the messiness of caring for each other.

Scat-tending the uuddd: slow/ing and soft/ening processes

Scat-tending engages marginal urban places (and their things, beings, entities and elements) that are considered by the three Cs colonisation, capitalism, and christianity to be unworthy, unvaluable, dirty, disgusting, or dangerous (*the uuddd*). Therefore, driven by the desire to value and uplift the vitalities and powers of the uuddd, I at-tend with care that which has been judged and projected upon. Things, beings, entities, and elements call out to me with a certain effervescence and energetic frequency, revealing a *co-shimmering* that communicates beyond any language I know (see the dance with a single pink sequin in Chapter 1). The uuddd often appears right before me, on the footpath, in the air, or embedded into a grassy knoll at the edge of a park. Sometimes arriving as a message, or sign, from the queer*trans realms of the more-than/human world.

⁴⁰¹ Both disability culture activists.

⁴⁰² Kuppers, Petra and Stephanie Heit, “Tendings: Creative Practice as Self-Care,” *Center for Sustainable Practice in the Arts Quarterly*, no. 18 (2017): 28–33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90015874>

⁴⁰³ Kuppers and Heit, 28.

⁴⁰⁴ Wade, Jeremy and Tanja Erhart, “Future Clinic for Critical Care: Dance The Accessible Ritual Tools,” ImPulsTanz Archives, ImPulsTanz, 2019, <https://www.impulstanz.com/en/archive/workshops/2019/id3953/>

⁴⁰⁵ Wade also experiments with a critical approach to Somatics in the Impulstanz workshop *The Non-Natural Body as Interface* (2017), which reconsiders “human techniques” as “deeply constructed processes”. His challenge to the ‘natural’, ‘authentic’ and ‘normative’ of Somatics is informed by queer, feminist, and post humanist scholarship. https://www.impulstanz.com/media/download/IPT17_Workshop_Folder_Ansicht_small.pdf

Scat-tending cultivates perceptual and felt capacities with an undertone of empathy and love for the uudd, because of how they are forgotten, overlooked, uncared-for. Paying care-full attention to where the uudd is located, I gravitate to that which dwells in the margins, the cracks and corners, the unswept edges and spaces, to things un-attended or left to accumulate dust.

The slow/ing speed of *scat-tending* is important for establishing *consensuality* with the uudd of marginal urban places (see *consensuality*, Chapter 1). We are sensing-with, moving at the pace of trust-building.⁴⁰⁶ This temporality of gentle sensing is key to how I develop an ethico-political constitution of more-than/human relationality in performance. Witnessing the live works of this study, *scat-tending* might appear (from the outside) to be a solo human standing still, slowly crawling or rolling through dirt, or lingering quietly in dark spaces. This perverse technique then, might be seen to be small, or almost imperceptible as physical relations or dance actions with things, plants, trees, or architectural structures. This stilling, slow/ing and reduction in scale could be misinterpreted as a kind of dance exhaustion (see Lepecki 2006), however I consider *scat-tending* a form of ‘possibilising’ (Protopapa 2009).

As a performer, with an insider perspective, I am at-tending to complex, multiple and intimate relationships with the uudd, becoming familiar, and getting to know the teeming life of marginal urban places, through haptic encounters and meeting places. This is a queer*trans somatic becoming-with the things, beings, entities, forces, and elemental realms of place.

The three phases of scat-tending : arriving, attunement, and sinking in

Scat-tending moves across three phases of focusing attention: *arriving*, *attunement*, and *sinking in*. The bodies-in-relation of *Promiscuous Emplacements* might move attention through each *scat-tending* phase in order, but more often the phases flip, loop, blur and slip through and across each other. These phases build on Nancy Stark-Smith’s the Underscore, a long-form Contact Improvisation structure, in which I am conversant.⁴⁰⁷ Whilst the Underscore focuses on the movement conversation of human-human physics and relationality, I extend deliberate attention to dancing with the more-than/human, scat-tending that which is seen and unseen, touchable and intangible. I am paying particular attention to the minoritized of marginal urban places. Attention moves heterogeneously and

⁴⁰⁶ See ‘move at the speed of trust’, one of the principles of Emergent Strategy. brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, 42.

⁴⁰⁷ Stark Smith describes Underscore as “a vehicle for incorporating Contact Improvisation into a broader arena of improvisational dance practice.” There is 20+ stages of the score, creating a map for dance, each stage has a name and graphic symbol. See Stark Smith, Nancy, ‘The Underscore’, Nancy Stark Smith, 2021, <https://nancystarksmith.com/underscore/>

improvisationally with the flicker and glimmers of charged desire or a magnetism. Scat-tending engages the affective forces of intra-relation.⁴⁰⁸

Arriving⁴⁰⁹ Settle into place physically, emotionally, energetically. Move attention and energy with awareness of the uudd. We are noticing, becoming familiar. Softening into an open bodily state, be receptive to in-coming sense information and the involutions of feltness.

(Arriving involves a noticing-with-care that gives rise to *attunement*, a choreographic economy of care is discussed in chapter 4.)⁴¹⁰

Attunement⁴¹¹ Attune with the uudd, becoming haptically, sensorially, spatio-temporally responsive to place, beings, things. Locate a movement language with the uudd without expecting to find anything new, the dancing is rooted in bodily listening. Sense and synchronise with energies, textures, powers, vibrations, colours, vitalities, tones, affects, and the spirit of this place. Notice how your attention flickers, shifts, hovers, then reorients. Stay with this. Allow your attention to widen. To be proximally far from, or homing in to get up close to surfaces, beings, entities, bodies, elements and things.

(Attunement builds on an already underway assemblage of connections and deepens the dance we have going with flows of sensorial information. This can lead to sinking-in.)

Sinking-in⁴¹² Focus more intently on what is emerging in the dance. Stick with and develop emergent material within a relationship framework of care-fullness. Honour the agential operations of the uudd. Allow the relationship to grow and flourish, disperse, or intensify (depending on the vibe). Sink your attention into the dance, deepening the engagement, yet remain open to what else occurs, to what else is

⁴⁰⁸ Attention distributes tentacularly, in a shifty glitchy response to impulses, dynamic flows, attractions, repulsions, and relations.

⁴⁰⁹ My use of the term 'arriving' encompasses Stark-Smith's stages of 'arriving energetically' and 'arriving physically'. See Stark Smith and Koteen, *Caught Falling: The Confluence of Contact Improvisation, Nancy Stark Smith, and Other Moving Ideas.*, 91.

⁴¹⁰ Arriving sometimes includes an explicit invitation that welcomes "all of who you are", meaning I open space (verbally and non-verbally) for the expansive processes we each go through personally to arrive. As well as arriving physically and energetically in place, we might also arrive genealogically, spiritually, emotionally, politically and/or socio-culturally.

⁴¹¹ *Attunement* relates to Stark-Smith's 'grazing', wherein attention (in an Underscore jam) does not settle with one relationship, nor one dance, but instead moves around, taste testing and moving with fleeting relations and connections, some plural/ensemble/chorus. Stark Smith and Koteen, *Caught Falling: The Confluence of Contact Improvisation, Nancy Stark Smith, and Other Moving Ideas.*, 93.

⁴¹² The phase of *sinking-in* relates with Stark-Smith's 'development'.

possible. Take things further if it feels right; pay attention to the yes. Take risks; experiment with possibilities.

(Sinking-in reveals the capacity of *scat-tending* to respond to multi layers of information and the complexity of haptic encounters.)

Scat-tending plays out in the live works of *Promiscuous Emplacements* as an empathic attunement, a felt relationality that moves with affect, emotion, feeling, and an awareness of the ethical. This is a *tentacular* kind of empathy, rooted in *sensorial perversity* (see Chapter 1). Consent, respect and reciprocity are important, which involves keeping a distance unless invited or called to engage (consensuality). The practice is rooted in orienting to a feeling of yes! A felt ok-ness may or may not emerge in relation to what is occurring in the moment. Meanwhile also negotiating any hegemonic disapproval of movements, behaviours and attitudes (too unseemly, unkempt, messy). *Scat-tending* works to undermine white settler society's relationship with the uuddd (and by extension with gender non-conformity, and any form of sexuality that deviates from white hetero-norms). Oriented through care practices, *scat-tending* extends and becomes entangled with the more-than/human. *Scat-tending* sets the stage for further *Choreoqueering* explorations of care and protection as *queer*trans rituals of care and protection* (Chapter 4), and contributes to discourse on disability justice, access, and inter-species care.⁴¹³

Returning now to my practice, *scat-tending's* experimentation with more-than/human intimacy and care deepens in the work *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)* (2019), and playfully extends approaches to queer collective care in *Scat Hunt (2020)*. Further, in *Sex/es on Site (v1)* (2019) and *Offline Onsite Hookups (v2)* (2019), I reimagine the care of inter-species intimacies by drawing on kink community values, sex positivity and affirmative queer models for autonomy, respect and consent to.⁴¹⁴ Next, I look at how *scat-tending* is applied in the work *sex/es on site (v1)*.

⁴¹³ In collaboration with artist Lusi Faiva for *queer walk-naps*, within the context of the About Walking project, we investigated how *scat-tending's* slow/ing, soft/ening and reduction of scale in dance might influence access for people who use wheelchairs, and other folks with diverse disabilities (see Chapter 4).

⁴¹⁴ I look to models currently being engaged and developed by queer and kink communities in negotiating sexual activity and boundaries such as the Gender Affirmation Model of health services. Hidalgo, Marco A. et al., "The Gender Affirmative Model: What We Know and What We Aim to Learn," *Human Development* 56, no. 5 (2013): 285–90, <https://doi.org/10.1159/000355235>

sex/es on site (v1)



Figure 28: val smith, *sex/es on site (v1)*, 2018. Image: Josh Szeto

Sex/es on site (v1) (13 February 2018) was a performance occurring over two hours for the event *Under Your Skin You Look Divine*, at Basement Adult Shop & Cruise Club.⁴¹⁵ Curated by Daniel John Corbett Sanders as part of Auckland Pride Festival, *Under Your Skin* gathered 19

⁴¹⁵ Corbett Sanders, Daniel John, 'Under Your Skin You Look Divine', *Auckland Pride Festival* (blog), 13 February 2018, <https://2018.aucklandpride.org.nz/events/under-your-skin-you-look-divine/>

queer and trans artists together, aiming to examine “virtual and ‘real’ representations of queerness.” My performance was nestled alongside these artists’ works in intimate proximity.⁴¹⁶ Most of the works, including my performance, were located behind the shop itself in the back rooms of the cruise club. The club was laid out as a maze that typically functions as a sex-on-site venue with multiple rooms and corridor spaces for anonymous sexual encounters.⁴¹⁷

The queer space and collective context of this event for making and presenting work, provided a sense of safety for me, a basis for community building, social practice and relationality. The transient exhibition enabled a temporary queer art community, and as a result collective methods of working becomes an interest of this inquiry, extended through the perverse technique of *bttm//bottom* with Richard Orjis (Chapter 4), in the live works *Queer Failure Walk* (Chapter 1), and *Bttm Methodology* (discussed in Chapter 4).

More-than-just-human queer intimacies

I was drawn to a marginal place not considered part of the cruise club itself. A small nook outside the walls of the venue, hidden behind a bolted little wooden door that prevents access into or out of the club for security reasons. With permission, I climbed over a bathtub, unlocked and clambered through the door, and stepped slowly down an old unsteady ladder. I was arriving, attuning with, sinking-in. Scat-tending here was about settling physically, energetically, and becoming familiar with this marginal urban place. It was muddy and messy, reeking of the discarded and leaking. I was wearing tall heavy gumboots that sunk into a soft squishy substance underfoot. Sinking deep into this overlooked pit space, attuning intimately through performance with thrown away matter – cigarette butts, condoms and used needles, rat poison, plastic pipes and wrappers, and lumps of concrete and building wood.

Four metres by two metres at ground level, the space extended four floors upwards at least. When I looked up, I could see a tunnelling of mouldy concrete and glass that eventually opened out to invite the night sky. As I slowed and softened, I became increasingly sensorially open, listening and sensing the energies of this unlit covert place nuzzled behind and between the club’s toilet and dungeon rooms.

I activated a small battery-powered torch to illuminate and electrically activate the marginal details of the space, around the bottom verges, the plumbing and corners, and its mounds of

⁴¹⁶ Sione Monu, Jordana Bragg, Aliyah Winters, Richard Orjis, Ary Jansen and Samuel Te Kani (amongst the many others).

⁴¹⁷ Basement Adult Shop & Cruise Club is located around the backside, a less tidied area of the Karangahape Road district (gentrification is well under way there now). Hard to find if you don’t know where to look, Basement is located at the bottom of an unnoticed, steeply inclined driveway, dimly lit at night. In the face of property developments and the virus that is colonialist capitalism, Basement is one of the few remaining original ‘old school’ queer spaces and the longest running gay sex clubs in Aotearoa. This is a part of the city where retail showrooms and heterosexual/straight nightclubs have been edging in and attempting to push out Basement for some years now (personal communication January 2020 with curator Daniel John Corbett Sanders).

slimy detritus. This adds a touch of gayYay to the performance, a momentary celebration of this queer*trans life. The torch acted as a witch-wand, a * for trans-forming and re-generation space as queer*trans. I also utilised a Go-Pro camera in this work, wanting to explore different processes of *flotsy* (discussed next). However, a DIY use of gaffa tape to secure the Go-Pro for filming failed 5 minutes into my performance, left hanging, drooping. Interestingly, this produced two hours of queer failure *flotsy*, the footage feeds-forward an up-close grey scale scape of a concrete wall with almost nothing going on beyond the odd sweeping shadow across screen. The productive sensibility of *doing fuck all* is re-generated with this performance anarchiving (also see *Queer Napping*, Chapter 4).

I am a pleasure seeker.
 This is a communal bonding rite.
 I will drop judgement, fear, and filter to see what emerges.
 I will not hide sexuality and sounds due to shame.
 I breathe and let vocal energy move as intimacies develop.
 Allowing more-than/human pleasures to travel through vibrations and neural oscillation.
 Staying safe emotionally and physically.
 I reconnect and deepen my relationship with the urban ecology. Allowing the delight in experience, of embodied eroticism, to be just that. Joy. And at-tending to our bodies and shared erotic aliveness and any arousal with care and respect.
 practice notes 40: 2019

I developed scat-tending in the performance by circulating queer and kinky sexual attention and energies to connect with and celebrate the erotic powers of this place, and its more-than/human things, surfaces, and beings. Asterisking boosted this energetic circulation, moving pleasure tentacularly, reaching to touch, to haptically connect with what calls out to me. The more-than/human intimacies of *sex/es on site (v1)* were invigorating, empowering. *Sensorial perversity* plays out as I deepen my *scat-tending* engagement with place, literally sinking-in. I experience a vitalising kink encounter in passing. A fleeting power bttm//bottom exchange with a large chunk of heavy wood, we are feeling held down and in with tight pressure, strangling and feeling strangled. A moment that leaves me feeling ... substantial ... seen ... alive. Right then, a glimmer of openness to mutual masturbation takes me by surprise. The space touches itself, as do I!⁴¹⁸

Sex/es on site (v1) extends approaches to engaging more-than/human intimacies initiated in the work *Queer Dating Sites* (2018) where I was working to re/connect with an already-active queer ecology of more-than/human participants in performance through the provocation of dating a place. The setting and context for *sex/es on site (v1)* enabled some shifts in practice.

⁴¹⁸ The sensorial perversity of this inquiry's exploration of more-than/human intimacies builds on the notion of 'perversity' (Barad 2015) meaning the self-touching, enfolding, and involution of an electron (a simple particle of matter). Barad, "Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings," 427.

More layers of protection and support for safety were provided through the queer collectivity, the buffer of numbers, curator as caretaker, and people-powered security systems at the entry to the club and inside the space. The work undertaken to ensure these safety features, sees an emerging queer*trans ethics of care and protection in future performances. I experience an increase in queer*trans en-joy-ment and a confidence through this work. In this writing on *sex/es on site (v1)*, I also included an instance of another perverse technique of Choreoqueering, *flotsy*, which creates space for a multi-modal thinking-moving of queerness and transness in performance. Experimenting in a non-representational documentation of performance has been key to this research, as outlined next.

flotsy: an approach to anarchiving performance



Figure 29: val smith, *flotsy cycles*, 2019.



Figure 30: val smith, *flotsy cycles*, 2019.

Flotsy is fun and fleeting, comprised of collaborative creative processes that are bursting with the touchy-feely (haptic). This perverse technique is playful, inquisitive, and connective. *flotsy* involves the mapping of performance's affective flights and tingles, processes that re-play the alive-ness of queer*trans performance, and producing generative notes towards the more-

than of *Choreoqueering*. I discuss here the exploration of flotsy as: a feed-forward mechanism; a multi-modal assemblage practice; non-linear strategies; digital proliferation; and as the fabulosity of writing, performance (performance writing).

– clears throat –

I've been... this is ummm... a drawing-writing....moving moment.

Where I'm reflecting on the Queer Napping workshop on the 10th of November, which was the first one in a series of three. And for this one I decided to have it at my house. And not at the AK council building. Cos yeah, there is a longer story in why I decided that, but that's for another time (note protesting TERFs – Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists). As I do this moving-drawing-writing about the nap itself, I find myself thinking about Hobbs, Rebecca. And as I'm doing this drawing-writing-moving, I'm being reminded of different experiences that we've had, Hobbs and I, conversations that we've had, and it makes me think about how relationships build up

over time. In Queer Napping, this felt quite personal.

– clears throat –

practice notes 41: *Queer Napping research cycles*, val smith, 2019.

Resisting the trap of preserving: flotsy is feeding forward potential

Flotsy moves in digestive cycles of generating, accumulating, and excreting the ideas and experiments of *Choreoqueering*. It is a messy queer*trans/materialist practice that moves-with the leakage of bodily un/knowning. A fluttering, a flailing, a permeable blurring of performance.

I have explored ways to reveal the felt experience and insights of performance events and encounters through a non-representational approach. Wanting to resist the trap of reducing or preserving performance, as inferred by 'archives', I build on the notion 'anarchiving' developed collaboratively by Senselab, Erin Manning & Brian Massumi (2016).⁴¹⁹ Anarchiving is described by Brian Massumi (2016) as a "feed-forward mechanism", and the anarchives as "carriers of potential", not inert or static representations of what occurred.⁴²⁰ *Flotsy*, as an anarchiving of performance, generates more and more creative-research processes and portals of *Choreoqueering*.

With regards to *Choreoqueering* ways of knowing that connect queer and trans bodies, acts and politics, the materiality of *flotsy* accumulates somatic insights as a transdisciplinary

⁴¹⁹ Massumi, Brian. "Working Principles," in *The Go-To How-To Book of Anarchiving*, ed. Andrew Murphie (Montréal: Lulu.com, 2016), 7.

⁴²⁰ Massumi, 6.

practice. I am resting/reflecting, receiving, and reactivating the live encounter in bursts, drips, pops, and flows. This perverse technique re-energises *scat-tending* and its vital affects, arrivals, bodily attunements, and felt intensities. *flotsy* is another way of sinking-in and enables reflection on the potential of queer*trans performance.

- * in movement, map the material and immaterial exchange of this marginal place.
 - * create a drawing-writing-moving that includes in-the-moment queer desires and transgender affects.
 - * diagram the meta-physical movements of your performance using ink, fabric, water and/or threading.
 - * fold this process back into a simple walk from here to there (notice any micro attractions and the rhythm of resting, and return to a) aaaaaa))).
 - * pauseeeee ,, let-uuuuuasssss-waitiiiiit.
 - * later, you might create sound-recordings of the inter-species conversations that were already-underway.
- practice notes 42: 2020

The Choreoqueering technique of *flotsy* recognises and disengages from the colonial power, control, and hegemony of archives as repositories of culture and knowledge.⁴²¹ Refusing the logic of representation in approaches to performance documentation, anarchiving preferences a mapping of relations, over any drive to capture. Anarchives are created in the midst of the material assemblages they produce (rather than looking down from above practice as a representational map). *flotsy* can also be understood as an alternative take on ‘performance documentation.’⁴²²

Flotsy derives benefits from already established work by practitioners of an archiving such as Erin Manning (2016, 2018, 2019), Brian Massumi (2016), Senselab (2016), Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman (2019), and Francisco Trento (2019). I also benefit from work developed by practitioners working in the field of Performance Writing including Della Pollock (1998), Ric Allsopp (1999), Allsopp and Julieanna Preston (2018), John Hall (2004, 2013, 2018), Bottoms and Goulish (2007), Matthew Goulish (2000), Alison M. Richards (2016), Theron Schmidt (2018a, 2018b), Schmidt and Tru Paraha (2020), and Tru Paraha (2018a, 2018b, 2019). Over many years of collaboration, I have also gleaned many insights

⁴²¹ Springgay, Stephanie, Anise Truman, and Sara MacLean, "Socially Engaged Art, Experimental Pedagogies, and Anarchiving as Research-Creation," *Qualitative Inquiry* 26, no. 7 (September 1, 2020): 897–907, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419884964>

⁴²² *Flotsy* builds on and proposes a variant to the term ‘performance documentation’. My rendering of *flotsy* nods to the extensive critical, philosophical and creative discourse about documenting performance, following Peggy Phelan (1993) and Philip Auslander (2006). In building on Senselab, Manning & Massumi’s notion of ‘anarchiving’ (2016), I join in on the shift away from documentation that merely preserves performance. *Flotsy* extends this distancing from preservation. During this study, I have tested the terms ‘performance writing’, ‘performance documentation’ and ‘experimental documentation’, later discovering and resonating with Manning/Massumi/Senselab’s concept of ‘the anarchiver’. I do not explicate this shift or testing of terminologies in the exegesis, other than inferred here in the footnotes. I consider that which is produced as ‘excess’ in the contemplation of language and practice to live in the discarded texts of this thesis. Brooding. Potent queer*trans/material forcefields for future essays of this research.

from Alys Longley's practices of Performative Documentation and Experimental Documentation (2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018a, 2018b).⁴²³

Multi-modal assemblage

digital pencils ink pens tape thoughts photos effects filters liquids concepts bells
paper recording devices. all transporting matters and meanings to the more-
than/human assemblage

composing relations of things, surfaces, forces, places, bodies
practice notes 43: 2020

I utilise various mediums, tools, and methods in a layering, blending, and erasing of marks, materials, experiences, words and feelings. *flotsy* may well be called a 'multimodal' practice.⁴²⁴ I am conducting the electric relations of performance across different media and pages (paper, virtual and digital pages). There are different forms of *flotsy* that you may or may not have encountered in these pages – video, photos, practice notes, drawings, performance scripts, and poetic writing. These anarchival pieces speak to the buoyancy, movement, and powers of *Promiscuous Emplacements* as queer*trans/material research processes.

Non-linear strategies; speculative research

Flotsy proves a lively research strategy. Tasks are explored playfully and take pleasure in the generative flair and sway of queer*trans performance. Queer feelings and desires, trans joy and friendships, political rainbowy ideation and memories of protests are written into the anarchives.

Moving-drawing-feeling puts pencils, papers and bodies in motion: from page to movement improvisation to chatting-writing. let's respond again in moving the drawing. how does this shift or inform the next performance? create a list of dance propositions from each performance relation.

practice notes 44: 2018

Flotsy continues opening Choreoqueueing onto a queer*trans future. This is a speculative locating of practice research that embraces indeterminacy, fluidity, and nonlinearity. *flotsy* invites the feltness of meta-physical realms to reach across and connect past and future, in what Barad (2015) might consider a "queer configuring of spacetime mattering."⁴²⁵ For

⁴²³ I have engaged in friendship-based collaborative practice with Alys Longley since 2001. We have collaborated on various projects through which modes of performance writing and documentation have been developed and published alongside the production of performance events (see *Mistranslation Laboratory*, 2017, and *Smudge Skittle*, 2018). Longley has proposed various terminologies that shift and shape the extended fields of performance and writing. See for example 'movement-initiated writing' in her piece entitled *experimental documentation/choreographic translation* (2013).

⁴²⁴ Massumi, 'Working Principles', 6.

⁴²⁵ Barad, 'Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings', 393.

example, a *flotsy* process of *sweeping-feeling-writing* of AUT's black box theatre, I rest for a moment, looking down at the assemblage of particles in my dustpan (Figures 27 & 28). Ideas arise that connect and refract across other processes, at other times. As I gaze upon the tiniest of sparkles and fluff balls, sand granules and indistinct bits of stuff, I remember my co-shimmering with a single pink sequin (Chapter 1). The queer configurations of *flotsy* give birth to new forms of generativity. Place, materials and bodies meet together in this so-called liminal theatre space (spacetimemattering) acknowledging the inheritance of white settler society here to consider the possibility of undoing racism and white supremacy (passing from dust to dust, from ancestry to futurity, ways of moving differently, queerly).



Figure 31: val smith, *flotsy* in AUT's black box space, 2018.



Figure 32: val smith, *flotsy* in AUT's black box space, 2018.

Digital proliferation: photo notes and drawing-over

Digital photography is integral to *flotsy*, forming the basis of figures and practice notes that speak to and map creative processes. The technique of drawing digitally over photos proves a fruitful mapping. Drawing-over reactivates my performance experience and insights (see Chapter 1, Figure 13). I utilise digital filters and use photos as virtual backgrounds in zoom, activating a politics of speed, visibility and passing. In Chapter 1, Figure 11, I remap sensations and qualities of queerness and light in the encounter with a single pink sequence on the footpath around the back of Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland Art Gallery (digital drawing is extended in Chapter 5).

Flotsy upholds the body-in-relation as a keen and keening processor of performance. You may notice and feel the intuitive knowing, or sometimes vague and contradicting logics of

more-than/human performers at play in the anarchives of this research. The recursive loop of *flotsy* reinforces the qualities of feeling processes, experiential tones, and the circulation of erotic powers in performance. This speaks to a value system that is centered in process, rather than striving for definitive outcomes.

The Fabulosity of Performance Writing

Flotsy values the queer logic of being glittery and inconceivable and melodramatic. This approach to archiving performance calls in the fabulosity of performance writing as a field of practice. I see fabulosity as much like the pink makeover of a remote church in Māwhera/Greymouth.⁴²⁶ Akin to this rural action, *flotsy* celebrates queer community in unexpected places.

flotsy engages with a blur and melding of different processes that become hyphenated, such as writing-drawing-moving. This hyphenation encourages the emergence of lively and relational more-than/human forms. Writing-drawing-moving reveals assemblages of human and more-than/human entities – supervisors, pedestrians, theorists, books, digital devices. *flotsy* remains open to experimentation. Rebounding the proliferative and promiscuous elements of this research, *flotsy* moves in alignment with a meta-lens of queer*trans/materiality. As such, *flotsy* possibilises methods that press at and destabilise the formalities of an academic framework. The following discussion of the live work *sex/es on site* (v2), folds between methods of *flotsy* and a queer somatics in performance.

⁴²⁶ Corlett, Eva, “‘Quiet Fabulosity’: Remote New Zealand Gets Pink Makeover to Celebrate Queer Community’, *The Guardian*, 21 January 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/22/quiet-fabulosity-remote-new-zealand-church-gets-pink-makeover-to-celebrate-queer-community?CMP=aus_googlewebstories

sex/es on site (v2)⁴²⁷

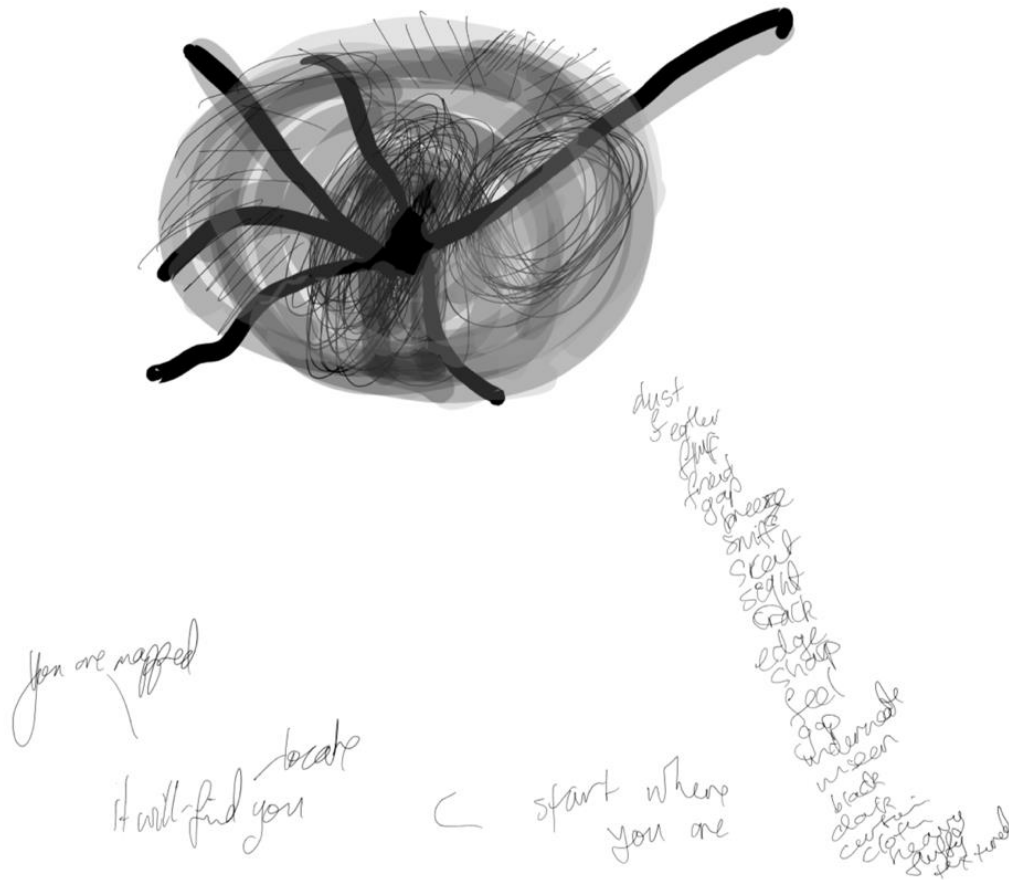


Figure 33: val smith, *sex/es on site (v2)* (flotsy), 2018.

Sex/es on site (v2) was created for the *125 Diverse Genders and Sexualities Symposium* in June 2018, held in Te Whare Tāpere Iti at Waikato University.⁴²⁸ The architecture of Te Whare Tāpere Iti includes floor to ceiling windows, with native bush and lake views. It is a wide and high open floor studio-room, designed for the performing arts and formal academic events; an intimate yet expansive space that invites a relationship with ‘outside’.

The call from symposium organisers was “to celebrate the diversity of genders and sexualities by reflecting back on 125 years of Suffrage in Aotearoa”, a theme that informed the thinking-moving of my Choreoqueering. I respond to this call with performance writing that is edited

⁴²⁷ I refer to this event as *sex/es on site (v2)* to differentiate it from the iteration for Auckland Pride Festival 2018 of the same title.

⁴²⁸ One of the rooms within Gallagher Academy of Performance Arts precinct at Waikato University. This studio’s name, Te Whare Tāpere Iti, pays homage to the origins of Māori theatre – whare tapere was the name given to sites used for entertainment, often a suitable outdoor location was designated. See Derby, Mark, and Briar Grace-Smith, ‘Māori Theatre - Te Whare Tapere Hōu - Origins of Māori Theatre’, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 22 October 2014.

and submitted as my abstract for the symposium (practice notes 46), and with somatic experiments that engage more-than/human intimacies. As an example of *flotsy*, my writing plays with the multiple meanings of 'sex', shifting between more-than/human and non-binary views, inter-species sexual intimacies, and intersex variations in sex characteristics. These shifting references all disrupt typical binary notions of female and male bodies and their sexual roles in a cis-het society.⁴²⁹

a sex of alliance, that moves together
a sex that creates a space for hesitation and resistance
a sex with no predetermined body, place or route
a speculative sex
that refuses an exclusively human sexuality
that rebuts an entirely human gender
a sex of orientations and disorientations
in micro and macron, molar and minor
a sex of micro-attractions
of slowness, a politics of speed
a sex that listens to the flows of land and sky, the forces of Indigeneity
a sex that unsettles the settler, and settles the unsettled
a sex that invites
asks questions *with* wounds and worlds
of frictional encounters
of rub, of press, of consensual resistance
a sex of capacities and agencies
that ruptures and repairs
a coagulating sex
a contagious sex
a sovereign sex

practice notes 45: abstract for *sex/es on site* (v2), val smith, 2018.

During studio sessions, I also allow critical-creative possibilities to play out on the page using iPad and iPencil (Figure 27), a thinking-moving that flows into and with somatic dance experiments. I respond to questions that arise through techniques of *scat-tending* and *flotsy*: – What/where are queer more-than/human sexualities here? How might more-than/human queer sexualities orient to/with place? How are these sexualities shared or organised in relation to other bodies, subjects, things? With lots of questions, but no definitive answers, I approach the live work with an open-ended approach to engaging with the more-than/human. I explore an improvisational wondering-wandering of intimacies to seek interconnectedness (building on Barad 2015).

⁴²⁹ See Hird 2006 for an account of how non-human living organisms display both a wide diversity of sexual behaviours and a wide diversity of sex. "Virtually all plant and many animal species are intersex." Hird, Myra J. "Animal Transex," *Australian Feminist Studies* 21, no. 49 (March 2006): 41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164640500470636>

Un-announcing performance – underneath the habit of human-human relations

I requested that my performance began unannounced, during the symposium's morning tea break. This was a time when the other attending humans would likely be talking and snacking. I imagined the focus and energy of social interaction to be sucking the energy and attention away from any expectation of human-human performance relations (to disrupt assumptions of watching-the-human-dancer-dancing). With this, I am interested in activating performance relations that centre queer and trans more-than/human perspectives.

Quietly, gently, i move to begin at the symposium presenter's podium. arriving, my pace is very slow, and slowing, so as not to attract human attention, or disturb the human activities already underway. the weightedness of the podium acts as a support to slide bodily to the floor. without much notice, i am attuning with, sinking with gravity, then seeking out the margins of this academic ecology. i am called to the dusty darkened sliver of space under the raised stage. trying to get under this flooring, intended for speakers, performers and presenters to stand on (to give height, so as to be best seen and heard by a human audience). this is not the audience or audiencing that i long for (these up-down looking-seeing protocols and measures of the symposium the sensorial procedures do not interest me), I am seeking out a subterranean reality for this performance.⁴³⁰

practice notes 46: 2018

Perceptual and sensorial perversity: attuning horizontally to the more-than/human

Activating *scat-tending*, I am slowing (quietly, gently), curious how I might listen, sense, or even hear the voice or concerns of the more-than/human beings, entities, structures, surfaces, and atmospheric elements that I might encounter. The performance crawls in a trajectory from the podium, to under the stage, to along the lower and outer edges of the room (disrupting the uprightness and frontal visioning of dance). I trace the margins of this room, seeking the spaces that we humans least look to.

My eyes are cast downward (I am face down, bum up, reiterating the subterranean attentions of *Queer Failure Walk*, Chapter 1). I am casting a care-full sensing-with spell, summoning the electrical sociality of subterranean and marginal realities, calling them into a centred more-than/human relationality. I am desiring felt relations with the forgotten corners, the overlooked cracks, the discarded titbits, and the unseen details of this space.

⁴³⁰ The dances of *sex/es on site* (v1 & v2), sees a shift in presentational focus from the earlier work *Queer Dating Sites* (see Chapter 1). For *Queer Dating Sites* (2018), I was still concerned with the human experience, the human-human relations of gathering, informing my facilitation of the experience. *sex/es on site* (v1 & v2) shifts attention more directly to human-nonhuman interactivity.

Sex/es on site (v2) broods with the empowerment of bell hook's 'marginal space' as "a space of radical openness" (1989).

This performance reveals an ethical drive to at-tend to the creatures, things, and beings I encounter around the edges of the room with care. Enacting *scat-tending*, this is a thinking-moving that ruminates somatic dance with care and consideration. The lives and aliveness at the margins of this place matter. During this live work, I consider whether these intimate engagements with the more-than/human are consensual. How would I know? I wonder if engaging *flotsy* might provide insights on this ...?

Towards a more-than/human audiencing

Choreoqueueing in this work is rebuffing any overt dance-like movements that might signal dancer, performer or Performance with a capital P. Moving to align with a more-than/human performance orientation, my staging and visual-auditory trajectories are perverted, preferring the floor's lowly surface. The sensing-with of *sex/es on site (v2)* invites the sensorial involvement and perceptual engagement of tiny insectual creatures, and the haptic capacities of titbits residing within floor cracks.

sex/es on site (v2) keeeps on proliferating connections, letting go into non-normative relationality and non-typical sense perceptions. I noticed more-than/human viewing and listening are also part of the performance audiencing, underway outside the room. Birds encounter the performance through the huge glass windows, with a literal bird's eye view. Sparrows, swallows, and tui fly by; they catching flickers of performance-in-action.⁴³¹ I remain horizontally oriented, lying face down and crawling, turning my attention away from human view to the underground realms, and gravitationally focused toward the centre of the earth.

Polyamory and pleasure-seeking

I experience the more-than/human relations emerging in *sex/es on site (v2)* as pleasure-seeking and polyamorous, recalling *Queer Dating Sites*. My loving attentions within Te Whare Tapere Iti move-think-feel with the hard-to-see more-than/human community in and outside of the space – the many rolling dust bunnies – a fallen coin next to a forgotten alloy screw – a group of screwed-up tissues – the melodic and melodramatic frequencies of bird song and wind currents. All intermingled with my *flotsy* experiments and experience of place, informing the touch of a cool draft of air through a cracked sliding door as key to the performance event. A Choreoqueueing assemblage was composed of material things, atmospheric qualities, and inter-species relations: all already underway, influx, entangled. This live work makes way for forms of more-than/human collaboration and inter-species

⁴³¹ I note that settler bird species vastly outnumber the native manu, birds.

relations in further performance iterations such as *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)*, discussed next (also see Songs with Birds, Chapter 5).

Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)⁴³²



Figure 34: val smith, *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)*, 2019. Image: J. J Allen

Offline Onsite Hookups (v1) was a live work programmed as part of Auckland Pride Festival and Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa (EDWA) in February 2019.⁴³³ The performance emplacement is a marginal urban place around the corner from a popular, non-mainstreamer, theatre venue.⁴³⁴ I am drawn to this place next to the Lower Mayoral Drive carpark that borders the lands known as Aotea Square (I hold an awareness of the flowlines of Waihorotiu⁴³⁵), and ‘Myers Park’ (attuning to this Māori land that nurtures the movement

⁴³² I use (v1) to differentiate from a later second iteration of the same name, which was presented in Vienna in July 2019.

⁴³³ EDWA is curated by Alexa Wilson.

⁴³⁴ Basement Theatre off Greys Ave, Auckland City central.

⁴³⁵ A stream that carved out the valley we call Queen Street over millions of years, Waihorotiu was once a vital waterway providing water and sustenance to tangata whenua of Tāmaki Makaurau. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, ‘Te Wai o Horotiu Art Hikoi’, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 14 July 2021, <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/whats-on/event/te-wai-o-horotiu-art-hikoi?q=%2Fwhats-on%2Fevent%2Fte-wai-o-horotiu-art-hikoi>

of waters down from the Karangahape ridgeline).⁴³⁶ This place activates my attention to the need for pākehā response-ability.

i arrive by car. parking right in front of the security fence which separates carpark from weedy bank. wearing head to toe hi-vis safety gear and carry a stack of road cones with thick rubber gloves. setting up the cones and some gay disco lights just inside the fence on the side of the weedy bank. protection mechanisms. then i walk from carpark across bridge. calmly and confidently. climb over fence. move from top to bottom of this disregarded embankment, slowly roll. intimacies that arise are unexpected and delightful. at last, i plop out. leaving the last thrash-hold of weeds. gather my body backwards. towards uprightness to sit on the concrete horizontal slab of carpark. time arrives, aligns. i rest. to begin again. walk. roll. plop. sit.

practice notes 47: 2019

Offline Onsite Hookups (v1) experiments with more-than/human collaboration and intimacies within an overgrown urban garden in late summer in the centre of Auckland city. This particular marginal urban place includes a steeply sloped patch of land, huge weeds and vines, rubble, waste, and trees (one native, many invasive settler tree species). This urban terrain is overlooked by Capitalism (for now), located behind and underneath the Kang Nam Station restaurant, known for its haphazard construction, a boarded and nailed DIY structure built to fit around a tree trunk.⁴³⁷ Mostly unpainted, the back of Kang Nam Station looms above the trajectory of the performance, a dystopic scene fit for a post-apocalyptic movie.⁴³⁸

Let's transgress the transgressive

Let's orient to the margins of the margins

practice notes 48: 2019

The performance is situated on the physical and pragmatic margins of Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa (hereafter EDWA), which mostly occupies Basement Theatre's main indoor spaces. In this way, this iteration of *Promiscuous Emplacement* is a psycho-physical gravitation to the marginal-within-the-already-marginal. I move in relation to the edging construct of 'experimental dance' and select a space and time that activates the verges of what has already been programmed for EDWA. Outside of the theatre, I have little tech support, and limited marketing reach and visibility. Embracing this reduced visibility and my queer*trans marginality in the margins, the performance calls me into what is already-underway. A lively assemblage of overgrown weeds and other things.

⁴³⁶ This whenua is affiliated with Ngāti Whātua Ōrakei and many other iwi.

⁴³⁷ A tree grows through the restaurant floor.

⁴³⁸ This place is featured in the sci-fi series *Sweet Tooth* on Netflix, which imagines a world of human-animal hybrids.



Figure 35: val smith, *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)*, 2019. Image: J. J. Allen

I am *arriving* with the security fence; submerged trees; dust; broken glass; brick wall; wooden structures; a discarded shoe. I come with gumboots; hardhat; earmuffs; chemical mask; thick work gloves; gay disco and laser lights; various plastics; a black car. *Attuning-with* these things and their relations, I entangle myself between and through all these performance participants. I follow a pre-determined cycle of action: walk across carpark and bridge; climb over fence next to restaurant into weedy embankment; slowly roll down bank to carpark; smoko break; repeat. One cycle takes around 40 minutes or so, depending on the encounters and intimacies that arise as I go. This performance emplacement notices with care, presence and curiosity, another activation of *scat-tending* the more-than/human. I will not forget the visceral encounters with the very-present thick weed-vines, the broken glass, rusty pipes, a leather boot, and uncountable items of 'trash'.

Crawling behind and under the overwhelm of weedy undergrowth. signage indicates do-not-go-there. i am a tentacular process. a * that softens to listen, opening and becoming receptive to the affective, the erotic, the multidimensional. i am available to learn, to follow, to support this place as is. also at-tending and being present to *what-it-is-that-needs-to-happen*. i activate the cellular breathing of slashing as a queer*trans medicine. for well-being, for a peace with who i am, for groundedness. rolling slowly, taking moments of rest to breath and soften, to rest n yield, allowing the comings and goings of breath and fluidity.

practice notes 49: 2019

My asterisking and slashing, yielding, expanding, reaching and twisting bodily movements, erotic shimmers, and scuffling sounds, make up the atmospheres of the performance. I am also *scat-tending* the moods and qualities of the more-than/human engagements that emerged. I gently sense with relation tones, directional reaches, physical and psychic loosening and densities, keeping my attention with these flows, pops, bursts and blips.

I approach the environment with gentleness, curiosity and trepidation. Care-full *as well as* trepidatious, because I am producing the event without official city permissions to perform in this fenced off site. I am wary of 'being caught' by authorities, a fear which takes an ironic turn in *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)* as the late-summer weeds are strong, thickening, intertwined and ready to clasp.

i am rolling falling in a direction where the weed vines become especially thick, and the bank is particularly steep. i am gaining momentum. my rolling becomes less a choice and more an inevitability. my legs are becoming physically entangled with the vines.⁴³⁹ i am becoming seriously stuck. i take a moment to pause, breathe and notice what it feels like. one of my gumboots is twisted in such a way my ankle starts to throb with blood restriction; a feeling of slight anxiety rises in my gut. would I have to abandon the performance altogether to 'get out of' this weed-human knot? as I calm myself with slashing, my limbs and tissues start to relax. i realise half my body weight is supported by the weed-vines. this is a lofty blood-filled suspension event, a more-than/human bondage ritual? i am finding pleasure in this feeling of being caught here, held so tightly, so strongly, so restricted.

practice notes 50: 2019

This weed-human knot expands my understanding of more-than/human engagement possibilities for performance. The fleeting encounter, a tentacled exchange of struggle and acceptance, reveals a potential interface for weed-human intimacy, intensity, and kink collaboration. We twist, yield and reach into each other. An alliance, a togetherness. This iteration of inter-species intimacy troubles slashing, a dance of atmospheric transformation yes, but one that holds its breath, then releasing to flow with the unexpected currents and gusts. The more-than/human dance revealed a playful collaboration, an askew tussle and shuffle of power and control. With the assistance of gravity *e v e n t u a l l y* I am spewed out into the carpark to recover and regenerate. I'm dishevelled but feel somehow satisfied. As the sensations of this pleasurable wrangle dissipate, the trace of its effort and closeness remains. I take a smoko break, sitting on a concrete pile of rubble to rest and reflect before another cycle of the performance activation.

⁴³⁹ Whilst understanding I am already intra-actively involved with the plants, this physical knotting feels like a tangible metaphor of entanglement.

Summary of Chapter 3: en-joy-ment, pleasure, and/other kinds of intimacy

I have evaluated three live works, *sex/es on site (v1) & (v2)*, and *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)* in this chapter, as well as two perverse techniques of Choreoqueering, *scat-tending* and *flotsy*. *Scat-tending* has shown itself to be soft/ening and slow/ing, yet proliferative, promiscuous, tentacular; revealing a ‘co-shimmering’. In a process that is noticing, with care, *scat-tending* is rooted in a mutual respect and aid (building on *sensorial perversity*). *Scat-tending* represents my recognition of the overlooked and forgotten, the importance of both self-care and collective modes of care, and collaboration as invigorating and playful. My analysis regards a coalitional politics emerging through *scat-tending*, taking into account ethical and empathic movements across species, between humans and more-than/human worlds.

I find *flotsy* to be generative in many ways, not just because it creates more research process portals, but it certainly does so. *Flotsy* exudes queer and trans en-joy-ment and pleasure, imbued with the aliveness of Choreoqueering encounters as scribbles and scratches of more-than/human ideas. This technique offers a way to feed forward (and produce more) flickers of fun/joy and the queer sociality modes emerging in live works. *Flotsy* also creates different possibilities for engaging with the intimacies, intensities, atmosphere-encounters, risks, and minor revelations of performance.

The queer more-than/human intimacies of *sex/es on site (v1)* led to a sense of safety and empowerment. Engaging *sensorial perversity*, I recognised the self-touching involution of more-than/human intimacies in this performance. In *sex/es on site (v2)*, I located a sense of expansion in the delicate intimacies with cracks and corners of marginal urban places. Through the improvisational wandering/wondering, the possibility for alliance within the micro-attractions of the performance was also noted. *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)* also recognised the potential of the mutual aid and collaboration processes that arose in the work opening my awareness to the astute intelligence of the more-than/human.

All three of the live works discussed in this chapter extend on the more-than/human intimate relations initiated in *Queer Dating Sites* (Feb 2018).⁴⁴⁰ In *Queer Dating Sites*, I explored haptic modes of care, protection and support using gloves, lube, pink sheets and pillows with human participants, informed by my review of consent culture in Contact Improvisation, and a consideration of queer polyamory and hookup culture.⁴⁴¹ In *sex/es on site (v1)* and *(v2)*, and

⁴⁴⁰ For *Queer Dating Sites*, I leaned into the potential for more-than/human intimacies, whilst still at-tending to the concerns of human engagements, desires, and needs. *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)* shifts to the possibility of experimental casual intimacies, including a ‘hookup’. Generally speaking, ‘hooking up’ refers to acts of sexual intimacy.

⁴⁴¹ Hookup culture and hookup apps support casual sex encounters, including ‘one-night stands’, without commitment or necessarily engaging in emotional bonding or intimacy.

Offline Onsite Hookups (v1), I developed my focus to explore connection, intimacy and collaboration with the more-than/human, and attention to subterranean realities are reinforced. My haptic seeing-feeling approach in these works, revealed the space of extrasensory perception and atypical sensorial processing. The *Promiscuous Emplacements* works discussed in this chapter stand along-side queer and trans artists and performance works that offer another kind of intimacy.⁴⁴²

Choreoqueering proposes a queer approach to somatic experimentation that presses at harmful hierarchical and exclusionary assumptions about species, bodies, genders and sexualities. I keep on imagining other ways to engage more-than/human togethering, inventing modes of collectivity and collaboration that value multispecies love, care and tenderness. In the following chapter, I dig deeper into the research methodologies, outlining three more perverse techniques of Choreoqueering: *bttm//bottom*, *Queer Clean(s)ing*, and *Queer Napping*. I position up front a queer*trans care ethics, explaining ‘care’ and ‘care-fullness’ as the basis of these *queer*trans rituals of care and protection*.

⁴⁴² We stand together in material, embodied, and political difference to hegemonic cis/heterosexual desire and intimacy forms. See for example Keith Hennessy’s *Turbulence* (2010-2017) and *TRY* project (2021-2022). Also see the analysis of Shanks, Gwyneth. “A Different Kind of Intimacy: Performance and Protest in the Era of HIV/AIDS,” *Walker Art*, July 26, 2018, <https://walkerart.org/magazine/a-different-kind-of-intimacy-performance-and-protest-in-the-era-of-hiv-aids>

4. Choreoqueering II: queer*trans rituals of care and protection



Figure 36: val smith, *queer walk-naps* (dusk iteration), 2020. Image: Sam Hamilton

In this fourth chapter, I outline *queer*trans rituals of care and protection*, which underpin a performance ethics for engaging more-than/human relationality. I present three Choreoqueering techniques: *bttm//bottom*, *Queer Clean(s)ing* and *Queer Napping*, discussed in relation to works and projects: *Bttm Manifesto* (2018-ongoing), *Untitled Arts Foundation Performance* (2019), *Bttm Methodology* (2019), *Queer Napping Workshops* (2019-2020) and *queer walk-naps* (2020).

In the live works and projects of this inquiry, the currency of care is tested in practice. I am developing rituals to care for ourselves and one another through collective queer forms of care. I suggest that a values-based and collective approach that honours difference has the effect of decentring human agencies, as well as the hierarchical and individualistic models of working in the arts. My development of *queer*trans rituals of care and protection*, responds to the impact of contemporary neoliberal competitiveness and hierarchies of working in the performing arts. In contemplating the hands-on concept of 'care' in this investigation of

more-than/human performance relations, I am activating a research ethico-politics based on stewardship, reciprocity, love and respect.⁴⁴³ Engaging care-fullness and acts of care, requires a shift in the structures and institutions of Somatics, Dance and Choreography. My compositional approach values emergent relations, through which spatialities, temporalities and energies are at-tended to, but not rushed or forced.

Care, in its relationship with performance-making, can be seen to offer a role for the imagination, that of envisioning effective action (Hamington 2010).⁴⁴⁴ Recent work by Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) informs how I build ideas and practices to extend care beyond the realm of the human, to include performance relations with, and response-abilities for more-than/human species, and other non-human entities and ecosystems.⁴⁴⁵ In addition, Joan C. Tronto's (2013) call to think about care more democratically is considered.⁴⁴⁶ She asks how we might shift emphasis from economic productivity to care.⁴⁴⁷ Writer and scholar Kirsty Baker (2022), articulates care ethics as: "a principle antithetical to the hierarchical structure that has shaped the Pākehā-dominated arts infrastructure of Aotearoa since its establishment" arguing for power sharing through values-based practices of collaboration and collective action.⁴⁴⁸

My interest is also in centring response-able Pākehā relationships to land and place in performance by reimagining how we care; as collaborators, performers, and audiences. I find guidance in developing strategies from Russell Bishop's (1998) articulation of a Kaupapa Māori research approach to creating knowledge. His essay is entitled "Freeing ourselves from neo-colonial domination in research."⁴⁴⁹ I also return to Tina Ngata (2020) whose insightful suggestions for being a good Tangata Tiriti, treaty partner, continue to guide my practice, such as to "Be Tau", by knowing and finding peace with who you are and your own positioning. I take this suggestion from Ngata as a call to build a balanced understanding of

⁴⁴³ There is currently advancement and expansion of ideas and practices of care underway in Performance Studies. Performance Research Journal (June 2022, Vol. 27, No. 4) recently called for proposals that regard 'On Care'.

⁴⁴⁴ Hamington, Maurice. "The Will to Care: Performance, Expectation, and Imagination," *Hypatia* 25, no. 3 (2010): 675–95, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40928645>

⁴⁴⁵ de la Bellacasa, María Puig. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (U of Minnesota Press, 2017).

⁴⁴⁶ Whilst Tronto considers gender, as well as race and class, I also emphasise more-than/human agencies. Tronto, Joan C. *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

⁴⁴⁷ Tronto suggests we are moving from a society primarily concerned with economic production to one also concerned with care.

⁴⁴⁸ Baker, Kirsty. "Towards an Ethics of Care: On Advocacy and Community in the Arts," *Artnow*, March 11, 2022, 4, <https://artnow.nz/essays/towards-an-ethics-of-care?fbclid=IwAR3HXDEMOpZHAzwGBqFBmu3C593Z2rz1dUnNZZkdkpkzNHVKxaNfQLEC-y4>

⁴⁴⁹ Bishop, Russell. "Freeing Ourselves from Neo-Colonial Domination in Research: A Maori Approach to Creating Knowledge," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11, no. 2 (April 1998): 199–219, <https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236674>

my positionality as a practitioner-research, working in relation to the values of mutuality/reciprocity, and respectfulness – to know boundaries, my own and others. I begin this discussion with *bttm//bottom*, a friendship-based collaboration model that emerged through the project *Bttm Manifesto*.

bttm//bottom: friendship-based collaboration

Let's orient bottom methodology

to the corners, the cracks, the crevices of the space

Let's look at things from behind and below

primarily connective

locally subterranean

practice notes 51: *Bttm Manifesto* (excerpt), Richard Orjis & val smith, 2018.

bttm//bottom tendrils through the methodological reach of Choreoqueueing. I conceive this perverse technique as a friendship-based collaboration model that sub-verts the hierarchical and individualistic model of working in the arts. *bttm//bottom* develops an attention to transparency and equitable distribution (of wealth, knowledge, and resources).⁴⁵⁰ It was established through, and grows from, transdisciplinary experiments with artist Richard Orjis (2017-ongoing). Working with Richard Orjis has been fundamental to the development of this thesis. As mentioned in Chapter 1, we began working together in 2017, initiating *Art & Design Queer Reading Group*, then developing *Bttm Manifesto* in 2018 (described below) and other projects.⁴⁵¹

I also utilise the model of *bttm//bottom* to house and consider collaborations with other friends. Whilst my friendship and collaborative relationship with Richard is relatively new (meeting in 2017), practitioner-researcher Forest V Kapo and I have a longer friendship and history of working alongside each other. We met in the late 1990s, overlapping in spacetime in undergraduate Contemporary Dance training in Tāmaki Makaurau.⁴⁵² We then developed work in Naam in the early 2000s and continue to share in practice intermittently. Working

⁴⁵⁰ *bttm//bottom* resonates our collective commitment to transparency (in opposition to the individualism of competitive neoliberalism, which depends on a secretive approach to pay-scale equity). See Baker (2022), "Towards an Ethics of Care: On Advocacy and Community in the Arts."

⁴⁵¹ Other projects that we co-create include the three-day event Bottom Methodology (2019); Queer Failure Walk (2017) and Walk of Shame (2018) both collective events for Queer Reading Group; Read, a queer zine-making workshop (2018); and the conception and development of Queer Pavilion (realised by Orjis in 2020). Richard describes some of the projects we have developed in his/their thesis. See Orjis, 2021.

⁴⁵² Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts (Contemporary Dance), Unitec.

together with Forest becomes key in the final phases of the research (discussed in Chapter 5).⁴⁵³

The beauty of *bttm//bottom* is in its multitudes and social dimensions/cycles. I align ‘bttm’ and ‘bottom’ in a celebration of plural perversities.⁴⁵⁴ Richard and I consider that we are ‘leading from the bottom’ in creative practice terms.⁴⁵⁵ Multiple perspectives are embraced and invited, encouraging an open-source development and dissemination of ideas, and collective means of dispersing practices. The sociality of *bttm//bottom* is integral to the more-than/human relations of my inquiry. Its ethico-politics can be felt in how we reimagine an economy of care for more-than/human intimacies, rooted in queer*trans ethics.

Key elements of bttm//bottom: sub-mission, pleasure-seeking & the production of subjugated knowledge.

Practices and projects that stem from *bttm//bottom* build on the notion of ‘queer failure’ (Halberstam 2011), centering sub-mission, receptivity, in/significance, pleasure-seeking, and the unsettling of cis/heteronormative logics.⁴⁵⁶ We release uprightness, preferring the proliferation of downwrongness, rejoicing lowliness, and exploring sub-terranean realities (see *Queer Failure Walk*, Chapter 1). Knowledge produced through friendship-based collaborative practice is sometimes illegible or un-see-able. Producing subjugated knowledge, Richard and I value distributed agency and the circulation of power and wealth and knowledge, whilst always honouring consent and promoting sensorial perversity (includes human-human, and relations between human and more-than/human players).

⁴⁵³ Whilst I don’t elaborate on other collaborations in this thesis, I also have meaningful engagements with practitioner-researchers Alys Longley, Kristian Larsen, Kyro Selket, Lusi Faiva, and Rebecca Hobbs.

⁴⁵⁴ Richard prefers ‘bttm’, an abbreviation of bottom used on queer networking and dating apps such as Grindr, Hornet, and Scruff. For Orjis, bttm is “the person who assumes the receptive position in sexual relations” in a countering of the negative cultural associations with “a radically emancipatory alternative”. Meanwhile, I favour ‘bottom’ in reference to the submissive roles of consensual erotic practices, or roleplay, in the context of BDSM (Bondage/Discipline, Domination/Submission, and Sadomasochism). Bottoming in a BDSM context might involve, for example, the reception of immobilisation, intense sensations, humiliation or being made to serve. Sitting alongside and near to Orjis’s view, my interest in bottoming, within the context of practice research, reaches for the generative potentiality and possibilities of playing with power as a ‘sub’ (submissive). Orjis, 2021, 29–30.

⁴⁵⁵ As sub-missive friends of bottoming, we claim lower case rather than the importance inferred through capital letters.

⁴⁵⁶ Bottoming is often misunderstood, a role where the afforded lower social ranking is frowned upon considered somehow shameful. Surrendering to the lowly ranking of bottoming, *bttm//bottom* as a collaborative approach celebrates the submissive, resonating Halberstam’s ‘queer failure’ (2011). Richard and I consider bottoming an alternative mode of kinship and alliance and a refusal to acquiesce to capitalism’s insistence on legibility and productivity.

Richard and val – double slash//membrane-friend

less whole, more hole(o)graphic

overlapping dimensional realities

different frequency levels

practice notes 52: *Bttm Manifesto* (excerpt), Richard Orjis & val smith, 2018-ongoing.

I utilise the slash symbol again in *bttm//bottom*. In Chapter One, I examined and positioned the slash in the development of queer*trans/materiality, as a marker of engaging the Aotearoa-specific relationality of Māori/Pākehā. I consider my Pākehā response-ability and positioning care-fully. The slash emerged as a semi-permeable membrane that protects and allows, valuing the productive tension of difference (Jones 2020), and multiplicity (Jenkins and Jones 2008; Barnett 2015; Hobbs 2017). This time I emplace two of the typographical symbols aligned and closely oriented - //.

Positioned between *bttm* and *bottom*, the two slashes stand together as friends in support, protection, and with affection for each other. The double slash of *bttm//bottom* echoes the double-layer membrane of Cellular Breathing (discussed in Chapter 1), enabling transmission/the passing of fluids, molecules, and gases across the cell/body 'skin', as needed or desired. *bttm//bottom* speaks to the breathing relationality of co-creative collaboration, providing structural sustenance for ideas and creative practices to pass (or not) between partners involved in the relationship or project. The breathing double slash of *bttm//bottom* also enables the transmission of care, support, fun/joy, and leisure within the friendship-based method.

Elevating the lowly status of friendship (inventing relation forms)

The valuation of friendship as a site of intimacy, meaning-making, resource sharing, and transformation has the potential to unravel stories about the specialness of sex and to fuel our imaginations to rethink forms and structures that exceed the ideal of the settler family, which may sustain and remake us.⁴⁵⁷

Friendship is often afforded a lower status to romance and kinship in a white society that values the hierarchical ordering of relation forms. *bttm//bottom* refuses this lower status, upholding friendship as a significant and essential relation form for queer folk. Queer, trans and other rainbowy friendships and communities provide necessary buffers and protections against harassment, discrimination, and violence, as well as creating care and support systems specific to our needs. *bttm//bottom* pays tribute to Michel Foucault's iconic essay *Friendship as a Way of Life* (1996), who asks "what relations, through homosexuality, can be

⁴⁵⁷ TallBear and Willey, 'Critical Relationality: Queer, Indigenous, and Multispecies Belonging Beyond Settler Sex and Nature', 205.

established, invented, multiplied, and modulated?”⁴⁵⁸ Our friendship-based collaborative practice is open to possibilities, and variations on intimate relationship forms, as integral to co-creative queer*trans practice. We preference practice that democratises/flattens working relationships.

For Richard and me, queer kinship/friendship is rooted in warmth and good will, closeness and comfort, laughter and fun. Processes are built and cushioned conversationally, through pleasure-seeking, resting, improvisation and playful curiosity. We go for walks, nap together, and joke. We also foreground the importance of an empathic and gentle ethic of care for other’s well-being. Surprises and hurts are felt and accepted as spaces for generative vulnerability. We develop ways to be open and generous together in creative practice (being cheeky and deviant are welcomed too), whilst holding space for the choice to ‘opt out’ at any time. *bttm//bottom* in this sense underlines consensuality (see Chapter 1).

One strategy we develop that rejuvenates friendship is a care-full ritual of the ‘check in’.⁴⁵⁹ An ethic of queer care is integral to a *bttm//bottom* check-in, where our friendship as research method is tested and maintained through how we deal with, what qualitative researcher, Lisa M. Tillmann-Healy (2015) calls, the generative tensions between “affection and instrumentality, expressiveness and protectiveness, and judgment and acceptance.”⁴⁶⁰ Our collaborative practice grows in strength through check-ins, marked by “a deep friendship, trust and attentiveness to each other” (Caine and Lavoie 2015).⁴⁶¹ *Bttm//bottom* cultivates acceptance and gratitude as necessary to our queer*trans care ethics.

⁴⁵⁸ Foucault, Michel. “Friendship as a Way of Life,” in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, ed. S. Lotinger (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 204–12.

⁴⁵⁹ A relation-based process adapted from group therapy contexts, that allows any needed airing of experience, including struggle, as well as spacetime for expressing gratitude, desires and dreams.

⁴⁶⁰ Tillmann-Healy’s “Friendship as Method” (2015) posits friendship as “a kind of fieldwork”, a primary method. *bttm//bottom* builds on this method, resonating Tillman-Healy’s definition of a close friend as “somebody to talk to, to depend on and rely on for help, support, and caring, and to have fun and enjoy doing things with.” Tillmann-Healy builds on this definition to develop a mode of qualitative inquiry that involves “researching with the practices, at the pace, in the natural contexts, and with an ethic of friendship.” Tillmann-Healy, Lisa M. “Friendship as Method,” in *In Solidarity: Friendship, Family, and Activism Beyond Gay and Straight* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 270.

⁴⁶¹ Caine, Vera, and Michelle Lavoie, “Seeing Through Artistic Practices: Collaboration Between an Artist and Researcher,” in *Creating Together: Participatory, Community-Based, and Collaborative Arts Practices and Scholarship across Canada*, ed. Diane Conrad and Anita Sinner (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2015), 180.

A friendship of thingies // stories // political ties



Figure 37: Richard Orjis & val smith, floor work, 2019.



Figure 38: Richard Orjis & val smith, floor work, 2019.

Our *bttm//bottom* practice grew through playful engagements with queer arts practices and theories of queer ecologies (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 2010⁴⁶²) and queer failure (Halberstam 2011⁴⁶³). It also grew through long meandering queer walks in parks and on the streets. We talked about local and global queer protests and Indigenous political movements, often reflecting on trans, queer and Pride discourse locally and internationally. *bttm//bottom* reverberates our shared and unique life experiences including encounters with Auckland Pride, ratty friends, witch-sticks, colonial trees, mushrooms, BDMRR⁴⁶⁴, cruising sites, the George Floyd Uprising, and queer beers.⁴⁶⁵

Our practice is conversational, fluid, playful and promiscuous, we communicate in fragments and flows, using emojis, gifs, images and visual abstractions. Our shared knowledge flows in alignment with the structure of poetics and dramatics; we think-move as camp and coy. We don't follow high art trends, nor the heights of queer fashion, instead we fashion art,

⁴⁶² Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona, and Bruce Erickson, eds., *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁴⁶³ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*.

⁴⁶⁴ The Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Relationships Registration Bill.

⁴⁶⁵ Queer Reading Group initiated regular outings for a 'queer beer'.

garments, and accessories out of coffee cups, found pegs and clips, stained cardboard, recycled fabrics, and odd bits of string and chalk. I outline *Bttm Manifesto* below as it is key to *bttm//bottom*, providing a values-based groundwork for our friendship-based collaboration and our lean toward collective action. The *bttm//bottom* collaborations with Richard (and Forest, as will be revealed in Chapter 5) are ongoing, following the bubbling flows and fountains of friendship.⁴⁶⁶

Bttm Manifesto

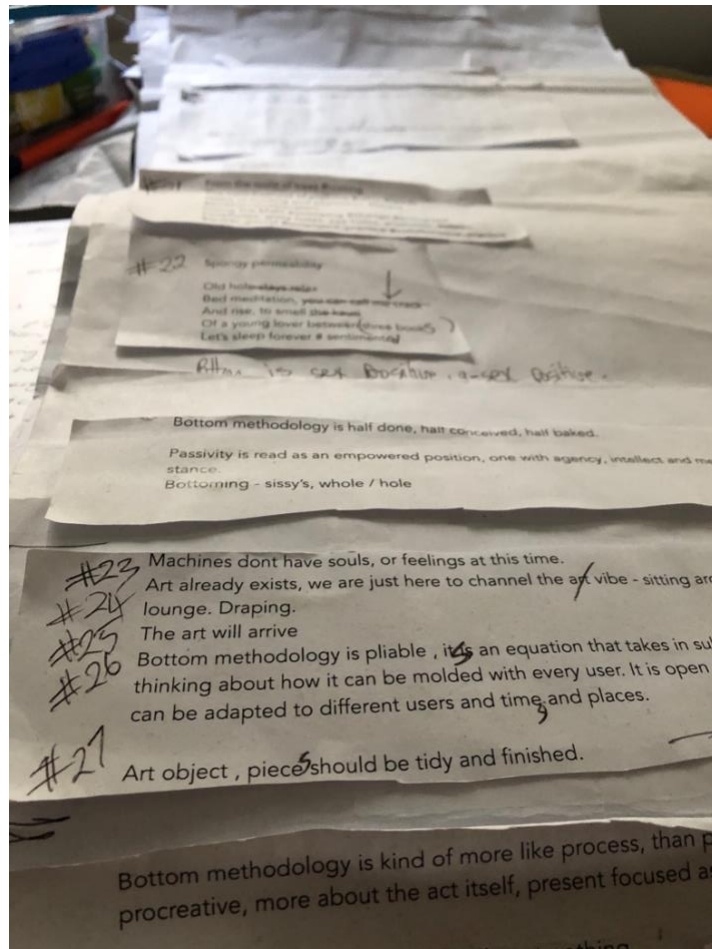


Figure 39: Richard Orjis & val smith, *Bttm Manifesto*, 2018. Image: val smith

Bttm Manifesto (2018-ongoing) is an uncertain manifesto developed iteratively by Richard and me over 16 months (or so).⁴⁶⁷ The manifesto is a listing of fluid provocations, questions,

⁴⁶⁶ Future mappings with Richard and Forest of inter-species intimate friendships (as fun and pleasures) are to be expected.

⁴⁶⁷ Deviating from the forebears of the art manifesto since the 20th century, which set out clear intentions, views or demands, often addressing political issues for societal change. For a choreographic example see Yvonne Rainer's *No Manifesto* (1964) who declares her opposition to the dominant forces of dance in the 1960s (such as saying no to spectacle, virtuosity, and transcendence). See Rainer, Yvonne, *No Manifesto*, 1964, Manifesto, 1964, <https://www.ktufsd.org/cms/lib/NY19000262/Centricity/Domain/116/No%20Manifesto.pdf>

and poetic proclamations about collaborative queer art practice, which emerged through iterative walking, talking, and writing sessions. *Bttm Manifesto* took on many flimsy forms: an open-source online document; a hand written physical paper scroll; photocopies of cut up and collaged lists (Figure 34); and sandwich boards made by Orjis.⁴⁶⁸ We activated these flimsy forms as proclamations in live events, sometimes public, sometimes not. *Bttm Manifesto* also led to Queer Pavilion and Bttm Methodology (discussed later in this Chapter).

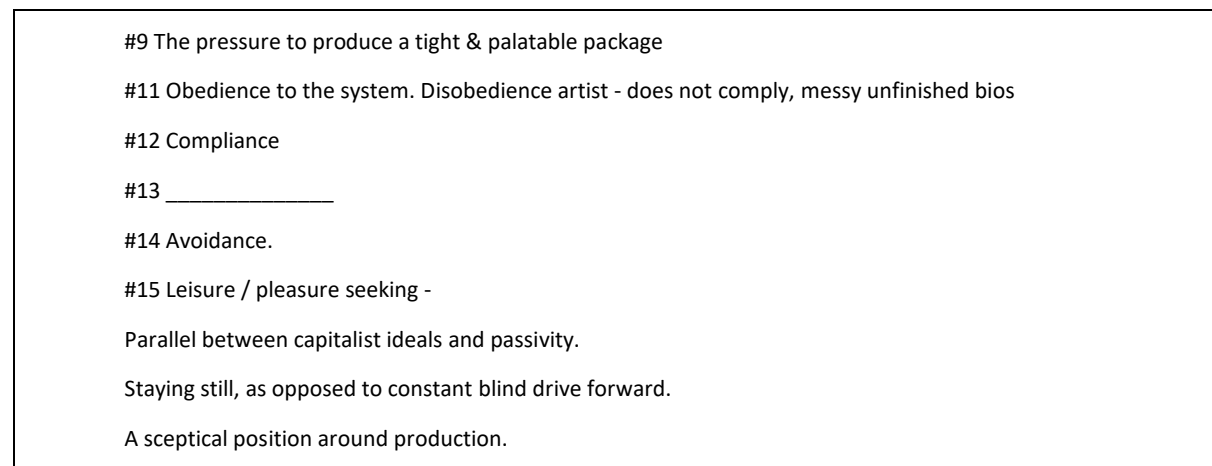


Figure 40: Richard Orjis & val smith, *Bttm Manifesto* (excerpt), 2019

The open-source manifesto document is an online publication inviting dispersed and ongoing participation, feedback, and engagement.⁴⁶⁹ Readers are asked to add, mess, or edit. The physical paper scroll was activated in a ritual late one night, buried for three days under an oak tree in Rangipuke/Albert Park, then dug up again to be reused in its disintegrating form (fed-forward as flotsy in further live iterations). In this live iteration, *Bttm Manifesto* becomes a spell to counter the oppressive colonial presence in the park, including the circle of oak trees planted to commemorate battleships of the United States Navy 'Great White Fleet'.⁴⁷⁰ We embrace the proliferation and plurality of *Bttm Manifesto*, valuing diverse interpretations, our own deviations, and re/generations of the form and its meanings.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁸ See description of sandwich boards in Orjis, 2021, 146.

⁴⁶⁹ Orjis, Richard, and val smith, *Bttm Manifesto*, 2018, Manifesto, 2018, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hJdBkalKUTqEpuf9rDgO1wXhGjM87zJwcsqSx4oas54/edit?fbclid=IwAR3qt0ekTeGueMVAqfOLbzqt9cJj-8Z-q8Fg2SnJfKJA902tLOfuQrIAKz8#heading=h.8nti11j08myt>

⁴⁷⁰ In 1908, sixteen oaks were planted, each tree associated with a particular warship of the United States Navy 'Great White Fleet', which was doing a world cruise. Law, Robert Garry, *Auckland, August 1908: A Stop on the Great White Fleet World Cruise*. (Electronic Book Text), 2008, <https://www.loot.co.za/product/robert-garry-law-auckland-august-1908-a-stop-on-the-g/vvzw-2282-g1a0>

⁴⁷¹ The anticolonial spell in Rangipuke/Albert Park also formed in correlation with the same said colonial oaks as sacred trees resonating the Druid tradition. We ignite a conversation about 'nature' and the 'natural' with our Celtic queer and trans ancestors (whilst also acknowledging the privilege and advantages we hold as Pākehā living in Aotearoa). The word 'druid'

Public readings of *Bttm Manifesto* are also plural and promiscuous. The manifesto's first reading was for *18 Horas Entre Nosortos (18 Hours Between Us)*, a collective event curated by practitioner and scholar Alys Longley (6 December 2018). We invited attendees as collaborators to read, edit and fail whilst we all lay down with our legs up an overlooked concrete wall outside the University of Auckland Library (orienting bttm, rejoicing lowliness). Later the collective event moves to Waipapa Marae, where our reading continues. We position ourselves off to the side of the marae ātea emphasising resting together with attendees; we read aloud with the environmental rhythms of this open place of meeting (this experience of resting together is formative in the emergence of *Queer Napping*).⁴⁷²

Another reading of *Bttm Manifesto* responds to an open invitation to contribute to a continuous 25-hour-long happening for *IDOCDE symposium* in Vienna (27-28 July, 2019).⁴⁷³ This reading occurs slowly over an hour and a half. I am sharing the manifesto without Richard alongside me this time, but I am far from friendless. Rather, I wander/wonder improvisationally to locate a marginal urban ecology, positioning myself next to a group of smelly skip bins to lie down and rest with legs up. Not announcing where or when I will begin, the reading begins when it feels 'right'. Friends accumulate and manifest in human and non-human form. Performing live readings of *Bttm Manifesto* offers a portal for the proliferative &&& and pleasure-seeking qualities of bttm//bottom to disperse, be shared and received.⁴⁷⁴

The lines that connect: bttm//bottom — Bttm Manifesto — flotsy

Our friendship-based collaborative practice engages the perverse technique of *flotsy* as a feed-forward mechanism. Our activations of *flotsy* embrace multi-modalities, various materials and processes, and writing, performance (see Chapter 3). *Bttm Manifesto* is one example of our proliferative *flotsy* processes. We create co-compositions and assemblages of ideas, utilising embodiment, photography, drawing, and writing practices. Tactile and physical co-creative practices also include assemblage and embodiment. Multi-modal methods cross-pollinate across performance, visual arts, and installation, in actions that invent and improvise. bttm//bottom invites new connective possibilities. We are always open

comes from the Irish-Gaelic word for oak tree, 'doire'. See Johnson, Ben, 'Who Were the Druids?', *Historic UK* (blog), accessed 11 June 2022, <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofWales/Druids/>

⁴⁷² We locate our practice in this uncertain 'off to the side' outdoor area in front of the wharenui. The Marae Ātea is the place of welcome and the domain of Tūmataunga, the Atua of war and people, and an appropriate place to raise contentious issues. Retrieved from Te Aka Māori Dictionary, 'Marae Ātea', Te Aka Māori Dictionary, accessed 30 July 2021, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/3665>

⁴⁷³ The International Documentation of Contemporary Dance Education (IDOCDE) symposium for 2019 had the theme of Tracing Forwards: intersecting (somatic) legacies and future (art) practices. See IDOCDE, 'Tracing Forwards — Intersecting (Somatic) Legacies and Future (Art) Practices', The International Documentation of Contemporary Dance Education (IDOCDE) symposium, 2019, <http://www.idocde.net/pages/160>

⁴⁷⁴ Reverberations of *Bttm Manifesto* can be seen and felt in my Choreoqueueing approach, as "multiple entry and exit points" and through inviting "pleasure, leisure, measure" as attitudes of practice.

to practitioners from other disciplines popping in to contribute to the collective practice; new and more friends, yesyesyes; circles of friendship flourish; cycles of practice develop.

We draw and write communally, reclined in marginal spaces to playfully gush on and adjacent to the page. Using materials from our studios and surroundings, this is a flotsam and jetsam approach. We call in debris, things discarded or considered useless, to gather with us in practice. In one instance we test possible printmaking processes with another human friend/practitioner, by pressing foot to page to floor to face to window (Figure 33). We warm material surfaces with affection and care, giving life to that which is rendered useless, or just unwanted.

Sometimes Richard and I communicate virtually via texting, or take the practice outside, in-person, to lie down on benches, in courtyards, or on the softest grassy patches in city parks. We are inhabiting, exiting, then reimagining familiar institutional and urban recreational spaces. Puddles of creation and reflection are photographed at times, then thrown out, or left to dry up, evaporate, disappear. The trace of friendship remains.



Figure 41: Richard Orjis, Alys Longley & val smith, collaborative process, 2019.

Our flotsy writing practices evoke and transmit the feltness of bttm//bottom as a doing and knowing as *writing*, *performance* or performance writing (see Introduction, Notes for the Reader).

#31 From the roots of trees #rooting

The care-freeness of pigeons #ratty_friends

Webs of holding and protection #lovers

Fuck homonationalism #JasbirPuar

(promiscuous referencing and hashtags ~~#richardorjis~~)

Doing the Mahi #sweeping #tikanga #energising

Peepholes, glory holes, eye holes, arseholes, ~~holes~~

#queer_portal ~~#emergent_practice~~ ~~#collaborative_practice~~

Figure 42: Richard Orjis & val smith, *Bttm Manifesto* (screenshot), 2020.

Processes of erasure, including the ~~strike through~~ of text emerges as one writing practice of the *Bttm Manifesto*. The erasure performed by strike through uplifts the value of discards and the thought-process of edits. This is a material doing (reverberating flotsy's felt powers). Erasure is a force-full layering and altering of our thoughts, a palimpsest that emphasises what is visible and present. Strike through bottoms the certainty and legibility of language, speaking to the visibility of transness and queerness.

Effacing itself twice over -- once as meaning and reference, twice as deferral and erasure -- writing becomes itself, becomes its own means and ends, recovering to itself the force of action.⁴⁷⁵

This practice puts the writing into question, confounding normative distinctions between critical and creative, recalling the 'effacing' of Della Pollock's influential essay "Performing Writing" (1998). *Bttm Manifesto* offers poetic directives and performative lines of thought, approaches that are indebted to Pollock's six excursions into performative writing as evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous, citational and consequential.⁴⁷⁶ The cross through/strike out renders the language partial, making ideas sort-of-invisible, and process evident. We say something, then erase it, to half-say it. In the open-source version of *Bttm Manifesto*, we might overwrite another's strike through or edit by erasing it, to reprioritise a different idea. I see the erasure process as reclaiming back power taken by the rendering invisible of gender nonconformity and queerness by white hegemonies (sub-verting queer erasure).

I find trans-disciplinarity, multiplicity/pluralism, and a collective relationality to be core to our *bttm//bottom* queer creative practice, rooted in a queer*trans ethics of care. Events and

⁴⁷⁵ Pollock, Della. "Performing Writing," in *The Ends of Performance*, ed. Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 75.

⁴⁷⁶ Pollock, 1998, 73–103.

projects emerging through *bttm//bottom* collaborations with Richard, such as the *Queering Napping of Bottom Methodology* (2019) and iterations of *Queer Clean(s)ing*, continue into the following sections of this chapter.

Queer Clean(s)ing



Figure 43: val smith, *Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance*, 2019. Image: Kyro Selket

The Choreoqueering technique *Queer Clean(s)ing*, cares for and activates marginal urban places by slowly and softly sweeping and cleaning (building on *scat-tending*). It is through these haptic processes that I meet and become familiar with the contours, edges and details of things, surfaces of places. I also play close attention to the dust, dirt, and detritus that I haptically encounter, the human trace of place. The detailed focus of sweeping and cleaning, almost meditative, allows me to get to know and contemplate the material and discursive cultural histories of place. Touch that is mediated through a broom, cloth, brush and shovel, water, spray bottle and/or a bucket, is the means of my researching.

I activate these materials for cleaning as ritual tools (practice notes 53). It is when I begin and connect my hands and body surfaces to the floor, ground, soil, surfaces and things, that insights come to me. Something of a queer un/knowning happens when touching place with intention that is hard to articulate. The materiality of touch and the dirt/y ground me in this

respect to something bigger than me. Theorist Winfried Menninghaus (2003) examines the strong sensation of disgust, which acutely says “no”, in sensing a threat to the integrity of self.⁴⁷⁷ I turn this no to a yes, as I delve deeper into the insight-full processes of *Queer Clean(s)ing*. Digging under any trace of disgust or shame in myself, I stick with intuition and any emerging affects to build a relationship with dirt, grime, rubbish, and everything else I encounter. There is joy and wonder in these acts of clean(s)ing; I sense and feel the aliveness of marginal urban places and their stories and spirits. Over time, and through performance iterations, I recognise the power of *Queer Clean(s)ing* is in its capacities and qualities of un/knowning as well as care, care-fullness, and response-ability.

My broom, a wand, marks boundaries to protect the sacred space of performance. sweeping, to focus my intention to transform cruel energies.

I am cultivating compassion for what is considered unworthy, unvaluable, dirty, disgusting, or dangerous (the uuddd – see *scat-tending*).

I pay respects to tangata whenua, and the unseen beings and entities here, letting them know my intentions, offering a peaceful acknowledgement.

I am whispering the intention to cleanse with waters, whispering with bucket, inviting the magick of cleaning cloth, of brush and shovel.

practice notes 53: 2019

Queer Clean(s)ing emerges from the simple practice of care-fully cleaning a space to prepare for studio practice or performance.⁴⁷⁸ Then as I developed the practice, it reveals possibilities for relating tentacularly with the marginal urban places that I engage. Playfully exploring the everyday actions of sweeping and cleaning intersects with the processes of *scat-tending*: of arriving, attuning with, and sinking in.

Activating *Queer Clean(s)ing* in performance, I intentionally trans-form the processes into a pagan Celtic ritual of clearing and cleansing. Old magick appears.⁴⁷⁹ I enact ‘clearing the air’ of superfluous or unwanted human energies (an affective and im/material tracing, rather than a ‘purification’ of the space). A ritual with a critical edge also, I am clean(s)ing the lingering smells and trace of settler-colonisation, the white cruelty and violence inflicted by Othering. By inviting and conjuring wanted energies (kindness, gentleness, and gratitude), rather than simply banishing unwanted energies, *Queer Clean(s)ing* works to unsettle and counteract

⁴⁷⁷ Menninghaus, Winfried. *Disgust: The Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, Intersections (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 1.

⁴⁷⁸ I have a dust allergy, so cleaning and sweeping began as a necessary process for maintaining my health and well-being.

⁴⁷⁹ I research and build on the clearing and purification rituals from the Irish pagan tradition referred to as Íonú (ee-noo). Brigid is often called on in such rituals, as the Goddess of fire and light, protection and purification. Rua, Aedh. *Celtic Flame: An Insider's Guide to Irish Pagan Tradition* (New York, Bloomington: iUniverse, 2008).

material and animacy hierarchies, cis/heterosexist hegemonies, and racial taxonomies (building on Chen 2012 and Barad 2012).

Queer Clean(s)ing as a ritual of care, opens a portal for queer*trans re/generation and healing. With kindness and fierce dreaming, fresh flotsy arises, poems that Alice Walker might say are “devoted to transformation and to change” (2013).⁴⁸⁰ As will be revealed, necessary protective ritual mechanisms are also developed, to safeguard the vulnerability of care-fullness. The ritual is: an opening, blessing the marginal urban place; enacting and preserving a field of protection; then revealing a liminal spacetime, inviting the meta/physical exchange of performance. I experience *Queer Clean(s)ing* as ritualised preparation for an immersion into flows of intensity inherent to somatic experimentation and performance.

Emergence and iterations of Queer Clean(s)ing

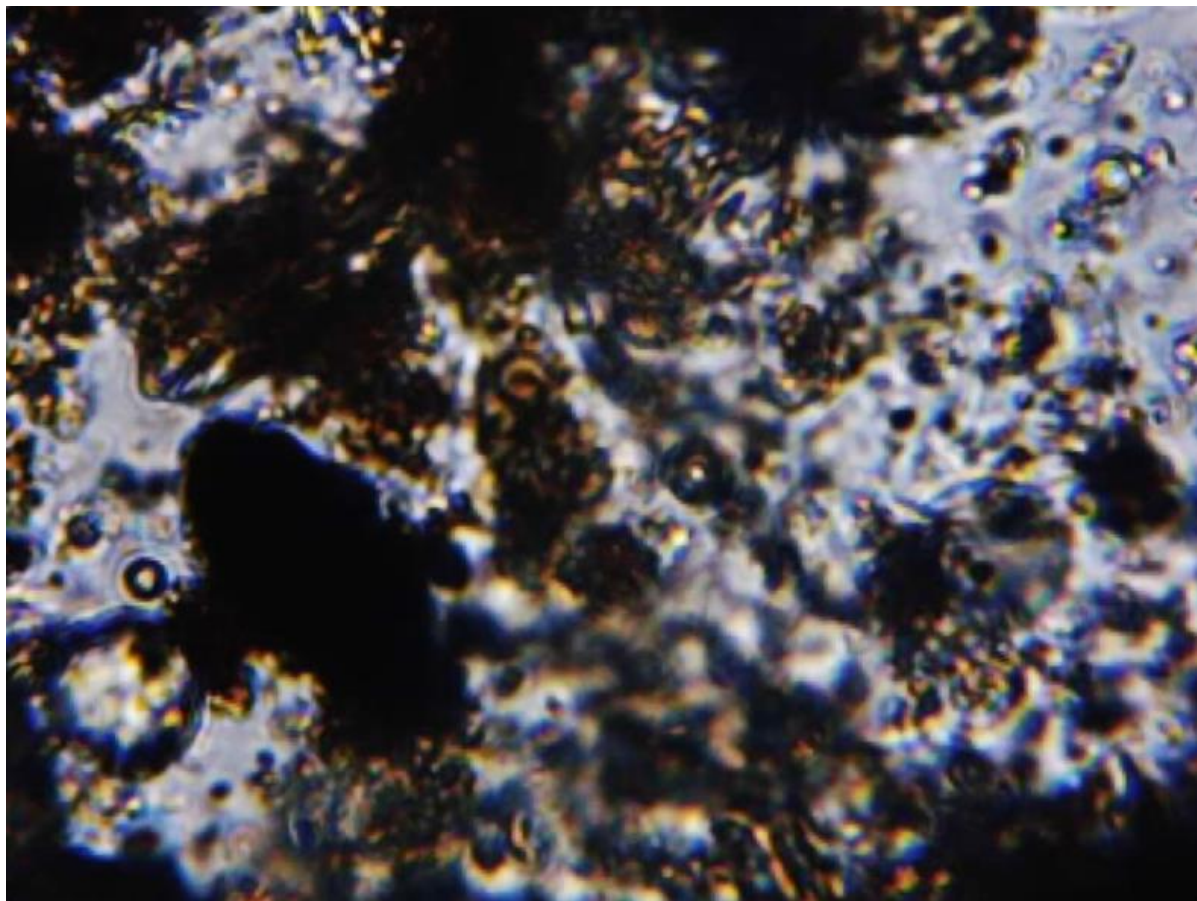


Figure 44: val smith, *Scat Hunt* (Team Purple), for Queer Pavilion 2020. Image: val smith

Several iterations of *Promiscuous Emplacements* centre *Queer Clean(s)ing*. The first, for the closing ceremony of the three-day collaborative event *Bttm Methodology* (2019) in Artspace

⁴⁸⁰ From Walker’s poem ‘Every Revolution Needs Fresh Poems’. Walker, Alice. *The World Will Follow Joy: Turning Madness Into Flowers* (New Poems) (New York: The New Press, 2013), 142–43.

Aotearoa gallery and carpark (*Bttm Methodology* is discussed in *Queer Napping*).⁴⁸¹ In this iteration I tested cleansing with a spray bottle and water (blessed), hydrogen peroxide and toothbrush (trans-formational), the amplification of classic gay clubbing music (vibrationally protective and healing), and by beckoning the protective powers of maunga and whenua (grounding forces that connect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi).

The most recent iteration of *Queer Clean(s)ing* was *Scat Hunt* (5 Feb 2020), which proposed the dirt/y as a sacred materiality. In this work I activated a playful competition that encouraged teamwork to collect samples of scat, more-than/human faecal matter, around Rangipuke/Albert Park (Figure 35). *Scat Hunt* was presented as part of the Queer Pavilion event (see Orjis 2021).⁴⁸² Samples collected during *Scat Hunt* were then re-activated in *flotsy* processes, producing moving image materials with a digital microscope that reveal a *gayYay* already underway (a fleeting celebration of this queer*trans life).⁴⁸³

Intrusions into queer culture and our queer and trans lives can be unpredictable, violent, and racially motivated.⁴⁸⁴ Our safety is precarious. Responding to this, I develop strategies for protection that became increasingly stressed in iterations of *Queer Clean(s)ing*. Having already experienced forceful and disciplinary intrusions into the performances of this inquiry (*Queer Dating Sites* 2018), I stressed a protection spell using hi-vis safety gear for the iteration *Offline Onsite Hookups* (v2) in July 2019.⁴⁸⁵ Despite my precautions, this ritual of care and protection, was stretched and tested in a physical threat that occurred during *Offline Onsite Hookups* (v2) (see Figure 20). This led to my creating extra controls and measures to ensure the safety for both physical and psychic wellbeing of performers in *Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance* (August 2019). I discuss this work next, which stays focused on connecting with the more-than/human through care-full haptic sweeping and cleaning, whilst ensuring the performing humans are kept safe and as comfortable as possible. I also unpack how the perverse technique of *Queer Clean(s)ing* touches upon the complex material-discursive dynamics of class differentiation (a less emphasised theme of my research but present nonetheless).

⁴⁸¹ Bttm Methodology spanned two perverse techniques, *bttm//bottom* and *Queer Clean(s)ing*.

⁴⁸² Richard discusses *Scat Hunt* at Orjis, 'Below, Behind, Across', 129–32.

⁴⁸³ I imagine future iterations of *Scat Hunt* projecting the moving images, adding a *gayYay* soundtrack, in a live tentacular activation of performance installation.

⁴⁸⁴ I remember the Orlando mass shooting at the gay bar and nightclub Pulse Club (June 2016), that was holding a 'Latin-themes' event.

⁴⁸⁵ Presented for ImpulsTranz in Vienna, a queer performance event curated by Keith Hennessy.

Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance



Figure 45: val smith, *Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance* (screenshot of video), 2019. Credit: Kyro Selket

I emplace myself outside of Shed 10, near to where the patrons and guests arrive and enter for drinks and canapes. I am oriented away from these humans, facing the margins, facing the sea. i begin sweeping and cleaning slowly around the margins of Shed 10, on a crumbling concrete pad.

I utilise a very soft handheld brush and shovel, gently sweeping, clearing. Richard is within eye-shot, shifting safety cones as and when needed. i am sinking-in, paying particular attention to the cracks, corners and edges of the building and the vast crumbling concrete pad that surround it. scat-tending care-fully. focusing in yet staying alert to my surroundings.

i am listening to Shed 10 and its surrounding colonial structures and fences, a material-discursive settler assemblage.

practice notes 54: 2019

The Arts Foundation Ball (AF Ball) is an annual party in which selected 'Laureates' receive an honoured award. In 2019, the event was held at Shed 10 on Auckland's waterfront, hosted by Arts Foundation and Brown Paper Bag events. Significant patrons of the arts in Aotearoa are invited to the AF Ball, as well as people considered of great consequence to the local arts industries. I am an invited recipient as the 2019 Laureate in Performing Arts and was asked to present a performance for the evening's proceedings (important context for the ethico-politics of my performance emplacement).

Protection spells

I am cautious and hyperalert, feeling vulnerable, more sensitive. I move even more gently and slowly, knowing the importance of establishing safety for queer and trans performers.

Richard is co-worker, co-cleaner and queer protector. we carry ritual tools - a bucket; brush & pan; mini safety cones. we wear hi vis protective wear (coveralls, hi-vis vest, hardhat, earmuffs, safety eyewear, rubber gloves, gumboots). we enact rituals of care and protection together.

practice notes 55: 2019

I want to keep safe from harm, harassment or insult the queers and trans folk who are present here now, and in future high profile public events such as AF Balls. I also want to keep performers safe (Richard and me in this case), as the caregivers of the work, by surrounding them/us with care and love. To do this, I develop protective mechanisms that rely on the relationship between a performer and 'queer protector' in *Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance*.

I invite my bttm//bottom buddy Richard Orjis, as the queer protector, a second human performer; I add a 'circle' of orange hazard cones to widen the zone of protection, maintained by the queer protector; I summon the protective forces of mountains, celestial, and water bodies.

practice notes 56: 2019

I am sweeping and clean(s)ing.⁴⁸⁶ As the queer protector, Richard keeps a safeguarding eye on me from a distance; a softer version of the more formal 'health and safety officer.' Then we switch roles, and I do the same for him/them. The queer protector's role includes moving and arranging three bright orange hazard cones, to surround and align with the performer as they crawl around the margins clean(s)ing (head down, bum up). The hazard cones create a barrier-membrane imagined as a 'circle of protection' that communicates firm boundaries (as and when needed) – a signal to KEEP OUT (building on the double slash of bttm//bottom). As well as this functional capacity, the cones are also activated as energetic signifiers, opening portals for material and psychic connection and interaction. The cones shift and morph the lines of connection, fielding directions and summoning elemental forces. Cones activate space as an expanding and contracting field, as gateways to other worlds (better worlds), mixing signs and indicators of the directions (elemental and geographic). We move them improvisationally, sometimes emplacing them with uncertainty and clarity, at other times with the blurriness of the asterisk, making hazy and smudgy our protection spells.

⁴⁸⁶ In centring these everyday actions, I also elevate the collected sweepings - a discarded thing, the tiniest crumb, a dust bunny, or plastic particle, each becoming something curious, something worthy of attention and care.

Hi-vis safety gear and class politics

Both Richard and I wear as much hi-vis and safety gear as we can muster.⁴⁸⁷ The gear is designed for industrial purposes, to prevent contact with chemicals, dust, toxins, and smoke.⁴⁸⁸ I joke with Richard that it protects us from touching the dirt, dirty and disgusting, but in seriousness, this gear provides me psychic and physical protection.⁴⁸⁹ Covering my bio-body, I am disrupting assumptive readings of my gender and sex, as well as providing layers of protection from threats, including any queer judgement or trans shaming.⁴⁹⁰ Hi-vis also references working class politics.⁴⁹¹

The art patronage is premium/property. Stay out of their way.

Orient to just-up-against-the-edge of the movement pathway of guests/patrons, whilst remaining steadfastly fixed on the task of clean(s)ing.

Do not forget the powers and privilege of the elite class.

Take smoko breaks as needed and desired. Rest in friendship, in kindness.

practice notes 57: 2019

Hi-vis and the bulky safety gear makes the performer more anonymous, unnoticed, less visible, even invisible.⁴⁹² I use the gear to create a hardened exterior (symbolic), whilst underneath, hidden inside, my body can soften, relax, and release into becoming who and what I am, to become as vulnerable as I wish. From this point of view, these mechanisms of protection allow for a deepening into self-care practices.

⁴⁸⁷ I re-use the hi-vis safety gear that I wore in *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)*, used to protect myself against dust and chemical inhalation, possible toxins, and the material dangers of syringes and rat poison.

⁴⁸⁸ The hi-vis jacket has been called a “paradoxical symbol for the protest movement” (Wiles 2018). The yellow vest has become an internationally contagious symbol of protest, picked up by the anti-establishment movement in France triggered by rising fuel prices (Henley 2018). It is cheap, readily available, visible, and easily identifiable, representing “an obligation imposed by the state” (Henley 2018). The yellow vest is also making the working-class visible, a symbol mostly taken up in the context of anti-government movements, however, it has also been commandeered by the far right (pro-Brexit campaigners in Sweden, Greece, and the UK) (Walker 2019).

⁴⁸⁹ My desire is to feel safe/r physically, emotionally, and psychically, as queer and trans non-binary, to be able to express who/what I am without fear.

⁴⁹⁰ Whether perceived or encountered, the everyday threat of homophobic and transphobic attack, harassment, and harm is real.

⁴⁹¹ Hi-vis references a class politics of city construction workers, with associations of hazardous occupations, emergency services and maintenance. Hi-vis is seen everywhere in 21st century cities, commonly adorning security guards, cyclists, car park attendants and joggers, described as “an all-purpose symbol of both authority and safety-first caution.” Kelly, Jon, ‘How High-Visibility Took over Britain’, *BBC News*, 30 August 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-14720101>

⁴⁹² The irony of using hi-vis gear as a kind of queer safety feature, is that it increases both my invisibility and anonymity as queer and trans.

We are working hard/harder. we are tentacular cleaners. contracted performers as employees. we are also of the privileged – embodying contradictions. invited guests playing at being cleaners. we are layered, politically problematic *and* vulnerable.

practice notes 58: 2019

From a differing perspective on class dynamics, an air of the official comes with wearing hi-vis. The powerful symbology of this clothing keeps patrons and passers-by at bay. Performing this work, I wondered if people keep their distance because we were doing something utilitarian or ‘useful’, presumed to be authorised by the event’s organisers. We use this officialdom to our advantage, playing with the tensions of class that this brings. These tensions intersect with the design and management of the event, which worked to ensure the spatialised division of the working classes from the guests and patrons, and from our regulated labour as artists.⁴⁹³ Raised through this work, my use of hi-vis adds to discourse regarding the material-discursive dynamics of class differentiation in performance (future analysis is planned with this, but outside the scope of this thesis).

The Indigenous materialism of the moana and whenua

Structural racism intersects through these class dynamics. Ongoing settler-colonial violence to the whenua and moana is very present here. Shed 10 and the surrounding port areas of Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland city speak loudly of colonial invasions and extractive industries that take hold of the moana and whenua as resources for the benefit of settlers, a process termed ‘land reclamation’. Shed 10, to me, represents this culture of denigration fundamental to white settler society. Where the life and world of moana once thrived, we stand on layers and structures of concrete, tarseal, woods and metals, a trampling of mana moana.⁴⁹⁴

Outside of Shed 10, I take a smoko break and notice the mana of maunga Takarunga⁴⁹⁵ and Maungauika,⁴⁹⁶ and the many pōhutukawa standing across the sea at Te Hau Kapua/Devonport. I am a Pākehā art-worker, glamoured by the sparkle of Waitematā, the glimmer of Te Rā on watery surfaces.⁴⁹⁷ I take these as signs of the endurance of mana,

⁴⁹³ As performers, we are treated differently from guests, kept at a distance, but in an elevated way. All performers are offered a makeshift shared greenroom, with snacks and drinks provided and attendance by the serving staff.

⁴⁹⁴ Mana moana is described as authority over the sea/lake, according to Māori custom. Te Aka Māori Dictionary, ‘Mana Moana’, Te Aka Māori Dictionary, accessed 30 July 2021, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/14983>

⁴⁹⁵ Tūpuna Maunga Authority, ‘Takarunga Mount Victoria’, Tūpuna Maunga Authority, accessed 11 June 2022, <https://www.maunga.nz/maunga/takarunga/>.

⁴⁹⁶ Tūpuna Maunga Authority, ‘Maungauika North Head’, Tūpuna Maunga Authority, accessed 11 June 2022, <https://www.maunga.nz/maunga/maungauika/>.

⁴⁹⁷ Taonui, Rāwiri, ‘Ranginui – the Sky - The Family of Light’, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, 12 June 2006, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/ranginui-the-sky/page-4>

whenua and enduring sovereignty of tangata whenua. I become aware through this moment of the material intersections of racism and classism, understanding that Māori experiences are multiple, with interlocking forms of discrimination specific to Aotearoa.⁴⁹⁸

The working-class materials of *Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance* and other iterations of *Queer Clean(s)ing*, relate to the installation and performance art practice of John Vea. Relevant examples of Vea's work include: *If I pick your fruit, will you put mine back?* (2019), which deals with complexities for Pacific migrant workers, co-opted for labour in Aotearoa⁴⁹⁹, and *One Kiosk Many Exchanges* (2016), which explores "what it means to be visitors responding to a site of rich local significance."⁵⁰⁰

This live work touches on class analysis and the material colonial force of Shed 10 and the AF Ball, structures which act as policing separators of the classes. This unpacking of colonial materiality gives rise to further investigation, in Chapter 5. Whilst *Queer Clean(s)ing* extends an ethico-politics of queer*trans care and protection in performance, *Queer Napping* delves into the potentiality of resting and napping together as ways of enabling queer*trans re/generation and rejuvenation. I recognise a need for creating spaciousness in performance practice for more-than/human relation forms to emerge at their own pace.

⁴⁹⁸ Cormack, Donna, Ricci Harris, and James Stanley, "Māori Experiences of Multiple Forms of Discrimination: Findings from Te Kupenga 2013," *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 106–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083X.2019.1657472>

⁴⁹⁹ See Vea, John, 'If I Pick Your Fruit, Will You Put Mine Back?', 4a, 25 December 2019, <https://4a.com.au/exhibitions/john-vea-if-i-pick-your-fruit-will-you-put-mine-back> Also Vea, John. "Exploring Pacific Talanoa Research Methods in Visual Arts Installation and Performance Art Practices" (Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2021), <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/14800>

⁵⁰⁰ John Vea, 'One Kiosk Many Exchanges', Te Tuhi, 2016, <https://tetuhi.art/art-archive/digital-library/watch/john-vea-one-kiosk-many-exchanges/>

Queer Napping



Figure 46: val smith, *queer walk-naps*, 2020. Image: Ivan Mrsic

This section considers another queer*trans ritual of care and protection and perverse technique, *Queer Napping*. *Queer Napping* explores the potency of resting together (and takes stock of how this disrupts cis/heteronormative logics, capitalism, and other white systems). I pay attention to the more-than/human kinships emerging in live works of napping, through the collective stilling, slow/ing, soft/ening, and relaxing (with the possibility of sleeping and dreaming). I suggest that for queer and trans communities, acts of napping and resting alongside each other hold the potential for profound comfort, safety and protection, as well as meaningful connectivity with each other and the more-than/human world.

Queer napping is dreaming
our lives into beyond-just-existence (human and more-than)
enmeshed with ancient and future time, culture, and matter
a fluid queer time matures between and through us.

we are taking our time for queer spatiotemporalities to be seen and felt,
to move and develop at their own pace
practice notes 59: 2019

Queer Napping initiates an exploration into felt queer time in performance. Live works explore possibilities for sensing and attuning with more-than/human things, beings, entities, elements in relation to 'queer time' (Halberstam 2005), as well as deepening human-human queer*trans kinship networks (building on the queer*trans ethics of care established through *bttm//bottom*).

Queer Napping was refined through an iterative approach, beginning with ‘naps at 3pm’ in the three-day event *Bttm Methodology* (February 2019), extended in a workshop series called *Queer Napping Workshops* (November & December 2019), then further refined in a series of four events, *queer walk-naps* for the About Walking project (February 2020). I discuss ‘naps at 3pm’ and *queer walk-naps*, with a summary of what emerged in *Queer Napping Workshops* in between.

Naps at 3pm – Bttm Methodology



Figure 47: Richard Orjis & val smith, *Bttm Methodology* (Day 3), 2019. Image: Geneva Alexander-Marsters

Naps were an important feature of *Bttm Methodology*,⁵⁰¹ a three-day event (February 12-14, 2019) that was conceived, developed, and facilitated collaboratively by Richard Orjis and me. *Bttm Methodology* was presented in association with Auckland Pride Festival,⁵⁰² with support

⁵⁰¹ *Bttm Methodology* emerged out of a drifting conversation about glow worms, mushrooms and queer networks, tree-hugging/humping, resting, composting and excretion, toilets and cruising. At the soft core of bttm methodology is a love of the temporal, the tidal, and the transitory. An approach to artmaking, pedagogy and friendship, it is counter, subterranean and passively active, prioritizing openness, slowness, listening and the pursuit of pleasure/leisure/desire. bttm methodology presents itself as an uncertain manifesto, a list of provocations, questions, and ethical explorations, a soft testing of collaborative queer practice. See artists' statement: <https://artspace-aotearoa.nz/events/bttm-methodology>

⁵⁰² *Bttm Methodology* (2019) was a reconceptualisation of *Queer Pavilion* (our intended event for Auckland Pride Festival 2019 that was postponed). This work responded to the decision made by Auckland Pride Board to not allow police to march in uniform in the Pride Parade. *Queer Pavilion* was later developed and presented by Richard, in 2020. See Orjis 2021, for discussion on this background to *Bttm Methodology*. Orjis, 2021, 66, 94–148.

from Artspace Aotearoa.⁵⁰³ The conversations between Richard and I that underpinned this project flowed from notions of gay shame, police brutality, homonormativity and racism, to DIY creative production, messy collective strategies, and future half-baked collaborative workings (building on *Bttm Manifesto*). For the three days of *Bttm Methodology*, we occupied Artspace Aotearoa carpark, located behind and below the main gallery space.

Richard and I activated a permeable *bttm//bottom* structure, allowing for social practices to emerge, flow and reorient as needed, emphasising a collective strategy. Each day we offered a workshop-ish at 11am; a 'spongy lazy lunch' at 1pm; downtime (pleasure seeking, napping, and breathing) at 3pm; and a walk at 4pm. These offerings, held by Orjis and I, formed a loose structure within which additional activations were also welcomed.⁵⁰⁴

Responding to this permeable structure, several queer and trans arts practitioners offered activations rooted in their own interests and research. Welcoming, orienting and hosting people who came and went also became integral to iterative projects of *bttm//bottom*, and our approach to napping.⁵⁰⁵ Richard and I would invite attendees into the scheduled 'naps at 3pm'.⁵⁰⁶ We gathered with anyone willing to join us in this practice under the shade of a pop-up gazebo. We offered mattresses, sunscreen, cushions, and optional blankets for added cosiness.

Reduce the do-do-do of capitalism and refuse the insistence on productivity and 'successes'. Attune to queer time and the cadence of place instead. *queer napping* utilises slowing down, stilling, listening and resting to disrupt the demands of capitalist time pressures.⁵⁰⁷

practice notes 60: About Walking publication (excerpt), val smith, 2020.

Producing anything / producing *almost nothing*

practice notes 61: *Bttm Manifesto* (excerpt), Richard Orjis & val smith, 2018.

⁵⁰³ Thank you to the gallery team for your support, including Remco de Blaaij, Director of Artspace Aotearoa, and Geneva Alexander-Marsters, Marketing, Media & Communications Assistant at that time.

⁵⁰⁴ Visitors were invited to contribute "whatever you wish" or to just "hang out, lie around, eat, fall asleep." We also invited people we met in Auckland Pride Board's series of community hui to contribute to *Bttm Methodology*, and others involved in the debate regarding the no-Police-in-uniforms decision. smith, val, and Richard Orjis, 'Bttm Methodology', Facebook, Artspace Aotearoa, 12 February 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/events/395363501007458/?ref=newsfeed>

⁵⁰⁵ Attendees arrived and left at their leisure.

⁵⁰⁶ We named and renamed our queer naps playfully – at times referring to 'the post-(lazy)-lunch nap', at other times as 'downtime'. 'Naps at 3pm' refers to the sandwich board programme signage erected in the carpark (Figure 39). Our fluidity around the conception of napping reflects our performative play with writing, language and concepts.

⁵⁰⁷ Houghton, Christina, Melissa Laing, and Becca Wood, Eds., *About Walking: 15 Months of Artist Walks in Tāmaki Auckland* (Tāmaki Auckland: Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery), 55–59, accessed November 4, 2021, <https://www.teuru.org.nz/index.cfm/shop/publications/about-walking-publication/>

Richard and I conceived napping for *Bttm Methodology* as a way of defying capitalism's pressure to work, and accumulate wealth, success, and profit.⁵⁰⁸ We also considered our practice an anticolonial act. In relation to this, I refer to African American artists Tricia Hersey of *The Nap Ministry* and Navild Acosta & Fannie Sosa of *Black Power Naps* who are comprehensively mapping the liberatory power of nap practices through installation and social practice.⁵⁰⁹

Human-human and more-than/human affective attunement

Drifting, dreaming, the tenderness of napping together arrives,
to sense warmth, kindness, soft gentleness.

we are being quiet together, so as not to awaken each other. we pad away, a
heartfelt parting with such soft sweet sorrowful feet.

practice notes 62: 2019.

'Naps at 3pm' allowed for qualities of human-human relationality to be experienced and felt. Local naps led to fleeting and incidental human-human connections, an affective attunement. On Day 2, we were joined by a group of colleagues from Tautai Pacific Arts Trust. They arrived specifically for nap time, then left straight afterwards with few words, all smiles, many thank-yous. Wonder-full! I felt closer and more connected to the bodies, materials, surfaces, and entities involved, especially when lying on the ground.

The downtime/naps also became a chance to witness and feel the atmospheric events and more-than/human lives and encounters going on around us. The sounds of birds and other creatures going about their day in this marginal urban ecology enlivened the napping experience. A communal gentle jostling and rustling emerges between us. Birds tweet, flying around and over us – perhaps giggling to each other? All the while, cloudscape are de-revolving above us.

There is something very comforting about napping together. The way we snuggle down into the softness of cushions and melding into each other's creases and bends. Or how we emerged after napping, to stretch, roll and stand up, somehow more in sync with each

⁵⁰⁸ Richard and I had been exploring a shared practice of napping long before we produced *Bttm Methodology*. As PhD co-conspirators we worked in close physical proximity in the Art and Design practice PhD zone of AUT's WE Building. Friendship-based collaborations emerged quickly as improvisational, spontaneous, curious, and playful. We would meet for a cup of tea, do a check in, talk about our ideas for projects, and then nap together. Occasionally other researcher-practitioners would join us in napping. This became a process of pursuing pleasure and en-joy-ment, as well as a necessary break from the PhD grind to renew and rejuvenate. At this early stage we positioned our napping peripherally to other artistic inquiries, such as *Bttm Manifesto* (2018).

⁵⁰⁹ Colonisation's insistence on the labour of POC and Black people in the context of America is a project taken up by Tricia Hersey (see *The Nap Ministry*) Hersey, Tricia, 'About / The Nap Ministry', *The Nap Ministry*, 5 January 2018, <https://thenapministry.wordpress.com/about/> Also see Navild Acosta & Fannie Sosa (see *Black Power Naps*) who each provide proper contextual justice to the liberatory power of their nap practices. Acosta, Navild, and Fannie Sosa, "Blackpowernaps.Black," accessed May 16, 2020, <https://blackpowernaps.black>

other's rhythms. Revived, I felt more at ease and at peace with myself, who I am, and my positioning in this practice. I attune to the affective flows of our bodies (breath, blood, fluids, synaptic electrics), to the land, to my own and others' rhythms, a plurality of listening and attuning.

Dreaming better worlds

Queer Napping is dreaming

with the time it takes for queer hookups, for dog walking and young trans lovers holding hands... and for the time it takes for homophobia to crumble, for ponytail pram pushing and consumerism to crack

Our resting and napping queer and trans bodies and bodily acts are creating timely worlds with each other, a worlding.

practice notes 63: 2019

As Richard and I rested with friends and strangers during the allocated downtime each day (pleasure-seeking, napping, breathing), we revelled in the en-joy-ment that arose in laying close to each other. Relaxing deeply in the safety of proximity, I drifted off into wistful and sometimes hopeful dreaming/sleeping, states that manifested in the anarchives of our processes.

I experienced napping together as a protective spacetime allowing for imagining and envisaging better worlds. I could see-feel the potential of *Queer Napping* to be creating a safe/r place for dropping into self-care, collective care, and processes of spiritual restoration from the harms inflicted by cis/heteronormativities, homophobic and transphobic white society. A queer*trans utopic dreaming was awakened in *Bttm Methodology*, holding space for the endless possibilities of queer intimacies (outside of coupledness), and for the manifestation of gender acceptance and euphoria within and between us, radiating into the worlds we move through.

From doing less to possibilising felt queer time: the iterative shifts of Queer Napping

The moving experiences and insights of 'naps at 3pm' led me to ponder further the significance of *Queer Napping*, leading to a shift from the intention of *doing less* to counter capitalism's insistence on overproduction, to seeing collective forms of rest with the more-than/human as *possibilising* ways to address queer*trans well-being. I hint at the not-so-radical yet quite radical proposition in the context of today's do-do-do society, that: *rest is restorative*. Redirecting my research intention then, I foreground the healing and healthful effects of *Queer Napping* as a social somatics practice. I provide some contextual material below that supports my proposition.

Resting as a restorative queer practice

For visibly trans, gender diverse and queer folks, moving through urban and suburban spaces can be dangerous and frightening, manifesting in high levels of psychological distress.⁵¹⁰ Urban walking and dwelling are not inherently practices of equality; we each experience urban places differently through intersections of oppression and privilege.

Some of us build personalised armour to cope in our unique ways. Hyper visible gender expression, such as flamboyance or drag, can provide a sense of protection and strength, but can also be a beacon for unwanted attention or attack (Pasley 2022).⁵¹¹ For trans folk, there is also transnormativity to contend with, expectations of what a trans person is supposed to look and operate like (Pasley, Hamilton and Veale 2022).⁵¹² In iterations of *Queer Napping*, I am taking into account and responding to these conditions for queer and trans folk, and other gender queers. I am seeking to offset the way that hypervigilance becomes an enhanced state of sensory sensitivity that keeps us alert to threats yet still acknowledging that at times this is a necessary protective mechanism for us when moving through the world.⁵¹³

Queer Napping emerges as an opportunity to rebalance our nervous systems when we need to restore, reenergise, and come back down, returning to a bodily 'home' to rest (remembering the restorative yielding qualities of asterisking/Navel Radiation). *Queer Napping* holds the potential for a creative approach to restoration, which might include pathways into feeling our vulnerability in a protected environment and sensing this openness in the gentlest and most reparative of ways. This leads to a collective surrender to rest. This can be a process for some people, it can take time to drop through layers of tension we might hold, or to locate the right amount of physical and emotional comfort to nap together

⁵¹⁰ Trans and non-binary people suffer from high and very high psychological distress at rates nine times higher than the general population (found to be higher for disabled folks and youth in Aotearoa). Elevated rates of mental health issues and distress occur in response to discrimination, stigma, shame, a lack of acceptance, and abuse faced on a regular basis. The lack of acceptance and empathy in the medical systems and social settings of Aotearoa, can also have hugely devastating effects. Veale, Jaimie, et al. "Counting Ourselves: The Health and Wellbeing of Trans and Non-Binary People in Aotearoa New Zealand," Report (Transgender Health Research Lab, 2019), <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/handle/10289/12942>

⁵¹¹ It can also work in a way to mask or hide our sensitivities and vulnerabilities. Hyper visible gender expression that does not meet with majoritarian infrastructures that constitute 'normality' (such as cisnormativity) comes with real struggles and dangers (Pasley, 2022). Pasley, And, *Transnormativities*, Video (Auckland, New Zealand, 2022), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBNR_VJ6FwU&ab_channel=AndPasley

⁵¹² Pasley, And, Tommy Hamilton, and Jaimie Veale. "Transnormativities: Reterritorializing Perceptions and Practice," in *Rethinking Transgender Identities* (Routledge, 2022), 124–47, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315613703-8>

⁵¹³ Some of us have the capacity (when needed) to make decisions fast, to run or take flight when there is real danger. For others, states of high anxiety keep our queer and trans nervous systems bound and fired up, which can lead to exhaustion or the desire to hide away from the outside world to restore energies. The consistent presence of adrenaline, cortisol increase, and other heightened neuro chemicals can lead to our immune and cardiovascular systems wearing down. Our queer and trans bodies can become tired and worn.

(different for each person). This practice summons a collective gentleness, kindness, and patience, building care, acceptance, and resiliency amongst us.

A soft/ening body arrives to attune with the aliveness of the marginal location
remaining relationally open, sensuous, and radiant (calling on the powers of
queer*trans/materiality's asterisk).

practice notes 64: 2019

I carry these experiences, learnings, and insights into further iterations of *Queer Napping* – *Queer Napping Workshops* and *queer walk-naps*. An important development that occurred through *Queer Napping Workshops* was a somatic exploration of 'queer time' (Halberstam 2005; Freeman 2010; Barad 2012).

Can we feel into what pace 'queer time' travels today? How might we feel time?
How fast/slow will we walk? How does safety and comfort play a role in the speed
we take?

practice notes 65: 2019

As part of the introductory talk in each of the three workshops, I ask people: *What does the term 'queer time' mean to you?* I poetically propose we might disrupt a linear conception of progressive straight time, through felt queer time (building on Halberstam's analysis of heteronormative time measures - marriage, breeding, property purchasing, dying).⁵¹⁴ We set off towards the pre-selected marginal location at a slower than pedestrian pace. We are arriving and attuning with each other in place, listening to the environmental soundscape, noticing emergent and fluid affects. This *Queer Napping* iteration enabled a sinking into non-linear temporality through bodily experimentation, allowing space for divergence, disconnection and any overlapping of inter-personal speeds and rhythms. We walked, paused, and stilled together in loops of rest and invigoration that "move at the speed of trust" (brown 2017).⁵¹⁵

Whilst human-human intimacies were more centralised in the *Bttm Methodology* iteration of *Queer Napping*,⁵¹⁶ in *Queer Napping Workshops* my research turns to engaging the more-than/human kinships and qualities of togetherness emerging through the social and collective care practice of napping. I also initiate an inquiry into welcoming place in *Queer Napping Workshops*, in a Pākehā land acknowledgement that continues in my inquiry to become a better Tangata Tiriti partner (following Ngata 2020). This napping inquiry as a

⁵¹⁴ Halberstam, Jack. *In a Queer Time and Place : Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives, Sexual Cultures* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

⁵¹⁵ brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, 42.

⁵¹⁶ I had become acutely aware through those three-days that our social spacetime was intimately entangled with the rhythms of atmospheric elements, and the more-than/human entities and beings that surrounded us (birds, concrete surfaces, drainage pipes, fences, and traffic noise).

queer*trans ritual of care and protection pays respect to the reciprocity inherent to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, also reaching to tie into the practices of my Celtic Irish and English pagan ancestry. I begin find my feet to stand as Pākehā-Celtic and Tangata Tiriti, a place of belonging that situates my living and making work in Aotearoa. This explorative questioning is carried over into the following iteration of *Queer Napping* called *queer walk-naps*.

queer walk-naps



Figure 48: val smith, *queer walk-naps* (dawn iteration), 2020. Image: Ivan Mrsic

*queer walk-naps*⁵¹⁷ was a series of four live events occurring over two days in the middle of the lunar month of Huitānguru, 2020.⁵¹⁸ The series was programmed for the *About Walking* project, curated by Melissa Liang and Christina Houghton, with support from Te Uru Gallery.⁵¹⁹ The *queer walk-naps* coincided with dawn, midday, dusk, and midnight. The first was at dawn, meeting at Te Wai Ōrea; the second at noon at ‘Heron Park’ (Saturday 15th

⁵¹⁷ The title of this series was changed after community feedback.

⁵¹⁸ I acknowledge and pay respects to the peoples of Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei and Te Kawerau a Maki who hold customary authority over the lands this project moved across and places we were relating with. There is other iwi affiliated to these places. I offer special thanks to Pita Turei (Ngai Tai ki Tamaki, Ngāti Pāoa, Ngā Rauru Kiitahi) as kaitiaki for this project who generously engaged in rich conversation about the specific places and walking pathways I wished to engage in this project. I also am grateful to Melissa and Christina, and the rest of the About Walking team, who supported me in this project to consider an accountable relationship with place as Pākehā.

⁵¹⁹ I produce a piece of writing about these performances for the About Walking publication. See Houghton, Christina, Melissa Laing, and Becca Wood, Eds., *About Walking: 15 Months of Artist Walks in Tāmaki Auckland* (Tāmaki Auckland: Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery), 55–59, accessed November 4, 2021, <https://www.teuru.org.nz/index.cfm/shop/publications/about-walking-publication/>

February). The following day (Sunday 16th February), we gathered at ‘Ken Maunder Park’ at dusk; finally we met on the Rooftop Terrace of Lopdell House in Titirangi at midnight.⁵²⁰

Building on ideas for possibilising more-than/human kinships and felt queer time tested in *Queer Napping Workshops*, this iteration re-conceives *Queer Napping* as a pro-creative act, referencing the Donna Haraway’s provocation “making kin, not babies” (2016) for making art and creating temporary more-than/human queer communities.⁵²¹

I wish to acknowledge all iwi and hāpu affiliated to this place, the holders of intimate knowledge of the whenua, whose seasonal movements and systems of time are purposeful.⁵²²

practice notes 66: 2020

The curators invited us to engage Maramataka, the traditional Māori environmental calendar system (See Rangi Matamua, 2017, 2020).⁵²³ I also engaged in collaborative practice with artist and disability activist Lusi Faiva to explore accessibility for people in wheelchairs in the ‘walking’ events. My selection of the times, days, and places for the four events responded to Maramataka and access rights/disability justice; investigating overland walking (and rolling) routes that would join each of the four places in an interconnected event that would span the duration of two sun and moon encirclements of earth (and enable access for people in wheelchairs). As will be discussed, my engagement with Maramataka holds me to account as Pākehā, guiding my inquiry into performance place relations of accountability and reciprocity (Pākehā response-ability), and opening my awareness to whakapapa connectivity and inter-species kinships. Whilst rich experiences and insights emerged through the development of this work (notably with Lusi), and in each of the four events of the series, I focus on the first event at dawn, to examine a clash that occurred between queer time and straight time in real time.

⁵²⁰ The four events move westward with the trajectory of the sun towards the Waitākere Ranges starting from Te Wai Ōrea/Western Springs lake park. The series moves along the overland path between north and west; a route known to Māori as Te Ara o Karangahape. Multiple iwi and hapū whakapapa to Karangahape, with stories connecting tangata and whenua. I held this in mind as we walked and moved over the lands. I knew Karangahape Road (an area known for its queer culture) was behind us as we moved westward. This whenua is of significance to tangata whenua, takatāpui whanau, whakawāhine and tangata ira tāne, as well as to non-Indigenous queer and trans communities. This backing/positioning provides me comfort and strength in these works.

⁵²¹ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 159.

⁵²² This sentence is informed by Rangi Matamua, *Matariki: The Star of the Year* (Wellington, New Zealand: Huia, 2017).

⁵²³ I am guided by the Indigenous cosmological work of Professor Rangi Matamua (Tūhoe) on the Maramataka, his research into Matariki, which has gained visibility through a TV series, and live to air talks on Facebook (see *Living with The Stars*). Professor Matamua describes Maramataka as the Māori environmental calendar system, a system of Indigenous time which uses the lunar phases as a baseline, alongside reading the sun, stars, and environmental factors. See Matamua, Rangi. “Beyond Matariki,” TV Episode (Māori Television, July 16, 2020), <https://www.maoritelevision.com/shows/beyond-matariki/S01E001/beyond-matariki-episode-1> The work of Matamua is key to the growing interest in, and current revitalisation, of Māori astronomy.

The time it takes for more-than/human encounters



Figure 49: val smith, *queer walk-naps* (dawn iteration), 2020. Image: Ivan Mrsic

During the dawn iteration of *queer walk-nap* at Te Wai Ōrea, as with each of the four events, I open the space with a welcome to place, and a somatic process that called our bodies into felt queer time and the interconnected kinships of place. We shared in an emergent felt queer time with pigeons, pukeko, swans, rabbits, geese, and other roaming species (notably mostly settler species). This was a de-adrenalized more-than/human performance atmosphere; the slow/ing and soft/ening temporality of *scat-tending* and *Queer Napping* allowed a closer-than-usual relationality with the birds and creatures.

The social *Choreoqueering* emphasised the spacetime of more-than/human relationality. We were not in a hurry to 'perform' or create 'good', 'watchable' dance but instead listened to the pace of trust that felt right to the time of day and circumstances we found ourselves in (often unpredictable). The economy of this improvisational dance was in the feltness of connection, care, reciprocity, and the emergence of trust between all players.

queer walk-naps notices the qualities of kinship and affections emerging with waterways, trees, sparkles of light, wind, grassy patches of curvy land, as well as with the huge numbers of pigeons and swans. These friendly and curious human*bird encounters arose as we paid attention to the passing of time. There were also sweet and special moments of human-human relations, sharing in the witnessing of bird sounds and songs, and the energetic dance of dawn skies. Practitioner-researcher Alys Longley was invited to respond to *queer walk-*

naps at noon in a *flotsy* way, as an alternative to typical forms of documentary photography of the event (see Figure 44, and link to her writing in footnotes).⁵²⁴

Contrasting rhythms of straight and queer time

As a dispersed yet connected group, we slowly meandered and paused to finally rest together by the waters of Te Wai Ōrea (Figure 38 & 42). Orienting our bodies to attune with the heightened qualities of place at dawn, we were sinking into the changing lights and sky-colours of dawn. From dark browns and greens, to pinks, yellows, soft greys, then brightening blues, witnessing the atmospheric event bonded us in colour magick and love. In our attunement and soft/ening pace, we were slow to become alert to the hundreds of humans gathering for an early morning 'fun run' around the lake.

Not thinking much of it, as they were way over the other side of the lake, we began to gently pack up, to meander back to where we began. Quickly shaken into an adrenalised state however, we finally clicked to what was happening, when the trajectory of the fastest runners would very soon be crossing through our grouping. How would we navigate the speed of the fast-progressing linear time without injury? Could we avoid the impact of straight time's insistence of moving from A to B in the most efficient and fast means?

We coped in several ways: by making jokes, sticking close together, holding on to each other, or doing our best to jump out of the way. Still, we resisted the pressure to harden or move quickly, gathering again in our dawdling queer pace, until the loud voice of man-with-a-pram firmly requests we move aside (the aggressions of straightness). The togetherness and attunement of our felt queer time together had been cut apart, causing tension, excitement, and fear. The affective encounter led me to a deeper consideration of how the felt time of performance that I am accustomed, might undermine the necessary mechanisms for safety and protection, that allow for queer time to emerge on its own accords. This ritual of queer*trans care and protection sparked experiences from the sublime to the frightening, from the peaceful to the tense in a clash of temporal embodiments (straight and queer).

Mātauranga Māori and tracing colonisation

Researching in the lead up to *queer walk-naps*, I inquire into pre-colonial histories, stories, and Māori traditions associated with each place. The devastation that occurred through a settler-colonial history (ongoing) of environmental destruction and resource extraction impacted on my practice at a somatic level of seeing-feeling.⁵²⁵ I also continue to search out

⁵²⁴ Alys Longley, 'val smith: queer walk-nap; a reflection by Alys Longley' (Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, 2020), <https://www.teuru.org.nz/teuru/assets/File/Pdf%20publications/about%20walking%20epub%20val%20smith.pdf>

⁵²⁵ Walking alongside Te Wai Ōrea I see physical evidence of the settler-coloniser damming and rerouting of the springs, re-named 'Western Springs', an act that not only erases mātauranga Māori and te reo, but also denigrates the cultural practices of Māori, and destroys significant environmental features and resources for Māori.

Māori names of places and dig into the Pākehā names to locate plural histories, finding that settler-colonisation involves the anglicising of te Reo, and the overwriting of Māori names, erasing Māori knowledge (ongoing).

Knowledge was generously shared by respected storyteller and orator Pīta Turei (Ngāi Tai ki Tamaki, Ngāti Pāoa, Ngā Rauru Kiitahi), who holds intimate cultural knowledge of the iwi, areas, places, and their uses by hapū over generations.⁵²⁶ I also studied online spaces for information resources, paying special attention to the voice of Ngāti Whātua, Te Kawerau a Maki, and the many other iwi who are intimately connected to these places.⁵²⁷

Through these inquiries and conversations, I came to realise that if we (non-Māori) are making performance and ritual on these Māori lands, then it must be done with respect and honour. My view is that it is a privilege to make work here, not my right or entitlement. Coming to know more of the fraught histories of stolen lands, my focus turns to the possibilities of reparation. One way I find to do this is to understand and acknowledge how the work is rooted in the continued struggle that our (white) presence perpetuates. As my intention is for communal liberation, for forms of repair at all levels, then developing stronger understanding of my ancestors and their struggles and privileges is vital. I look to rituals and processes for listening to the wisdom of ancestors by noticing what is happening around me in my daily practices and experiences (receiving answers through my body).

Māori time and Maramataka

queer walk-naps attunes to the older Indigenous cosmologies of Maramataka, bringing mātauranga Māori into focus in my inquiry. I learnt about Māori methods of marking time by the stars and moon, and the rhythms and changes of the environment across seasons, weeks, months, or years. In the lead up to the events of *queer walk-naps*, I paid attention to signs, patterns and cadences of the environment, and any markers or changes in flora and fauna. This is an area of interest to me and learning that I wish to extend.

Growing out of this exploration of Maramataka, I developed poetic incantations that recognise, welcome and salute mana whenua, the local awa, moana, maunga, manu and rākau species.⁵²⁸ These incantations are recited during the opening of each of the four *queer*

⁵²⁶ Hearing mana whenua stories of place from Pita Turei, feeds into my understanding of kanohi ki te kanohi / face-to-face communication. As Tangata Tiriti I value listening/learning, koha, and reflecting on the significance of our entangled cultural histories.

⁵²⁷ Including Te Ākitai Waiohau, Ngāti Tamaterā, Ngāti Paoa, Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, Ngāti Whatua o Ōrakei, Te Kawerau a Maki, Ngāti Whatua, Ngāti Maru (Hauraki). See Native Land Digital, 'Native Land Digital', Native Land, 2021, <https://native-land.ca/>.

⁵²⁸ There are many ways to acknowledge land. Whilst a land acknowledgement varies from country to country, people to people – there are lots of examples that follow expectations of what you should do. Whilst well-meaning, white people doing a land acknowledgement can come across as tokenistic and prescribed. I develop incantations from the desire to figure out a response-able approach that feels right as a Pākehā researcher-practitioner, guided by Indigenous and decolonial thinking.

walk-naps. They intend to acknowledge the richness of Te Ao Māori and mātauranga Māori, and the importance of knowledge sovereignty for Māori, whilst also honoring a performative web of interconnections (from a Pākehā-Celtic perspective) between the things, beings, entities, atmospheres, and people of the events and places.⁵²⁹ This exploration into land acknowledgement is picked up again and further developed for *Songs with Birds* in collaboration with Forest V Kapo (see Chapter 5).

Summary of Chapter 4: collectivity, dreaming, and a queer*trans care ethics

This chapter has examined how *queer*trans rituals of care and protection* locate my practice within a choreographic economy of care that values more-than/human and queer*trans modes of collectivity and wellbeing. I have discussed three more perverse techniques of Choreoqueering, and their associated events and projects: *bttm//bottom* and *Bttm Manifesto*; *Queer Clean(s)ing* and *Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance*; and *Queer Napping*, for *Bttm Methodology* and *queer walk-naps*.

I locate an emergent queer*trans care ethics that draws critical and creative awareness to that which is deemed in/significant or lowly, democratising hierarchies of value within the arts. I do this by making use of the felt technologies of performance to undermine the projections and judgments put upon marginal urban places. Through examining live works and projects, I locate the queer*trans relation forms, tendencies and priorities specific to *bttm//bottom*, *Queer Clean(s)ing* and *Queer Napping*.

bttm//bottom is a friendship-based collaborative model that centres collectivity, support, love/affection, en-joy-ment, and esteem-building. I find it to destabilise cis-heteronormative logics in all its manifestations, through its exuberant and sensitive social cycles. *Bttm Manifesto* represents the heart of the conversational, fluid, playful and promiscuous research-creations of Richard and val, leading to generative writing techniques such as ~~queer~~ erasure. The collective and values-based projects of *bttm//bottom* provide a glimpse into what collaborative more-than/human performance might look and feel like, and how more-than/human collaboration might operate.⁵³⁰

Queer Clean(s)ing responds to the desire to care for, connect and become familiar with the abject, ignored, and discarded things, materials, elements and entities that I encounter in

⁵²⁹ Whilst knowing my Pākehā understanding of Te Ao Māori is limited and partial and comes with white bias.

⁵³⁰ Playful propositions for *more-than-human audiencing* that emerge through this inquiry have not yet been accounted for yet lingering in performance proliferations. Works that orientate towards more-than/human audiencing include – *sex/es on site* (v2), June 2019, *Offline Onsite Hookups* (v1) February 2019; *Offline Onsite Hookups* (v2) July 2019; *Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance*, August 2019; *Sex on Site with Air and Light*, January 2020; and *i'll grow back*, December 2020. In a turn away from human concerns, through *sex/es on site* (v1) in June 2018 (see Chapter 3), I quietly went about my performance business, not positioning myself for human viewing, not actively hiding from it, but with viewing in mind.

marginal urban places. Rituals of *Queer Clean(s)ing* have invoked the affective and bodily powers of engaging the 'dirty', theorising a choreographic melding of queerness, transness and the everyday actions of cleaning and clearing. I have examined how *Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance* trans-formed cleaning and clearing through the felt technologies of performance into a queer*trans ritual of care and protection. I reimagined disgust through this Choreoqueering practice, calling in the ethico-political potentials of care-full-ness for protecting queerness and transness as sacred, sovereign and alive that passes between human and more-than/human things and bodies. *Queer Clean(s)ing* operates as an somatic invocation and blessing (future-oriented) of the perverse and disgusting, extending acceptance and love to queer and trans communities. I softly sink-in to listen *with* the more-than/human community in all its flourishing.

Queer Napping, and *Queer Clean(s)ing*, both turn their back on the neoliberal underpinnings of white dance, where bodies are seen as disciplining, production machines (resisting the idea that dance is tied to the kinetic).⁵³¹ The collective nap practice of *Bttm Methodology* offers a social spacetime of 'productive nothingness', a dreamy space for *doing fuck-all*. We might celebrate this queer experiment in failing capitalism's pressures by napping more often! Discovering in the process the empowerment in taking a deliberate pause in activity to slooow down and ressst our queer and trans bodies together. My analysis of this perverse technique possibilises *rest as restorative*, foregrounding the potential for queer*trans well-being in *Queer Napping* as a social somatic practice. This view of napping sheds new light on the passivity and sub-mission of *Bttm//Bottom* as a queering of Somatics. In *Queer Napping Workshops* and *queer walk-naps* we noticed the queer spatio-temporalities that emerged in the participatory performance practice, utilising napping as a tool for imagining and dreaming other, better worlds. *Queer Napping* builds qualities of queer and trans acceptance and unconditional love for speculative queer performance futures.

Researching places of performance in the *queer walk-naps* series, including their Māori and Pākehā names and pre-colonial and settler histories, has had a strong impact on my practice. I am redirecting my practice to centre the redress of settler-colonisation, hoping that in a small way my approaches to acknowledging land and my positioning and privilege as a Pākehā practitioner-researcher might spark further settler awareness. Maramataka held me to account and shed a different light on my Pākehā queer*trans reading of felt queer time in *Queer Napping*. Engaging Maramataka, the Māori environmental calendar, has sparked an interest to further explore the relationship between Māori time, Indigenous knowledge systems, and queer time as materialist terrains. There is also an opening here to connect with the 'crip time'⁵³² of disability culture arts (the idea to explore crip time emerged in

⁵³¹ Resting and napping (and cleaning) are seldom considered part of a performance's ontological constitution.

⁵³² Koppers, Petra. "Crip Time," *Tikkun* 29, no. 4 (November 1, 2014): 29–30, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08879982-2810062>

collaboration with Lusi Faiva but was not taken up then). A future inquiry might explore how these three systems of time stand alongside each other (Māori time, queer time and crip time)?

We have seen how *queer*trans rituals of care and protection* have set in motion a political imaginary for the emergence of more-than/human kinships, and an engagement with accountable place relations as 'Pākehā response-ability' (including an exploration into land acknowledgement practices). I continue with these explorations in Chapter 5. The project I discuss, *Songs with Birds*, investigates inter-species communing and delves deeper into slash of Māori/Pākehā relationality in collaboration with artist Forest V Kapo. Together we ask: How do we act/care response-ably for our more-than/human kin?



Figure 50: val smith, *queer walk-naps* (noon iteration), 2020. Image: Christina Houghton



Figure 51: val smith, *queer walk-naps* (dusk iteration), 2020. Image: Christina Houghton

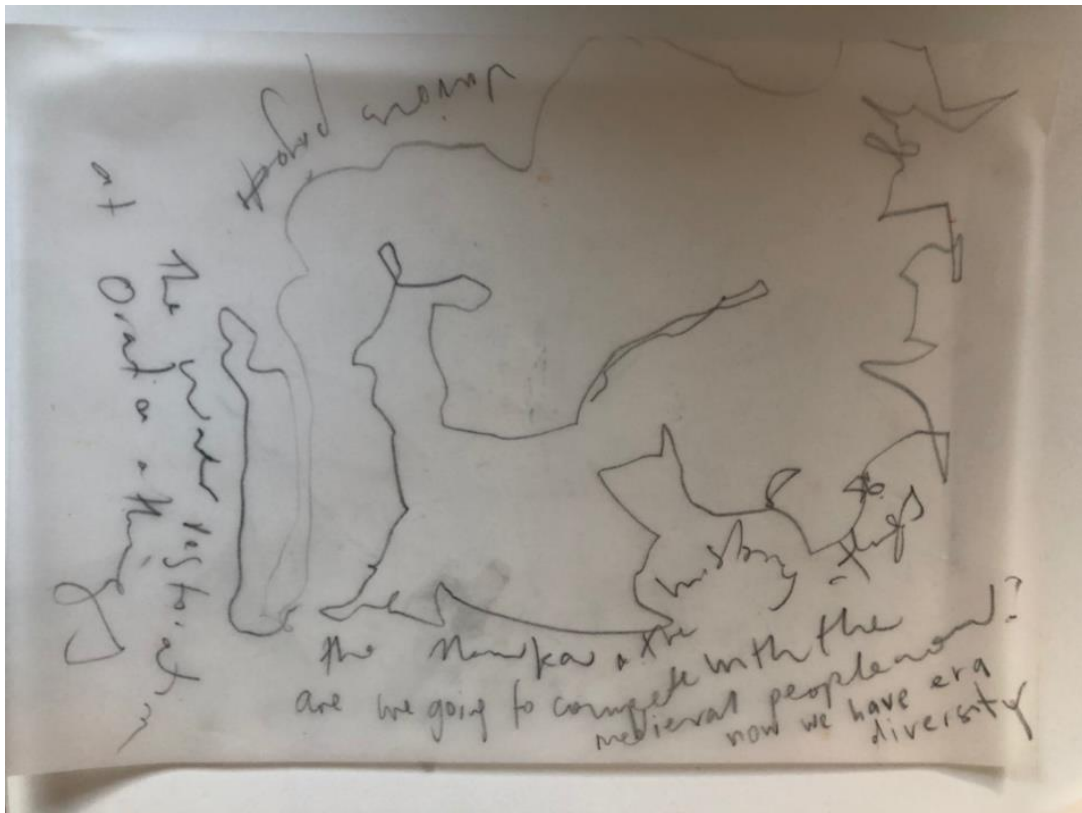


Figure 52: Alys Longley, flotsy response, *queer walk-naps* (noon iteration), 2020.

5. Songs with Birds: slash/ing back, to lean forward



Figure 53: Forest V Kapo & val smith, *Songs with Birds*, 2022. Image: val smith

This fifth chapter examines more-than/human communing through two performance works. The first work is *ill grow back* (Dec 2020), an in-person and live-streamed performance, framing a collaborative conversation about gender with house plants, presented for EDWA (Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa). The second work is *Songs with Birds* (July 2022), a Zoom happening about *transit*ioning*, place, and migration, intended as the concluding performance of this inquiry. Both works are developed and enacted through collaborative practice with friend and artist Forest V Kapo (Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Raukawa).

In my discussion of *ill grow back*, I explain how Forest and I developed approaches for human*plant communing and more-than/human performance. We experiment with divination and improvisational processes to open space for receiving and sending information and messages with the more-than/human. *ill grow back* responds and adapts to Covid-19 pandemic life and lockdowns, and the practicalities and possibilities of collaborating from a distance, across oceans. As such, Zoom and digital devices, as well as tarot cards, dance techniques, writing and drawing are utilised.

In this writing, I consider the sites of co-research, our trans non-binary viewpoints on the more-than/human relationality of *ill grow back*, and how our collaborative thinking-moving entangles with place. Through Choreoqueering practices, we address Forest's position as tangata whenua, residing in Bendigo (wider Naam/Melbourne), and myself, a Pākehā in Tāmaki Makaurau. The slash of Māori/Pākehā, Aotearoa/Australia, and they/them inform our explorations and relationality, underpinned by engagement with the Indigenous lands where we are residing and working.

Following, I sketch the work-in-development *Songs with Birds*. I describe the places Forest and I engage in practice, and our methods of communing with native and 'introduced' birds and trees (and other species near to where we live).⁵³³ Our practice refines situated and embodied means for relating with the more-than/human (building on *ill grow back*). This work continues to explore the potentiality of a queer*trans form of divination, through online platforms and other digital means of connecting and coming together in states of awareness and conversation with the more-than/human, with attention to interspecies migrations. These processes will form the basis of the Zoom performance-happening in mid-July 2022, for examination, a braiding of trans stories and bodily experiences.

Firstly, I outline our deepening into the relationality of the slash to reflect on our approach to friendship-based collaboration (bttm//bottom). Forest and I address the relationality of coming together as Māori/Pākehā through creative practice, challenging the slash as a cultural and species divide. We consider how our approach to more-than/human performance might circulate the generative forces and futurisms of the slash. I reference slashing in discussions of *ill grow back* and *Songs with Birds*. This reflection on the slash involves another return, back to the asterisk *. In doing so, I gather this inquiry's meanings and matters of queer*trans importance. This cyclical return to the * and / symbols, critically and creatively situates the live works, and opens discussion onto emergent research techniques such as *Transit*ioning*, *Welcomes and Blessings*, and *Rolling Land Acknowledgements*.

A contextual note before I begin: I hope to evoke the conversational manner of collaborative practice unique to Forest and I (ongoing I refer to our collaborative voice/s and effort/s as 'we' and 'our').⁵³⁴ Despite attempts to conjure the ideas, tone, wordings, and flavours that

⁵³³ The quotes around 'introduced', seeks to provoke the term. I suggest these species might more accurately be called colonial imports.

⁵³⁴ I use 'we' and 'our' throughout this chapter tentatively, but with permission, to evoke the entanglement and plurality of our research. I am aware that 'we' can infer a *mutuality* of views, practices, and understandings of the research we are together engaging. I do not intend this inference. I recognise that my use of 'we' might have the effect of reducing and simplifying the multiplicities inherent to our two voices. For me, 'we' implies co-research. It speaks to the complexities of working alongside each other, producing work together, and engaged in our independent research outside of this project. 'We' intends to celebrate the multi-faceted perspectives and stories that we bring to this research-creation.

Forest brings to our shared practice, I recognise that this writing will echo my own voice, perspective, languaging, and understanding of the live works.⁵³⁵

Delving deeper into the slash of cultural & species divides

/

Let's lean and tip forward into this unknowing with the slash
to c/leanse and tip/ple, to multiply, to slip and sip

///

practice notes 67: 2021

To lean toward and into the closing event of this inquiry, I trace back to the typographical symbols of this PhD journey – the slash and asterisk (and the hyphen by extension).⁵³⁶ In my development of queer*trans/materiality in the first phases of my research (Chapter 1, in two parts), I posited the slash as a semi-permeable membrane with the capacity for allowing and protecting the passage of matters and meanings, drawing on the somatic modality of Cellular Breathing (Bainbridge Cohen 2008).

I have reviewed my Pākehā position, to 'Be Tau', at peace, with who I am (Ngata 2020).⁵³⁷ The groundedness of the slash, a marker of Te Tiriti o Waitangi relationality, reminds me of this quality outlined by Ngata as required of Tangata Tiriti. In my Pākehā view of the slash, I reimagine place relations through applying the notion 'Pākehā response-ability' (Bell 2004, Ream 2020, Bell and Ream 2021) in performance. I lean towards a response-able stance as Tangata Tiriti, treaty partner, in my ongoing work of engagements with place through somatics and performance in the context of Aotearoa (recent work by Karen Barbour 2019 is also working in this scholarly terrain).⁵³⁸

The slash, in this chapter's re-turn, continues to celebrate the potent but necessary tension of difference with regards to the Indigene/settler-coloniser relationship (Jones 2020). It is an indicator of an inherent multiplicity/plurality that holds the dominant voice to account, and serves as a reminder of the need for care-full, reciprocal collaboration in Māori/Pākehā

⁵³⁵ My experiences and stories predominate in the telling of our collective research processes, and the co-produced live works, as the writer of this research. I am aware of my lens and biased perception of emergent methodologies. In future research, I would look to co-write with Forest (and other collaborators) to align and uplift both voices and stories (Forest's and val's unique and differing perspectives on what happened). These are the research stories, yet untold, but still present and dwell in the space between words, in the spirit of the performances, in the margins of the page. I do not intend to speak for another, nor write over or erase the Indigenous voice here, but am aware that this may very well be what I am doing.

⁵³⁶ In developing queer*trans/materiality, I paid attention to the connection that the hyphen has with the asterisk. I am open to what the hyphen has to offer, as such the - may also turn up to play.

⁵³⁷ Ngata, "What's Required From Tangata Tiriti."

⁵³⁸ Barbour, Karen, 'Dancing in Foreign Places: Practices of Place and Tropophilia', in *(Re)Positioning Site Dance: Local Acts, Global Perspectives*, ed. Karen Barbour, Victoria Hunter, and Melanie Kloetzel (Intellect Books, 2019), 248–70.

relationships. I now invite this symbol of / as a multi-faceted space of communing and negotiation. The slash slips through the cracks and around the edges of an exclusionary either/or stance, refusing a dualistic conversation of human/nonhuman or self/other. This carries the potential for a richer relationality in collaboration, one that includes self-care (as well as collective care), compassionate love and acceptance, activated responses to judgement and schisms of self/other, right/wrong, good/bad.

Assembling slash and asterisk (&&& - ...),
 we explore and meditate on constellations, like /*-*\
 a smiling friendship, as across, through, of, with composition
 radiating beyond the relation forms that they insist on, or that we know⁵³⁹
 we simply en-joy amongst the multisensorial cacophony of bird ballads (bards) and
 tree letters
 practice notes 68: 2022

\. -
 /. - *
 -/_ . —
 i see facial expressions (anthropomorphic symbolism),
 then, ancient markings on the sacred rocks and places of Ireland (Ogham?)⁵⁴⁰
 typographical performances shift and morph meanings and matter, contingent on
 emplacement and choreographic combinations.
 practice notes 69: 2021

The asterisk * was also posited in Chapter 1 (part I) as looping, blurring, rippling and radiant, a seeing-feeling research technology that promoted a warm and regenerative relationality. I emphasised the tentacular and promiscuous feltness of asterisking in performance, sensing how non-cis genders and queer sexualities were circulating, informing experiments into more-than/human relationality. The capacities of the slash and asterisk are activated again in this final chapter; they flow with increasing intensity and vigour, tracing and chasing the ethico-politics of this research.

I have been unsettled and shaken up through the duration of this project, by the violence of racism and white supremacy that arose in the Black Lives Matters era and in the Covid-19

⁵³⁹ Intimacy and kinship beyond heteronormative (and anthropocentric) norms.

⁵⁴⁰ In a trip to Ireland in 2019, I visited several sacred sites, places of ancestral, spiritual, cultural and ceremonial significance. This trip had a big impact on me, sparking conflictual feelings regarding belonging, homelands and ancestral knowledge that continued to inform this inquiry into its later stages.

pandemic where marginalisation and privilege had been notably intensified and highlighted.⁵⁴¹ Indigenous-led movements and uprisings against this violence globally, have informed the practices of Moana artists locally.⁵⁴² I have also paid attention to the immediate and ongoing shattering impacts of Covid lockdowns and the pandemic on Māori artists and grassroots Pasifika arts organisations.⁵⁴³ It is well documented that the Covid-19 strategy here in Aotearoa has failed Māori (Megget, 2022).⁵⁴⁴ Therefore, it feels important and timely to dig deeper into the cultural assumptions and biases of my Pākehā positioning and choreographic research approaches of engaging place and more-than/human relations. It is important to me that I do this with sensitivity, care, compassion, and gentleness. I refer to *slashing* again in this reconsideration of my research positioning and approach (also discussed in Chapter 1).

Re: Slashing

/

I see an immanent fall/ing into the future
or fail/ing to stand up or be straight.

I feel a lean forward, to fall back on

practice notes 70: 2022

The tracing of queer and transgender theories continues to inform my Pākehā review of the slash in the final stages of this research. The symbol is set in motion, as a challenge to the vertical, upright, and the straight (hetero and cis norms). This activation of slashing recalls the multidirectional and multicentred asterisk to avoid a reading of the slash as a dichotomous directionality – too linear, too ‘black and white’. Unsettling these reductive readings in the semi-permeable possibilities of slashing is set in motion to undermine the power of the hegemonic assumptions of good and bad, moral and immoral. I prefer to remain uncertain, queer, to be with the slash as a way of “sitting in the synapse” (Bainbridge Cohen).⁵⁴⁵ I imagine

⁵⁴¹ I refer to the murder of George Floyd, and the abhorrent awakening of white America at that time, with global movements following suit.

⁵⁴² Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho for example, created a set of digital images on the roots of the raised fist as a symbol of black power and defiance – combining political histories and visual language in a story-telling approach. See Kopeke-Te Aho, Huriana, ‘The Raised Fist’, Facebook, Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho, 17 June 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/hurianakt.a/posts/because-of-the-black-lives-matter-movement-seen-a-lot-of-people-talking-about/756931211746657/>

⁵⁴³ Ema Tavola closed the Vunilagi Vou Ōtāhuhu gallery, retail and consultancy space during the first Covid-19 lockdown in Aotearoa, to then repurpose the garage of her family home. Ahilapalapa Rands and Vaimaili Urale of Moana Fresh also shifted their practice, from pop-up events to trading via e-commerce. See Lopesi, Lana. “Metro — Vunilagi Vou and Moana Fresh on Their Approaches to Showcasing Pacific Art,” Metro Magazine, February 25, 2021, <https://www.metromag.co.nz/arts/vunilagi-vou-and-moana-fresh-on-their-approaches-to-showcasing-pacific-art>

⁵⁴⁴ Megget, Katrina. “How New Zealand’s Covid-19 Strategy Failed Māori People,” *BMJ* 376 (January 25, 2022): o180, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.o180>

⁵⁴⁵ Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen describes “sitting in the synapse” as a place to be within the nervous system, without striving to figure out, or responding in any way, just allowing information to pass through. See Bainbridge Cohen, Bonnie, *The Nervous*

the slash travels towards, away from, up and down. I remain open to unclear directions of the slash in time and space through somatic experimentation, inviting and conjuring poetic positionings, a slash poetics that orients to place and the more-than/human through sensing the quality of yes, no, and more.

The slash, as I discover, also has the capacity to mark temporally situated cultural histories. In this Aotearoa-based inquiry, the slash of Māori/Pākehā invites a spacetime where ancestry meets futurisms in place. The year 2022, is the first time the mātauranga Māori public holiday of Matariki will be officially observed.⁵⁴⁶ I salute all the hard work that has led to this historic moment. Engaging the slash as Pākehā, I celebrate Matariki and remember the timing and duration of my ancestors arriving here (having located my genealogy of Irish and British settler-colonisers migrating to Australia and Aotearoa).⁵⁴⁷ I see slashing to refer to precolonial, decolonial, and ongoing colonisation, as well as Indigenous futurisms of Te Moana Nui a Kiwa/the Pacific (Cole 2020;⁵⁴⁸ Dillon 2012⁵⁴⁹).

Our Māori/Pākehā take on *bttm//bottom*

In Chapter 4, I doubled up the slash in the Choreoqueueing technique of *bttm//bottom*, embracing plurality, co-construction, and a generative view of difference. Collective and values-based approaches emerged through working with and alongside Richard Orjis, with an awareness of the intersections of privilege and marginalisation in our queer Pākehā/Pākehā relationality. The double slash of *bttm//bottom* added an emphasis on the care, reflection and affection involved in friendship-based collaboration, qualities essential to joy, health and mutual support (things that people need). Working with Richard has paved the way for present and future queer*trans collaborations that invite plurality as a blossoming in practice.

bttm//bottom also frames and supports how Forest and I work alongside each other, feeding into our take on Māori/Pākehā collaborative practice. We make space and time for sharing the en-joy-ments, fears, insights, tensions, troubles, and the contradictions of life (also seen

System and Processing Information with Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, YouTube, n.d., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrFZNrY45ek&ab_channel=BonnieBainbridgeCohen

⁵⁴⁶ Dr Rangi Matamua is Professor Mātauranga Māori, Te Pūtahi-a-Toi, at Massey University, and leading expert on Matariki, who points out this will be the “first purely Māori holiday that predates the arrival of Captain Cook”. Matamua, Rangi. “How Matariki Will Connect Us All,” *E-Tangata*, April 17, 2022, <https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/how-matariki-will-connect-us-all/>

⁵⁴⁷ I see the arrival of tauīwi/non-Māori folks to Aotearoa to be situated by the relationality of the slash (grounded in the partnership set out by Te Tiriti o Waitangi).

⁵⁴⁸ Cole, Gina. “Wayfinding Pasifikafuturism : An Indigenous Science Fiction Vision of the Ocean in Space,” (Thesis, Massey University, 2020), <https://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/16334>

⁵⁴⁹ Dillon, Grace L. ed., *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*, First edition (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012).

as generative and inevitable affective experiences of collaboration). The qualities of reciprocity, care, warmth, respect, and trust-building of the slash are foregrounded in our practice. We embrace the ebbs, flows, stutters, and timings of how we make work, and how we do *bttm/bottom*. *bttm//bottom* is extended through our experiments into more-than/human performance.

The slash of Māori/Pākehā provides a relational grounding in the context of Aotearoa for our practice. The symbol prompts me to not only take response-ability for my Pākehā positioning, but to be accountable for my own well-being and healing. As Pākehā, queer and trans non-binary, I take the slash as a friendly reminder to activate unconditional acceptance through the cellular breathability of fluids and membranes alive inside me. I hold compassion for any hard divide that might arise in myself, between Forest and I, or with any other human parties, in my perception or experience. The slash is activated a social space to return to, to meet, to share, to negotiate.

We listen to the membranes/thresholds/contexts that hold cultural relations, and the different places we engage, connected by oceans. The slash enables/allows us to embrace our adaptive perspectives and voices, as tangata whenua, migrant, settler-coloniser, Pākehā-Celtic; the generative tension of difference (Jones 2020). The asterisk also informs our collaborative practice, which comes into play through our trans non-binary experiences of place and bodies meeting.

Trans*itioning

As trans non-binary practitioner-researchers working alongside each other, Forest and I are uniquely and together pursuing and creating transgender surviving and thriving. We explore imagined and ‘real’, virtual and ‘in-person’ processes of ‘transit*ioning’ in performance, as will be revealed. I posit the term *transit*ioning*, with the asterisk between transit and ion/ing, to open questions of what it means to be transgender and migrating between lands, places, and across cultural spacetimes – of what it is to be trans.⁵⁵⁰ The asterisk symbol * is re-engaged in this work. The * provides a critical-creative space of open-endedness and support through tentacular strength, an ability to connect and relate haptically with sensitivity and care, and to move with fluid adaptability to someplace else.⁵⁵¹

In proposing this concept *transit*ioning*, I am also signalling the sensuous, sometimes erotic, exchange of transgender bodies and environments in the choreographic practice Forest and I

⁵⁵⁰ Transitioning is typically thought a sexual transition from M to F, or from F to M. Painted as a pre-determined direct route from point A to B, understood through bodily alteration – surgeries and hormones – as necessary to achieve transition.

⁵⁵¹ My use of the asterisk here is a nod to the hyphen of Stryker, Currah & Moore (2008), who depict the hyphen as marking an explicit relationality, as trans- remains open-ended and resisting “premature foreclosure by attachment to any single suffix”. Stryker, Susan, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore, “Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3/4 (2008): 11, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27649781>

share. We draw on the scholarship of Eva Hayward (2010), who asks how place might come to matter in the changing of one's sex.⁵⁵² Of significance to our approach is in how Hayward works to de-ontologise absolutism in the experience of transitioning. Building on Hayward, I see *trans*itioning* alive in the inter-species interactions of humans and plants (as *human*plant*) in *ill grow back*, and the bodily encounters of humans and places, birds and trees &&& in *Songs with Birds* (human*bird*tree*place*and...).

There is typically an emphasis on seamless and fluid transitions in contemporary dance practices, and in the field of Somatics, infecting and informing our bodily approaches to performance. *Trans*itioning* in the context of this choreographic research, challenges this hegemonic preference for smooth and efficient dancing. It suggests instead, an expanded experience of shifting between states and genders in stutters and starts, to transition without attachment to a smooth, predetermined direct route from A to B. I invite the radiant, promiscuous, and seeing-feeling capacities of the asterisk in this regard, embracing multi-directional genders and multi-centred sensuous trans movements and encounters with the more-than/human. *Trans*itioning*, as integral to Choreoqueering, moves as a shifty and sometimes uncertain embodiment of gender*place (reaffirming the notion that body is not gender, nor complete or whole).

As we work at reciprocal and malleable (fluid) processes for moving across and between genders, cultures, lands, and places, we hold a respect for different perspectives and ways of doing dance and performance across oceans (connecting Australia and Aotearoa). I see our Māori/Pākehā collaboration attuning with the qualities and capacities of Te Moana Nui a Kiwa/the Pacific Ocean as the boundary-less fluid 'space-body' that connects us (lifegiving, sustaining, nurturing).⁵⁵³ Te Rangi Hiroa/Sir Peter Henry Buck (1964) sketched the octopus God, Te Wheke, with tentacles reaching out to islands of Polynesia, indicating the course of migration, with Hawaiki in the centre as the head of Te Wheke.⁵⁵⁴ My perception of the collaborative practice of Forest and I is one of engaging these tentacles (seen as the limbs of the *) to reach across and traverse Māori and Pākehā-Celtic, Aotearoa and 'Australia', man and woman. In this exchange of trans-gender, trans-cultural and trans-disciplinary practice, we pay attention to the movements, flows, currents, tides, and drifts of our non-binary and fluid performance techniques and friendship-based collaborative relationship. Receptive and

⁵⁵² Hayward, Eva. "Spider City Sex," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 20, no. 3 (November 1, 2010): 226, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0740770X.2010.529244>

⁵⁵³ Rameka Scott, Sarah Aroha, "Te-Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa, Māori in Te Ao Moemoea," *Runway Journal* (blog), August 25, 2019, <http://runway.org.au/te-moana-nui-a-kiwa-maori-in-te-ao-moemoea/>

⁵⁵⁴ The story of how Kupe (the great Māori navigator) came to Aotearoa from Hawaiki, by chasing and battling Te Wheke-o-Muturangi features in the oral traditions of many iwi. See Hiroa, Te Rangi (Sir Peter Buck). *Vikings of the Sunrise*, New Zealand Edition (USA: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1964), <https://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-BucViki.html> Also see the discussion of artists' contributions to the exhibition Te Wheke: Pathways Across Oceania in article *The Seas are Rising, So Are We* by Janine Randerson (2020), <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/bulletin/200/the-seas-are-rising-so-are-we>

listening to one another with tentacular openness; responding with sensitivity and unconditional acceptance.

Soft/ening the transition to another state; slow/ening into our state of transit*ion.
practice notes 71: 2022

Through our inquiry, rich and sometimes disorienting processes of trans-becoming emerge, firing plural-neural pathways for gender-emergence. This sensuous exchange at the meeting place of surface, thing, body, place inform an interior experience of 'self' that is always iteratively reconfiguring. Gender is felt as a * tentacular practice (radiating and integrating plurality).

Welcomes and blessings, rituals and spells

Entanglements of the more-than/human, the slash, asterisk, and choreographic experimentation lead to the development of welcomes and blessings; rituals and spells in *ill grow back* and *Songs with Birds*. These add to the accumulation of *queer*trans rituals of care and protection* in this inquiry, including the *Queer Clean(s)ing* and protection spells outlined in Chapter 4. Forest and I explore:

Incantations to welcome place - raising energies

Songs - setting intentions, blessing the space

Bodily approaches to land acknowledgement

Spells for grounding, letting go, and closing

Enchantments for love and interconnectivity

practice notes 72: 2022

These experiments enable the embodiment and expression of a queer*trans care ethics in em-placed choreographic practice. Welcomes and blessings become integral to how we open and close the liminal spacetime of performance, to response-ably contain and protect participants and witnesses, and set intentions. It is important to us in these processes to uphold and respond to mātauranga Māori, and to the mana of maunga, awa, moana, ngāhere, whenua, koiora.⁵⁵⁵

Through this exploration of welcomes and blessings, rituals and spells, Forest plays with Te Reo and I reach to the language of my Celtic ancestors, Irish Gaelic. In our own ways, we are inviting and asking for the guidance of our atua, gods, tūpuna, queer and trans ancestors, and older ancestral spiritualities. This is sensitive and personal terrain. I think it is ok to say we are both negotiating feelings of inadequacy when it comes to taking up ancestral languages and exploring cultural knowledge terrains. This speaks to the prickly nature of the slash, and our own experiences of migration, belonging and dislocation. In this way I see the slash to have

⁵⁵⁵ Mountains, rivers, oceans, forests, lands, and koiora refers to all living communities – plant, human, animal.

the capacity to enact a splitting and separation within ourselves if we allow its typical material function as a divider and separator.

Speaking for myself, my intention is to summon ‘my’ Pākehā-Celtic ways of thinking, feeling, and moving (specifically Irish and English), and bring this cultural knowledge to the slable of Māori/Pākehā. I see this to be a slow and ongoing reacculturation and socialisation, within in the context of Aotearoa. Engaging with Irish Gaelic, I remember to move at the ‘pace of trust’ (brown 2019) to counter feelings of inadequacy, encountering one word, concept, or small meaning at a time:

Céad mile fáilte⁵⁵⁶

Cáithnín⁵⁵⁷

Am gaeth i m-muir, Am tond trethan, Am fuaim mara⁵⁵⁸
practice notes 73: 2022

Forest and I send wispy and willowy ideas to each other as welcomes and blessings. Tendrils of an older spiritual practice, we weave the otherworldly and earthly elements of cultural knowledge into our performance works. What if we drew on Ogham, the Celtic Tree Alphabet, calling the voices, language, and marks of my ancestral trees and plants? What if we engaged birds and plants of Aotearoa and so-called Australia through manaakitanga⁵⁵⁹ and Mauri Ora?⁵⁶⁰ What if we called in our ancestors and the older ceremonies into the creative spacetime of *Songs with Birds*?

⁵⁵⁶ Céad mile fáilte, meaning a hundred thousand welcomes.

⁵⁵⁷ One unpacking of this concept describes Cáithnín as “a single word that brings you right around the universe from the infinitesimal to the infinite”, which reminds me of the choreographic scale of Pinky, an encounter with a single pink sequin discussed in Chapter 1. See Magan, Manchán. “A Magical Vision Is Hidden in the Irish Language – We Need to Rediscover It,” The Irish Times, accessed September 5, 2021, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/a-magical-vision-is-hidden-in-the-irish-language-we-need-to-rediscover-it-1.3558112>

⁵⁵⁸ A declaration of the unity of all things – physical and spiritual – from *The Incantation of Amaigen*. Retrieved from Burch, Michael R., ‘The Song of Amergin: Modern English Translations’, The Hypertexts, accessed 1 June 2022, <http://www.thehypertexts.com/Song%20of%20Amergin%20Modern%20English%20Translation.htm>

⁵⁵⁹ Manaakitanga is the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others. See Te Aka Māori Dictionary, ‘Manaakitanga’, Te Aka Māori Dictionary, n.d., <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?keywords=manaakitanga>

⁵⁶⁰ Mauri ora roughly translated can mean the alert life force that upholds creation. Marsden (2003) describes mauri as the “force that interpenetrates all things to bind and knit them together and as the various elements diversify, mauri acts as the bonding element creating unity and diversity.” Marsden, Māori, *The Woven Universe : Selected Writings of Rev. Māori Marsden* (Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden, 2003), 60.

Place as a vital body of Indigenous knowledge

oceans and airs connect Naam, Tāmaki Makaurau

— * —

reminding us of our fluid connectivity and the immediacy of stars, air and breath.

Te Moana Nui te Kiwa and the winds and skies that also flow between us carry the atmospheric voices of migrating seeds, plants, birds.

practice notes 74: 2020

Place is felt and present, active and engaged in the live work *ill grow back*. We acknowledge, offer respects, and respond to the whenua/lands, winds, skies, and awa/waterways under the Herald Theatre in Aotea Square, Tāmaki Makaurau,⁵⁶¹ and the reserve and bushlands connected to Forest’s backyard in Bendigo.⁵⁶² We investigated and responded to pre-colonial stories and colonial histories of the whenua/country/land that we were living and working on (following on from processes initiated in *Queer Failure Walk* (2017) and developed in *queer walk-naps* (2020)).



Figure 54: Forest V Kapo & val smith, *ill grow back* (screenshot), 2020

⁵⁶¹ Lands of Ngāti Whātua and other iwi and hapū affiliated to this place.

⁵⁶² Lands of Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples of the Kulin Nation.

We explored a land acknowledgement in written word (Figure 47), wanting to remember atrocities without telling the stories (not mine to tell), and to offer respect to Indigenous Māori and First Nations Australia peoples, elders, plants, lands.⁵⁶³ Engaging with the possibilities of a land acknowledgement through non-verbal means provided a sense of calming and connecting to place in the opening of the performance, reverberating Tina Ngata's principle to 'Be Tau' (2020). Delving into land acknowledgement and Indigenous language also brought to the surface complex feelings for us both, a generative tension that we each faced for different reasons. Whilst providing a way to value Indigenous knowledge systems as sovereign, this exploration revealed the complex intersections of cultural belonging, transgender embodiment, and conceptions of more-than/human kinship and communing (different for Forest as Māori and me as Pākehā).

Land acknowledgement provided a grounding for then calling in the complexities of material-discursive elements, stories, and to honour the psychic realms of the more-than/human in the performance. *ill grow back* became a threading and braiding of connections, rituals, songs, stories and relations that extend beyond the cultural realms of just Forest and I, to include intertwined kinship networks, circles and sub-cultural communing (implying the multi-faceted dynamics of the slash).

⁵⁶³ We each hand write 'land acknowledgements' on surfaces that we have lying around, with pen on paper, with chalk on blackboard, which are positioned for readability in the live event. Our intention is to invoke the power and energies of the Indigenous language of people and place, recognising whenua/country/land as sovereign and unceded, and inviting the interconnected relations with the more-than/human. This 'low tech' method for recognising Indigenous presence in place provides an immediacy and material grounding to our communing with plants, which is then layered with the delays, spasms and astral glitches of digital and online means of communing through 'high tech' modalities. The digital projection and scale of our words and writing played a role in understanding this approach to land acknowledgement process as a system for valuing and responding to Indigenous knowledge systems as sovereign.

ill grow back: crafting space, time and energies in more-than/human realms



Figure 55: Forest V Kapo & val smith, *ill grow back*, 2020. Image: val smith

The live work *ill grow back* was framed as a conversation about gender and bodies between Forest, me, and some house plants involving dance, sound art and tarot.⁵⁶⁴ The performance was presented on 3rd December 2020, in the Herald Theatre for the live festival Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa (EDWA), in Tāmaki Makaurau. *ill grow back* was one half of a double-bill event alongside the video work by Naam/Melbourne-based artist Rebecca Jenson.

Forest and I set up a situated assemblage of plant, land, body, screen, acknowledging Indigenous peoples and places present and 'absent'. We moved the plants from here to there. We amplified the audio work, live and pre-recorded. We touched and redirected mirrors and devices to optimise interconnectivity and seeing-feeling. We turned on and rotated lights, drawing attention this way and that. Then we paused and settled, sinking into

⁵⁶⁴ The title, *ill grow back*, comes from a lyric of *Cripple and the Starfish*, by Anohni (then Antony & The Johnsons), a song discussed by scholar Eva Hayward in her 2008 critical enmeshment *More Lessons from a Starfish: Prefixial Flesh and Transspeciated Selves*. This is significant because of how Hayward imbues the mundane and the sublime into *trans-species becoming*, a key conceptual provocation in the discussions around gender and being trans non-binary in this performance work. I imagine cutting off body parts for example, and then growing them back, like a starfish does its tentacles. Hayward, 'More Lessons from a Starfish'.

the multi-dimensional attunement required of human*plant relations and tarot readings. We glitched, disconnected, doubled, and delayed as noted in another's analysis,⁵⁶⁵ then we collated our own conglomerate review.⁵⁶⁶

A haptic networking of leaves, stems, hands, roots, air flows,
as linked nervous system/s
a mystical scene – we take our time, we take our place in the work
speak out loud the more-than/human in-sights that waft through the room (some
voiceless)
then, curling smoke, fanning flames,
we enact a long-view co-healing
practice notes 75: 2020

Research into place, and reflecting on our positioning and cultural heritage, was integral to how Forest and I set up the work *ill grow back*. We considered who we are and where we were located. Forest, tangata whenua, residing in Bendigo, Australia,⁵⁶⁷ the lands of Dja Dja Wurrung; val, living at this time in Kirikiriroa (Waikato-Tainui land) and working in central Tāmaki Makaurau (Ngāti Whātua whenua). Terminologies and language was (and still is) significant to Forest and I.⁵⁶⁸ Also important to these culturally located conversations, was our experiences living as trans non-binary, and they/them signifiers of gender that we each use.

Forest and I invited our houseplants into *ill grow back* as performers, friends and collaborators. Forest called upon plants that were gifted and found – peace lily, fern, and passionfruit. I asked five seedling oak trees, grown from acorns in buckets, to join us for the performance event (and some potted herbs and succulents into rehearsal sessions).⁵⁶⁹ We are aware that plants are not neutral; they carry stories of Indigeneity and colonisation, of

⁵⁶⁵ I am referencing Amit Noy's analysis on *ill grow back* in Pantograph Punch, see Noy, Amit, 'Glitches & Sweat: A Response to Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa; An Overture of Bodies, Movement and Feels, Amit Noy Reviews Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa.', Pantograph Punch, 16 December 2020, <https://pantograph-punch.com/posts/glitches-sweat>

⁵⁶⁶ I collated a 'review' for Theatreview, asking audience members (via a FaceBook update) to contribute one sentence reflections. This plural reviewing, as a method of writing about performance (after the fact), invites and values multiple perspectives and interpretations (celebrating incongruity, gathered different views, and the alonsideness of many voices resonating the generative difference of *btm//bottom* and *flotsy*). See {Citation}

⁵⁶⁷ Wider Naam/Melbourne.

⁵⁶⁸ Forest notices how 'country' enlivens place when spoken by Aboriginal peoples, experiencing the land as a living entity through Indigenous activation. Digging into meanings of the places now known as Herald Theatre and Aotea Square, my research felt into the vibrant energies of Wai o Horotiu, a waterway that now runs underneath these places due to colonial destruction and desecration of the stream and associated traditional tuna grounds. For me as Pākehā, the use of culturally specific and situated terminologies seeks to recognise and uplift the sovereign voice of Indigenous peoples, and the power and vitality of Indigenous materialities. For Forest, as Tangata Whenua reclaiming Te Reo and a migrant to the lands of Aboriginal clans referred to as Australia, this task brings additional complexities and layers of ethico-politics.

⁵⁶⁹ These tiny oak trees were grown from acorns and tended since this PhD's beginning. Tendrils pushed through the realms of unknowing to reach and connect across five years of practice. The acorns were collected on early research walks through Te Wai Ōrea Western Springs Lake Park. Later, the seedlings shrivelled and died in the dry summer of 2020-2021, when I moved from Kirikiriroa to Tāmaki Makaurau overnight to urgently tend my failing father.

“power, identity, change, economics, movement, exploitation, and care.”⁵⁷⁰ The work acknowledges and welcomes *all of who we are* as diverse species, as Māori and Pākehā-Celtic, as queer, trans non-binary, takatāpui (and/or otherwise).⁵⁷¹ Welcomed and blessed (in performance rituals without words), we moved through processes of arriving, at-tuning, and sinking in to perform together as the multispecies assemblage of *ill grow back* (see the three *scat-tending* phases, Chapter 3).

The compositional approaches of *ill grow back* respond primarily through *human*plant communing*, shifting with the assemblage at large. This iteration of Choreoqueering moves with felt timings, energetics, and spatial qualities (the affective nuance of pace, rhythm, flow, proximity, directions, focus).

Encounters and choreographics
flicker and emerge
in the thickening mist of listening to plant-voice,
feeling with the spatial awareness of
plant*human relations.
practice notes 76: 2020

We were crafting performance space, time and energies in response to the more-than/human realms sparked alive by the interconnected contexts of the Herald Theatre and Forest’s living room. We utilised the haptic and bodily means we have available to us as dancers and performers, sensing the call of plants. Choices were made improvisationally, a wandering/wondering thinking-moving and seeing-feeling in the moment.

In a recent special issue of *Performance Philosophy* regarding ‘Plant Performance’ (2021), Prudence Gibson and Catriona Sandilands note how plants perform “on their own terms”, “tuned into the multispecies relationships in which they participate.”⁵⁷² Thinking about plants as performing in some of the same ways that humans do (and for similar reasons), “emphasises their agency and responsiveness.”⁵⁷³ From a different field of thought, scientists have found plants to ‘communicate’ with a kind of nervous system, not with nerves as such, but they sense, signal, transmit and respond to information through electro-chemical

⁵⁷⁰ Gibson, Prudence, and Catriona Sandilands, “Introduction: Plant Performance,” *Performance Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (November 1, 2021): 4, <https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2021.62372>

⁵⁷¹ Tending seedling oaks, contained to buckets, is an ethico-political dilemma that fuels my investigation. I recognise oak’s part in the forces of imperialism and colonialism, sitting in an uncomfortable relationship with my desire to attune with this plant as a way to connect with the ancestral knowledge of my Irish and English peoples. Should the oaks be recycled to mulch native species? I call in the powers of Celtic Paganism to guide me, continuing my conflictual and intimate relationship with oak trees and acorns.

⁵⁷² Gibson and Sandilands, 2021, 2.

⁵⁷³ Gibson and Sandilands, 2.

events/electrical impulses, via specialised cells (Gill 2010;⁵⁷⁴ Karpiński & Szechyńska-Hebna 2010;⁵⁷⁵ Toyota et al. 2018⁵⁷⁶). Assembling choreographic thought in response to both these views, Forest and I work to traverse the language, intelligence and communication difference of human and plant in *ill grow back*. The more-than/human relationality and approach to human*plant communing of this live work was developed through experimenting with at-tuning with plants, a care-full felt mode.⁵⁷⁷ We utilised the tentacular and haptic capacities of asterisking as well as the semi-permeable receptivity of slashing (Chapter 1). I see-feel the glint and glimmer of as-yet-unrecognised more-than/human bodily systems, which I sense moving into and out of sync.

Sometimes we responded to direct requests from the plants (intuitively sensed), or improvised with their planty suggestions of performance qualities, rhythms, or placements (signalled across our inter-species nervous system/s). Other times the performance would move improvisationally like a fluid ensemble. Information passed between species and bodies without effort or strain. This human*plant performance about gender composed and extended ideas through electrical, affective, and bodily signals.

Through the development phases of *ill grow back*, Forest shared their sound compositions via Messenger. Vibing a beat, rhythm and/or melody to speak plant across the more-than/human intellect-realms without words. Forest also told stories. They wove visions of intricate human and plant relationships through poetic assemblage. The bodily language of dance was also integral to the work's development. Forest translated intimate connections between their plants and other migrating humans. Theirs is an art of musicality within and without dance.

Flotsy in this work included poems and scribble note-thought-movements that I to pass to Forest (multi-modal sketchings using paper, ink and pen). I noticed emotions passing tentacularly between us (Forest, me, plants and place), across our material and discursive bodies and nervous systems (affective attunement). Then we think-move with these human*plant affects. Taking photos and screen shots of Zoom calls is a key method of note-taking for me in *ill grow back* (practice notes). This became a way for me to reflect on our fleeting gender*place connections, ways of caring, and the material intermingling that were

⁵⁷⁴ Gill, Victoria. "Plants 'Can Think and Remember,'" *BBC News*, July 14, 2010, sec. Science & Environment, <https://www.bbc.com/news/10598926>

⁵⁷⁵ Karpiński, Stanislaw, and Magdalena Szechyńska-Hebda, "Secret Life of Plants: From Memory to Intelligence," *Plant Signaling & Behavior* 5, no. 11 (November 2010): 1391–94, <https://doi.org/10.4161/psb.5.11.13243>

⁵⁷⁶ Toyota, Masatsugu, et al., "Glutamate Triggers Long-Distance, Calcium-Based Plant Defense Signaling," *Science* 361, no. 6407 (September 14, 2018): 1112–15, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aat7744>

⁵⁷⁷ I am thinking about the care-full practices of disability artists, where processes of 'helping' or 'support' become integral to practice (see the work of Petra Kuppers and Jeremy Wade for example, Chapter 2). How might this care-full at-tuning speak to the interdependence of humans and plants in performance?

underway. Drawing over digital images also emerges as a technique for more-than/human mis-translation. Mark making over photos with iPencil and iPad, images are then layered using photo editing software (we continue to develop and refine these drawing techniques in *Songs with Birds*).⁵⁷⁸

A choreographic communion of human*plant

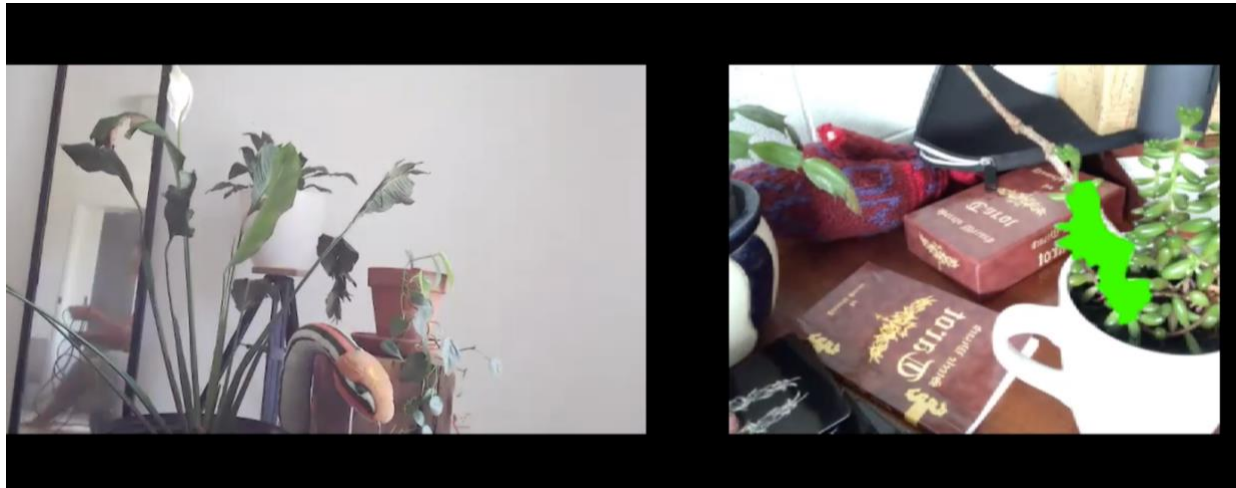


Figure 56: Forest V Kapo & val smith, *ill grow back* (screenshot), 2020

Tarot cards became an important tool for channelling in our more-than/human communing experiments, an occult medium that other arts practitioners are also exploring.⁵⁷⁹ Our tarot ‘readings’ open portals to past-present-future worlds through engaging the iconography, symbology, and colour magick of the cards through dance and ritual. We receive messages from plant realms. Utilising voice, movement, sound, writing, drawing and story we work to translate these messages. We refer to our methods as channelling.⁵⁸⁰ Our experimentation leans into the uncertainty of bodily ‘in-sight’ or ‘inner’ knowing that occurs through

⁵⁷⁸ The transparency tool creates spacetimes that meld and merge different realities, traversing different memories and experiences of places.

⁵⁷⁹ *The Spiral of Fortune (7 of Birds): A laboratory of political witchcraft*, is one example, a workshop co-led by Keith Hennessy and Michael J. Morris (2019), discussed in Chapter 2. Aotearoa based choreographic artist Alexa Wilson also explores this medium in one-to-one and collective contexts, see *SHOW PONY* with Nisha Madhan (2012), and *Rituals of Destruction* (2022). Also see *Pigeon Tarot* by Lonnie Hutchinson (2003), discussed by: Randerson, Janine. “The Seas Are Rising: So Are We,” Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, June 1, 2020, <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/bulletin/200/the-seas-are-rising-so-are-we>.

⁵⁸⁰ By ‘channelling’ I mean, we are activating multidimensional and psychic realms, touching into ‘other’ worlds, spacetimes typically unseen. In my 20 years of engagement in contemporary dance and performance practices, I have witnessed and felt the magick and meta-physical capacities of improvisation-based dancers to perceive, feel, and respond to expansive and nuanced realms of information. In my own experiences as a performer and improviser, I have engaged with material qualities and dynamics of the haptic and physical; emotional and energetic; relational and ethico-political; musical and other texturally indeterminate sensorial scapes. The terrains of dance as channelling are vast.

divination as a speculative method (MacLure 2020).⁵⁸¹ Our approach to tarot readings was supported by the somatic and choreographic practices familiar to *Forest and me*, which emphasises sensing the ‘inner landscape’ of the body (also divination, also speculative). We experience our somatic approach to divination as moving forward and backward in time, holding both past and future human and plant worlds in the present moment.

Our experiments contributed to a deeper understanding of what we term *human*plant communing*, meaning the more-than/human somatic movement practices that allowed information to pass between species.⁵⁸² Our work suggests plants are cognitive and conscious.⁵⁸³ Curious about the plants’ experiences of gender, we asked questions, did tarot readings, and offered translations of ‘answers’ and visions back to our plant-friends. We delighted in insights from the plants that regarded transgender bodies and lives. I experienced these insights as a felt knowing that moves bodies beyond settler-colonial sexes and gender divides, with the capacity to further expand an already radiantly open trans non-binary paradigm/discourse (a Pākehā conception). The asterisk sparked ajar multidimensional portals for promiscuous gendering in this regard.

Covid-19, Zoom and Messenger: the blur, glitch and merge of online technologies



Figure 57: Forest V Kapo & val smith, *ill grow back* (screenshot), 2020.

⁵⁸¹ MacLure, Maggie. “Inquiry as Divination,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 27, no. 5 (June 1, 2021): 502–11, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800420939124>

⁵⁸² We also explored the potential of engaging other forms of channelling and divination as a means of translating information across inter-species consciousness, bodily and language difference, which we delve further into in *Songs with Birds*.

⁵⁸³ A potential site for further collaborative research, we edge towards and engage the controversial terrain of plant consciousness in our performance practice. For discourse regarding plant consciousness, see for example Segundo-Ortin, Miguel, and Paco Calvo, “Consciousness and Cognition in Plants,” *WIREs Cognitive Science* 13, no. 2 (2022): e1578, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.1578>

Responding and adapting to the Covid-19 pandemic, Forest and I worked through necessary shifts, which informed our collaboration into more-than/human performance relations.⁵⁸⁴ Digital spaces, technologies and devices became integral to our rehearsals, design of the performance event, and its dissemination beyond the physical space of the theatre.⁵⁸⁵ *ill grow back* utilised both in-person elements (val on stage with oak trees in buckets), and live streaming of Forest from their living room in Bendigo with various house plants in pots (video projected into the theatre via Zoom and online technologies). Pandemic adaptations are reviewed further in discussing *Songs with Birds*.



Figure 58: Forest V Kapo & val smith, *ill grow back* (screen shot), 2020. Image: val smith

We tested the function of Zoom Backgrounds and Video Filters in this work, to see what they had to offer as performance technologies. Still and moving images of human*plant relations created layers of past and present experiences to feed-forward through Zoom. This approach imagines a future of more-than/human relational forms in performance research. We experimented with a green screen feature on my cell phone. These image-making experiments were popped onto our social media feeds as the *flotsy* of *ill grow back*, inviting

⁵⁸⁴ Forest had planned their travel to Aotearoa so we could rehearse in-person in Tāmaki Makaurau, and both be present in the theatre for the live event. As Naam/Melbourne moved in and out of covid lockdowns, like so many of us in the live event industry, we faced the choice to either cancel the live event or embrace virtual and/or online possibilities.

⁵⁸⁵ Rehearsals work through time difference and work/life schedules, requiring flexibility and adaptability. We find ourselves internet dependent, having to creatively respond to the physical restrictions on our mobility within rehearsal sessions and performance. The work was seen-felt across and beyond the online spaces of Zoom and Facebook, livestreaming between the cultural places of Bendigo, wider Naam and Tāmaki Makaurau's Herald black box theatre on Māori land, now called Aotea Square. The performance was witnessed by the human and more-than/human audience inside/of the Herald Theatre, and simultaneously attended by the many species and things in and around Forest's living room who was (and is still) based in Naam.

unpredictable engagement from virtual audiences (tentacular teasers).⁵⁸⁶ The glitching textures of these image-making tests are integrated into our performing trans bodies and trans-species embodiment processes (see Figure 49).

The feltness of more-than/human dance (in-person) became entangled with the digitality of Zoom and other online technologies, then becoming difficult to differentiate. This smudgy inter-space of the *ill grow back* performance brought Forest and I together-apart in a way that blurred the binarised divides of virtual/real and urban/rural, also making less certain the division of Māori/Pākehā and human/nonhuman.⁵⁸⁷ Centring this digital/in-person blurry enmeshment in the performance, we realised the potent possibilities of collaborative Zoom life as a way to approach *human*plant communing* (extended in *Songs with Birds*).⁵⁸⁸

The live work *ill grow back* works to dissolve any thought-belief in the binary of nature/human, and divisions of queer/nature and trans/nature (binaries that have been troubling and activating my research thus far). In *Songs with Birds*, with the support and intelligence that Forest brings to collaborative practice, we look to integrate trans, nature, and queer, focusing on how we might utilise an embodiment of the slash as a semi-permeable membrane/threshold (across which lifegiving waters and breath can pass) to enact this material and conceptual task.

⁵⁸⁶ *Flotsy* was incorporated into the work's marketing materials, and as activations of Instagram pages and Facebook events in the lead up to the live event.

⁵⁸⁷ Digital devices produced video and audio mappings of our material experiences in place, connecting us to the more-than/human in a way less familiar to us as dancers and performers.

⁵⁸⁸ Zoom was projected on the back wall of the theatre. The side-by-side orientation of the space of val and the space of Forest, speaks to the contemporary Covid conditions.

Songs with Birds: queer*trans rituals of care and protection



Figure 59: Forest V Kapo, *kin play* (screenshot of video work), 2022. Image: Forest V Kapo

Songs with Birds is the concluding work of this inquiry. Forest and I continue with an exploration into more-than/human communing, developed and enacted through our friendship-based collaborative practice.⁵⁸⁹ Building on our experiments in tarot and dance channelling in *ill grow back*, we continue exploring divination processes for communing with more-than/human species. Since *Songs with Birds* is still in development as I write this, I offer a speculative sketch of the evolving interlinked experiments as a closing research statement. The intended live work will be presented as another iterative pop of this inquiry, rather than a Grand Finale of accumulative proportions.

Field meets fence
Finger meets canopy
Hammock meets cloud

We introduce gardens, walking loops, flowers, and utes
Some sort of symbiosis occurs
Some sort of twinning or twining

⁵⁸⁹ There was an earlier draft of this research's concluding work, *Songs for Tawa*, which was adapted to covid life conditions. The material created in that experiment merges with the proliferating files of this research, yet remains, alive and present in the sound environments of *Songs with Birds*. Responding to a call from the wooden floorboards of OFA in July 2020 (likely Tawa wood), wanting to be heard, to be felt, listened to.

lichen gum
sand wood
slip house
worm farm deck
hair tree hill
practice notes 77: 2022

I outline in this section brief descriptions of the key ideas, methods and processes we are engaging in the development of this live work, and finish with an evocation of the imagined event-to-be. I also tentatively suggest a pre-emptive analysis that regards how *Songs with Birds* might advance this performance research (whilst knowing this-too-will-change).

We initially look to connect and speak with birds near to where we live, wanting to develop human*bird kinships, however this opens out to include the multispecies assemblage that birds are rooted in. We noticed the entangled co-lives birds have with trees. Trees are the landing, resting and nesting places of birds; spaces of safety, nurturance, and song. Because of this bird*tree relationality, I frame our research in this work as a continuation of *human*plant communing* (building on *ill grow back*). It could however be easily presented as performance research into *human*bird*tree relationality*, or simply as *multispecies performance research*. Regardless, our intention to commune with birds and their more-than/human familiars drives our closer critical-creative examination of the slash (and the asterisk).

The / and * of Songs with Birds



Figure 60: Forest V Kapo & val smith, *Songs with Birds* (screenshot), 2021.



Figure 61: Forest V Kapo & val smith, *Songs with Birds*, 2022. Image: val smith

We are resounding the slash / as a collaborative force / that together and faux-separates. Slashing (and asterisking) becomes the basis of our bodily explorations of the relationality between binary spaces such as Māori/Pākehā, Indigene/settler-Coloniser, black/white, right/wrong, man/woman and human/nonhuman. These dichotomous divisions are felt, examined, undone, and reimagined through our performance workings.

Because it is an important positioning to this work, I repeat again that Forest is tangata whenua and a migrant residing in Bendigo.⁵⁹⁰ I am (still) Pākehā, a white immigrant settler-coloniser with Celtic ancestry, but I am now living and working in south Kaipara (referred to by settler-colonisers as South Head).⁵⁹¹ I am residing on the edges of the lands known as Tāmaki Makaurau.⁵⁹² Four hundred hectares of pinus radiata plantations and cattle farming are referred to in this writing as ‘the farm’.⁵⁹³ This is the whenua of iwi Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara.⁵⁹⁴

We traverse the lands of Dja Dja Wurrung and the whenua of Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara

Aotearoa and Te Ao Moemoea/The Land of the Dreaming/‘Australia’

Sensing into meanings of Māori and Aboriginal-Indigenous Australian, anglicization and Pākehāhahaaaa

Questioning the usefulness of the slash, exploring a space of trust building, of negotiation, a place of meeting

practice notes 78: 2021

We work with the slash as an intimate zone of communing to develop cultural relations of communing with each other, with birds and their familial trees (and multispecies assemblages) living near to us. It is a fertile starting place, a generative ground for more-than/human communing. Our performance writing around the slash becomes-with the more-than/human communing of *Songs with Birds*.

⁵⁹⁰ The lands of Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples of the Kulin Nation.

⁵⁹¹ Within a week of performing *ill grow back*, I moved from Waikato to care for my ailing parents in Te Awaroa/Helensville, where the ‘rural’ culture and more-than/human environments of place infiltrate my ethico-political choreographic thinking (from ‘urban’ to ‘rural’, from central Tāmaki to the periphery of the ‘city’). Forest has continued their work moving through many lockdowns as a palliative nurse in Naam/Melbourne, also working on the art of dying in their current performance research and practice.

⁵⁹² I learn that this mapping relates to Auckland Council, where Tāmaki Makaurau is seen to extend from Te Hana in the north to Waiuku in the south, and known by Pākehā as the wider Auckland region (noting that mapping is a Pākehā thing). This is an overlay of traditional tribal boundaries however, and Māori electoral boundaries would see South Head and all of south Kaipara within Te Tai Tokerau.

⁵⁹³ Known by some as Rangitira Forest Farm, named to reflect nearby Rangitira Beach.

⁵⁹⁴ With Haranui marae located nearby at the base of the South Head peninsula, in Otakanini. The principal hapū here is Ngāti Whātua Tuturu and the ancestral papakāinga is Otakanini. Māori Maps, ‘Haranui (Otakanini)’, Māori Maps, accessed 1 June 2022, <https://maorimaps.com/marae/haranui-otakanini>

Place relations and conversational processes – rolling, call, send, respond, return

Land Back,

where skies meet the mighty Kaipara harbour and Te Moana Nui a Kiwa,
the ocean that swims all the way to First Nations Australia lands.

Let's uphold and honour the principles of rangatiratanga, sovereignty, sharing power
and choice in the choreographic design.

Let's connect with the livingness of the awa. In *Songs with Birds*, in Aotearoa, this
will be Te Wai Horotiu.⁵⁹⁵

practice notes 79: 2022

Forest and I rehearse for *Songs with Birds* through video and voice calls, via Zoom and Messenger. Outside of these calls, we spend most of our practice time working independently at home, and less frequently we work in institutional spaces in cities we live adjacent to. Using a conversational call and response approach, we build a series of movement experiments for *Songs with Birds*, an iterative method that accumulates layers, meanings and depth. We are each drawn to places, beings, things, and energies. The more-than/human worlds of *where* we practice: in our gardens and kitchens; on the Indigenous lands under and around our homes; on walks that connect home and friends, in forests, with work, lovers, coffee, and food. In these somatic place processes, we pay particular attention to the qualities of bodily interaction and messages that come from the realms of the more-than/human.

We are noticing and noting the play of light, shadow, glitch, movement, direction,
seasonal change, and screen orientation. Measuring how far we can move away
from Wi-Fi, and what kinds of pixilation occur with distance.

practice notes 80: 2021

Originally, I was drawn to the dark and dirty 'back barn' on the farm, the 'other' half of the converted deer barn that I live in, as a 'marginal urban place'. My interest was to engage with the queer*trans qualities of this space, and its' resident settler-colonial species, a growing population of feral pigeons. I wanted to check my privilege and talk with these birds about the potentiality and process of Land Back.⁵⁹⁶ As the work develops however, and Forest and I delve deeper into the slash, I reconsider my approach to Pākehā response-ability with advice

⁵⁹⁵ We remember the moment legal status was granted to the Whanganui River as a human person, a living entity (with rights to protect its health and wellbeing) and consider what this means for this work. Roy, Eleanor Ainge. "New Zealand River Granted Same Legal Rights as Human Being," *The Guardian*, March 16, 2017, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/16/new-zealand-river-granted-same-legal-rights-as-human-being>

⁵⁹⁶ Meaning processes of repatriation, repatriation, land reparation, and land returns (see for example Gray 2022; Tuck and Yang 2012; Thompson 2020) Thompson, Claire Elise. "Returning the Land: What Is the Indigenous Landback Movement — and Can It Help the Climate?," *Fix*, November 25, 2020, <https://grist.org/fix/indigenous-landback-movement-can-it-help-climate/>

from ancestral beings. I turn my focus to listen and at-tend the reduced and marginalised native species on these lands (see the ritual *Pōhuehue // couch*). I want to hear what the native species of these lands have to say, and to become more familiar with how they live, move, and relate with other native as well as settler species and material elements.

I have been *rolling down* the hills of these Māori lands
leaning into the slope of hill as slash
i move with these tilting slipping surfaces of present-day grassed sands,
of Te Korowai o Te Tonga Peninsula⁵⁹⁷
sensing stories with place
practice notes 81: 2022

Songs with Birds explores a land acknowledgement that embodies and creatively expresses a poetics of the slash. My slow reclining rolling acknowledges through bodily means the settler-colonial histories of land grab and desecration here that I benefit from. I am rolling with the discomfort of accountability, listening respectfully, receptive to learning as Pākehā. Rolling is my way of being response-able, moving and processing information that regards colonisation and decolonial approaches. I pay attention to encounters with native and ‘introduced’ species of plants, birds, insects. The shifting sand dunes of this coastal Kaipara ecology hold stories of waters that flow deeply, collecting as lakes that run inland from Te Oneone Rangatira Beach.⁵⁹⁸ Lakes sucked dry, struggling.⁵⁹⁹ As I roll, I sense for the voice and energies of wai, of lake Karaka and Kerete. I roll with the drives of winds; dynamism of sky-atmospheres; the forces of whenua on which I lie. I am arriving, at-tuning, and sinking in (*scat-tending*).

acknowledging light, dust-waters, mineral-persons, and land, as queer*trans co-performers and collaborators, of the event,
we are on Indigenous land.
practice notes 82: 2022

⁵⁹⁷ The peninsula of land often referred to by settlers as ‘South Head farmlands’, officially renamed Te Korowai o Te Tonga Peninsula (meaning “The cloak of the south”) as part of Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara Treaty of Waitangi settlement. Shaw, W. K., ‘Notice of New and Altered Geographic Names, and Altered Crown Protected Area Names, for Ngati Whatua o Kaipara Treaty of Waitangi Settlement 2013’, Notice, Gazette Government NZ, 25 July 2013, <https://gazette.govt.nz/notice/id/2013-In4645>

⁵⁹⁸ See ‘The Kaipara Report: Waitangi Tribunal Report 2006’ (Wellington, Aotearoa: Waitangi Tribunal, 2006), 230, https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/WT_DOC_68333936/Kaipara%20Report%20W.pdf

⁵⁹⁹ Due to Pākehā monocultural farming of pines and cattle. See *The Kaipara Report (Wai 674)*, p 229, for the genesis of Woodhill Forest as a reclamation programme in the 1920s in effect shutting Ngāti Whātua out of their lands. The report outlines the acquisition of land, and failure of the Crown to protect wāhi tapu or preserve traditional access to resources of the sand dunes, lakes, swamps and kaimoana.

Four rituals: Kin play; Mānuka Skin Energies; waiting for advice; Pōhuehue // Couch



Figure 62: val smith, *Mānuka Skin Energies* (video still), 2022.

Forest and I are developing a series of four experiments — *kin play*, *Mānuka skin energies*, *waiting for advice*, and *Pōhuehue // Couch* — I evoke three of the four in this writing.

Mānuka Skin Energies

Sparrow, Sparrow, Sparrow, Sparrow, Sparrow, magpie trio, Pīwakawaka,
pigeonsssss, sparrow, sparrow, etc, Matuku Moana, add, Mānuka, Kanuka, pinus
radiata x 50,000, couch as far as the eye sees, Pōhuehue, Sparrow, Sparrow,
Sparrow, Sparrow, Sparrow, Pōhutukawa, fence
practice notes 83: 2022

I set out on daily walks across the farm to listen for bird songs and to map their interactions and flight pathways between trees. I noticed mostly colonial birds on these walks, sparrows, magpies, blackbird, pigeons, rainbow lorikeets, with the occasional presence of piwakawaka. Mānuka and Kanuka were also struggling in reduced smatterings across the hills; meanwhile, the pine plantations prospered. As I walked between the distanced stands of Mānuka and Kanuka, I traced their emplacements and attune to their qualities and energies. Activating the slash, I physically leaned into a substantial Mānuka trunk as a meeting place (as and when called to do so), a tree species native to Aotearoa, and important to Māori. There is a reciprocal exchange of force and energy, as I yield into the skin membrane of the tree. I asked about the original birds of this place, I listened to a story of cracked tree hearts. A kind of healing unfolded, where sap and blood met and mingled.

Back home from this walk, I noticed tiny particles of the trees' bark-skin in my shoe. I carefully sprinkled these particles onto a microscope slide, and with a single drop of water, I sit to attune and see-feel the energies of the bark-skin in a different way. I am moved by the detailed microscopic Mānuka realities, sublime sunny scenes of hilly ranges and skies. I create short video clips with the microscope's digital camera. The resulting footage is then edited (Figure 53). The ritual of *Mānuka Skin Energies* invites the voice-force and medicine energies of Mānuka, making a space of exchange in performance for the potentiality of its Indigenous powers to arise (calling Rongoa and mātauranga Māori). *Mānuka Skin Energies* listens to the soothing song of this native tree, imagining their bird friends. Voice and melody float above whenua; colour, light and vibration carrying the message of the original trees of this place.⁶⁰⁰ I send my work-in-progress to Forest. Forest responds to *Mānuka Skin Energies* with *waiting for advice*.

waiting for advice

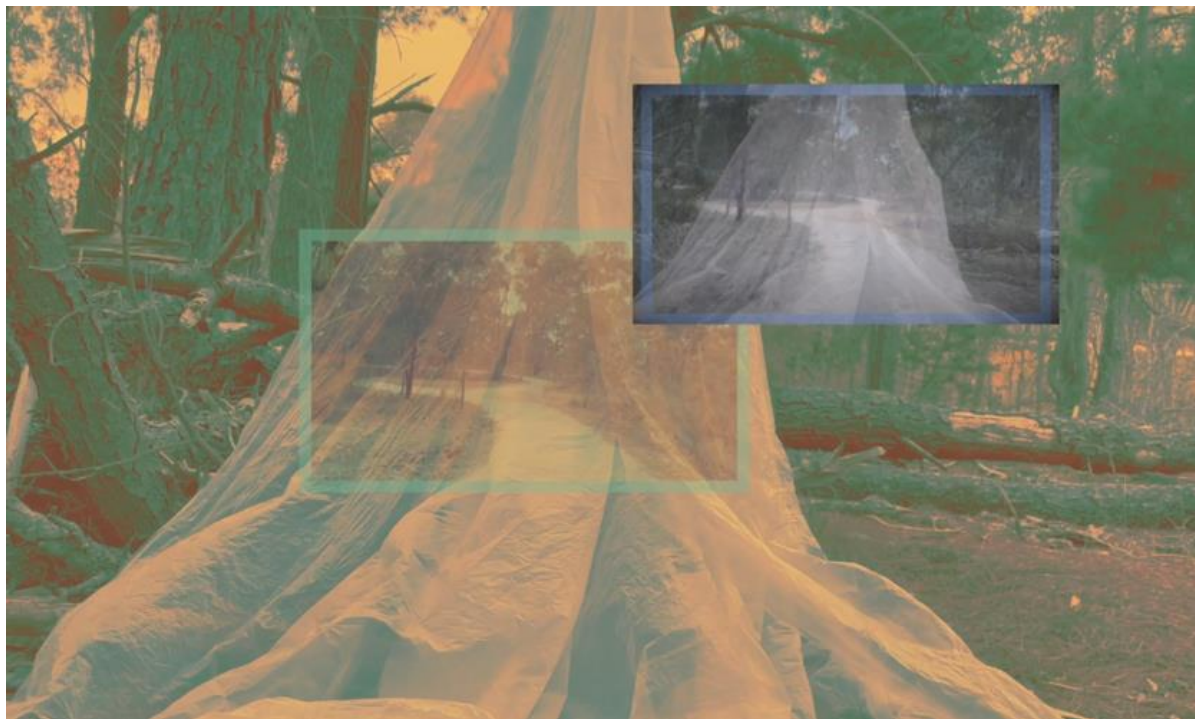


Figure 63: Forest V Kapo, *waiting for advice*, 2022.

I do not know the details of Forest's choreographic process, but I sense their life stories in *waiting for advice* (Figure 54). I see a ghostly figure appear in the moving shimmers of Bendigo bushlands. The figure retreats to then encroach towards me again, swaying faint movements on the slightest of wind current. In the making of this video, Forest repurposes a

⁶⁰⁰ The Mānuka tree has been used for centuries in Rongoā Māori /Māori medicine. See Kerridge, Donna, 'About Manuka', Rongoa New Zealand: Information for students of Rongoa Māori, 14 June 2014, <https://rongoanz.blogtown.co.nz/2014/06/14/about-manuka/>

furniture dust protestor (from house reno), a delicately thin sheet of plastic. The ghostly movement of this sheeting recalls Forest's work *Ghosting the queer* (2020),⁶⁰¹ an installation work that confronts "the intersection of environmental concern, colonisation and trans-homophobia."⁶⁰² A hauntology of place returns for *waiting for advice* with the rhythmic sway of soft more-than/human tree-bodies. Forest re-engages the ethical guidelines of this earlier work in *waiting for advice*, reusing materials to "leave nothing behind."⁶⁰³ Plastic sheeting, ghosting again referencing the devastating wildfires of Australia, rising climate concern, and the otherworldly terrains of place. Between life and death, *waiting for advice*, perhaps seeking counsel from trees about whether to return to Aotearoa, The Land of the Long White Cloud.

Continuing in our conversational call and response process, I respond to *waiting for advice* by doing just that, sitting, and waiting for advice under the shade of a Pōhutakawa tree outside my kitchen. It occurs to me when sensing for the marginalised voices of *Songs with Birds*, that there are some more subtle voices not being heard or listened to yet.

My attention is drawn to the most prominent bird voice here – magpie / this loud Australian bird call thrills out across the whenua / the pine trees are here too, quietly / as is the more subtle voice of grass / this insight regarding subtle voices, leads to the development of *Pōhuehue // couch*.

⁶⁰¹ Forest's installation work *Ghosting the Queer* (February 1, 2020) was presented for Queer Pavilion (conceived and curated by Richard and me, produced by Richard). In this work, the haunting rhythmic sway of soft coral in ocean is digitally tucked into the deep curves of tree roots at Rangipuke/Albert Park. The installation is comprised of a smoke-machine, a video work, and a grouping of umbrellas, dispersed lean-to structures, on dry summer earth and grass. Kapo's pink and blue umbrellas occupy land, taking up space, in uncertain positions. Zombies. Testing genders and sharing stories. I remember their exploration with a smoke machine, the ghost of vapour sneaking up and around as creeping fingers from under feet, earth creatures, the umbrellas cast as failing vapour-ghost catchers.

⁶⁰² Kapo, Forest, 'Ghosting the Queer, Queer Pavilion (2020)', Forest V Kapo, 24 June 2021, <https://forestvkapo.com/2021/06/24/ghosting-the-queer-queer-pavilion-2020>

⁶⁰³ Personal communication with Forest. *Ghosting the queer* used repurposed, recycled, and borrowed materials – pink and blue umbrellas.

Pōhuehue // couch

Ascend Pōhuehue, o purrr tendrils lines of creeping reach
curl twist up tree,
hum chant supports up up we rise o
Occurr Pōhutukawa kawa, your nose only knows
we smell the strength of u
Tui tui awa, as we boil back spades and tractors
Mana awa awa, as we soil back those metal thongs
an alchemy of trans-formations, flowing mercurial genders
Down light out now
to black out, to see, the stars who call us so
Yet still
we sing-song sing a-long long (time) with birds⁶⁰⁴
practice notes 84: 2022

I generate field recordings of the subterranean communications between trees, mycelium, plants, insects, burrowing beings, and microbial life underfoot. The birds are there too, prominent; I am listening underneath their loud songs. I am quieting my body so I can hear these underground communications of electrical and chemical networks sparking between and through to nourish, support, collaborate.⁶⁰⁵ This experiment summons the queer*trans lives and powers of subterranean worlds, recalling the mycelial systems activated in bttm//bottom projects with Richard (see *Queer Failure Walk*, *Bttm Manifesto* and *Queer Pavilion*).

Pōhuehue // couch is a human*plant communing, an intimate attuning and scat-tending to the voices of native flora and fauna at times hard to hear, overlooked or engulfed by this hegemonic 'farm' environment.⁶⁰⁶ I am sensing for the Indigenous land-voice, whilst also noticing the loudness of settler-colonial species, especially humans.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁴ Written at "a moment in time when we came of age as a nation." See Matamua, Rangi. "How Matariki Will Connect Us All," *E-Tangata*, April 17, 2022, <https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/how-matariki-will-connect-us-all/>

⁶⁰⁵ There is so much more to understand about more-than/human communication. I'm thinking about how cuttlefish communicate with colour, how plants communicate with chemicals, and dogs with emotion.

⁶⁰⁶ The coastal sand-dune complex where I live and work in South Kaipara was destabilised by Pākehā settler arrival, with the 'introduction' of cattle, sheep and other animals left to roam wildly. See The Kaipara Report (Wai 674). 'The Kaipara Report: Waitangi Tribunal Report 2006' (Wellington, Aotearoa: Waitangi Tribunal, 2006), 231, https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/WT_DOC_68333936/Kaipara%20Report%20W.pdf

⁶⁰⁷ These settler species broke the delicate surface of ground, pulling up sand-binding plants, and burying once fertile swampy valleys and flats. This was less an 'introduction', more an unwelcome invasion by beasts of places of vital importance for Māori. See The Kaipara Report (Wai 674), p 231.

Queer*trans divination

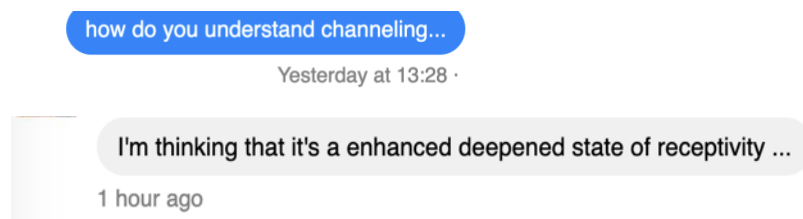


Figure 64: Forest V Kapo & val smith, *Songs with Birds* (flotsy), 2022.

We call on our queer ancestors and transcestors (human and more-than/human) for advice on forms of divination for our queer*trans rituals of care and protection in *Songs with Birds*. Whilst our engagement with tarot readings persists in developing *Songs with Birds*, other cards are added to our explorations of communicating with more-than/human beings and realms. Forest also contributes their knowledge field of flower/plant essences as supporting our playful, joyful, and regenerative approach to channelling queer*trans knowing.

In *waiting for advice*, Forest explored the supernatural powers of thin plastic sheeting, channelling spirits that have passed into other realms on these lands (see Figure 54). In *Pōhuehue // Couch*, I utilised sticks fallen from trees as witch-wands, like dowsing. I sensed into the land at South Head with a Pōhuehue witch-wand, felt as a radial extension of my bodily nervous system (*). I find it is challenging to locate and feel into the energies, trajectories, movements and presence of native plant species and waterways due to decimation by settler-colonial activities, but also perhaps because my Pākehā perceptions are limited in this regard.⁶⁰⁸

Opening and closing portals

open, close, open, close
squeeze, release, hold
let's go
practice notes 85: 2022

We create little movement and voice rituals for safeguarding the beings and elements at play, and for opening a portal for inter-species communing (connections and intimate exchanges arising in the more-than/human conversations).⁶⁰⁹ Rituals for clearing and airing using sound and vibration; these are rituals for connecting and deepening trust.

⁶⁰⁸ Such as cattle farming, land clearing, grass growing, and the Pākehā monoculture of pines.

⁶⁰⁹ May we always have the in-sight (touch third eye), wisdom (touch heart), and the balance (both hands trace from sternum along clavicle to left and right shoulders) to make good decisions/to move through the world from a space of aroha/love/compassionate kindness.

Flotsy: little creative exchanges and digital ephemera

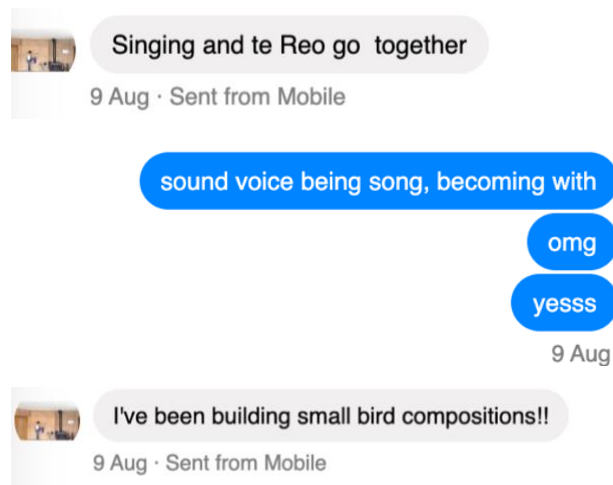


Figure 60: Forest V Kapo & val smith, *Songs with Birds* (flotsy), 2022.

Flotsy finds its stride in the collaborative works with Forest – as vibrant, invitational, multi-dimensional processes. We send each other short messages and openers (iterative, daily), and little fluid creative experiments (proliferative). We use voice recordings, emojis, and images sent through social media platforms, email, Google Drive and Dropbox to share, save, upload and download. These act as evocative warmups, suggestive of affective and material possibilities.

Non-binary song, tarot, poem, and animated drawings connect the dancery chit-chat of tree-bird-human-dog-grass
perhaps in touch, an intermingling of skins, or the organs of things (sex is a form of tentacularity)
practice notes 86: 2022

We develop processes for speaking with and mapping place through bodily sensing, at-tuning, at-tending, performance writing and digital image-making. Building on the digital drawing in *ill grow back*, we use tablets and iPencil and animation applications. We are curious about how these technologies might contribute to the more-than/human communing of *Songs with Birds*. *Flotsy* is also mapping material ephemera of Indigenous territories, languages, treaties, informed and supported by online mapping technologies (see *kin play* and *Pōhuehue // couch*).⁶¹⁰

In Figure 60, I am mapping with colour and line the directions of flow, timing, attraction, and the energies and affects passing between Forest and me, queer and nature, trans and environment. From finger to branch, sex to soil to shadow, beyond frame to cosmological

⁶¹⁰ See for example Native Land Digital, 'Native Land Digital'.

orbiting, then moving inter-cellularly; these are fluid conversations that cross between / through / lands and bodies, from here to someplace else.

Zoom, Covid-19, life: adaptations and the multiplicities of online spaces

Planning toward the Zoom happening of *Songs with Birds*, we have once again needed to be responsive and adaptive to Covid-19 lockdowns and life events. Like with *ill grow back*, this current process has moved in cycles of development, adaptation, dissolution, and reimagining of the live event for online conditions. As is necessary for this current Covid-19 life with an uncertain future for live work and international travel, there have been shifts and changes to ideas, dates, times, titles, locations, and processes. Online spaces and digital technologies in our covid-distanced friendship-collaboration between-across Aotearoa-Australia has become fundamental to *Songs with Birds*. I anticipate this dynamic will be central and essential to the concluding event.

Rectangles within rectangles
Screens within screens – encornering enlarge reduct
alongside, pixels surrounding by thickened black space

feeling out this space online/inline
parallel universe/ss
portals that flicker between fact and fiction
practice notes 87: 2022

Adaptations to Covid conditions and quarantines allowed our human*plant exchange to move through unknown and undefined durations, atmospheres, realms and elements, including shifts that relate to the perception of time as sometimes circular (choro-perception).⁶¹¹ Zoom and Messenger became key tools for our Aotearoa/Australia human*human and human*plant conversations, leading to more-than/human relation forms and felt/bodily/material methods of communing for live work. We recognised the channelling of multispecies languages and gender expressions moving through our bodies and the choreography in ways that are hard to describe, sparking differently felt ways of seeing and knowing more-than/human performance forms.⁶¹²

The event: a Zoom happening

Songs with Birds will be a Zoom happening (15 July 2022), that at-tunes to and amplifies the marginalised more-than/human voices/forces of place, that Forest and I engage in, and

⁶¹¹ Native Land Digital, 'Native Land Digital', <https://doi.org/10.1136/medhum-2021-012357>

⁶¹² See further discussion on pandemic adaptations in 'Nomadic New Zealand Artists during the Pandemic' (Wilson 2021) Wilson, Alexa. "Movement of Outsiders: Nomadic New Zealand Artists during the Pandemic," *Contemporary HUM*, February 10, 2021, <https://contemporaryhum.com/writing/movements-of-outsiders/>

across, Australia and Aotearoa.⁶¹³ The performance will be predominantly actioned and activated through online streaming modalities and functions, moving image, sound making, divination processes, and dance.⁶¹⁴ Our intention as co-performers and creators of this live work is to build care-full and loving relationship with the environments we are engaging (focusing on birds and their extended kinship network of related beings, things, entities, and forces). In doing so, we also work to refine our inter-species modes of communing (through divination processes) as a speculative research method.

The series of four video experiments we have developed – *kin play*, *Mānuka skin energies*, *waiting for advice*, *Pōhuehue // Couch* - will be activated in the event, as queer*trans rituals of care and protection. These rituals will move us through processes of land acknowledgement, blessing, clearing, airing, summoning, and deepening connection with place and the more-than/human.⁶¹⁵ There will also be a layering of sound work composed by Forest (with live and pre-recorded elements). These video and sound experiments will play a key role in enabling gayYay in the work. The voices/forces, stories, and sovereignty of Forest V Kapo, val smith, various birds and their tree and plant familiars (all they/thems) will all be present. We will be singing, dancing and glitching together with the inviting voices/forces of examiners, supervisors, convenor, technical support crew, an uncountable number of more-than/human players, three human queer protectors, and a select few other human attendees.

We will be utilising the spacetime of Zoom to bring us all together across oceans, interwebs and airwaves, in an inter-species performance that flickers with the asterisk and slash of queer*trans/materiality. This scratchy sketch of the research project's concluding performance event opens a portal to the live work (in-person and Zoom) of *Songs with Birds*. This performance will be the findings of this chapter, and another tendril of this research of *Promiscuous Emplacements*.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹³ *Songs with Birds* will involve a guided experience of the 'marginal urban place' each person dwells in, connected to other places through the online portal of Zoom. val will be in-person with a 'marginal urban place' on AUT campus in Tāmaki Makaurau central, adjacent to the underground presence of Te Wai Horotiu (a waterway that has been redirected and covered over through colonisation, in the urbanised environment). Forest will be located near to their home in Bendigo. We will all be connected and guided by skies, stars, asterisks, oceans, and slashes through the duration of the Zoom happening.

⁶¹⁴ It is with an ironic looping that a need to return to an urban city environment arises (we require fast reliable internet connectivity and technical assistance from AUT staff).

⁶¹⁵ The rituals will work to collectively hold respect for mana whenua, First Nations tribes of Australia, and the mana, mauri, wairua of all the lands, country, forests, waters, beings, and atmospheric entities and bodies involved on the night.

⁶¹⁶ There will also be access made available to the *flotsy* of the live event of *Songs with Birds*, by way of a live link to a webpage.

Summary of Chapter 5: closing communion re-marks

Working in collaboration with Forest has led to *human*plant communing*, a more-than/human performance approach that focuses on methods of communication. Forms of queer*trans divination have emerged and been extended in our work together, celebrating the felt process of *transit*ioning*. We have delved deeper into the slash, which has led to a Māori/Pākehā take on friendship-based collaborative practice and informed our critical-creative engagements with the stories and histories of Indigenous lands. Our uptake of the slash centres a bodily space of collaborative meeting and negotiation, with a sensitivity to intuition, ‘insight’ and ‘inner’ knowing. *ill grow back* and *Songs with Birds* contribute performance methods to the field of Performance Research that value the potential and radiance of more-than/human methodologies, queer*trans friendship and life (with the support of the asterisk’s promiscuity and tentacularity, and the allowing and protection of the slash).

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Ahead of the *Songs with Birds* live event in mid-July, we sense the power of the slash and asterisk binding us together in a spell of human/bird.tree* enchantment (of love, great pleasure and delight). We imagine this critical-creative enmeshment to facilitate a co-dreaming of queer*trans worlds beyond the human/nonhuman and gender binaries. We invoke Indigenous futurisms specific to our different processes of transit*ioning and the interconnectivity felt across lands within the fluid creativity of Te Moana Nui a Kiwa/the Pacific Ocean. All this, with a deep bow of respect to the tentacularity and force of Te Wheke.

6. Concluding reflections

The live events that form *Promiscuous Emplacements* have delved into more-than/human kinships, intimacies, and communing through a queer*trans choreographic practice that engages with place. Queer theorist José Muñoz (2015) describes the relentless struggle to think beyond and outside the habit of the human as: “a continuous straining to make sense of something else that is never fully knowable.”⁶¹⁷ Perhaps because of this unknowability, I have found contemplating more-than/human relationality to open a plethora of possibilities for Performance Studies.

Through this research I have gravitated to the margins of urban environments – to the cracks, corners and edges, the spaces of the city that are out of sight, overlooked, forgotten or seemingly uncared-for – ‘marginal urban places.’ I have built relationships from the ground up with discarded things, the plants, birds, trees, animals, as well as atmospheric and architectural elements, and with the Indigenous land we stand on.

I developed a series of performances that built on more-than/human relationships and responded to unplanned encounters through a queer*trans ethics of care. The research paid attention to the forces and voices of place names, Indigenous Māori and Pākehā settler-colonial histories, stories, and our positioning. Experimented with connecting through bodily processes, listening, proximity, and multisensorial forms of communication, the key intention of building and strengthening more-than/human kinship was realised.

Through iterative forming and refining, five key Choreoqueering techniques for engaging more-than/human relations have emerged: *scat-tending*, *flotsy*, *bttm//bottom*, *Queer Clean(s)ing*, and *Queer Napping*. These techniques have welcomed and activated the vital and affective energies of the more-than/human through various haptic, semi-permeable, and queer*trans orientations — we laid down, crawled, rolled, rested, napped, and dreamed:

For *Queer Failure Walk* (2017), bodies climbed over, gathered, and lay face down on the ‘other’ side of a safety fence at a seemingly dis-regarded strip of land running above and along the edge of Grafton Gully motorway.

For *Queer Dating Sites* (2018), we wrapped ourselves in pink sheets and blankets and lay down, side-by-side on the concrete, in a small unnoticed space underneath a towering institutional stairwell.

For *sex/es on site (v1)* (2018), I sunk down and wallowed in the squishy toxic ground of an unlit covert space nuzzled behind and between a set of toilets and dungeon rooms at Basement Adult Shop & Cruise Club, and in *sex/es on site (v2)* (later in 2018)

⁶¹⁷ Muñoz, José Esteban. “Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms: The Sense of Brownness,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, no. 2 (May 9, 2015): 209, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/581600>

I crawled and shuffled around the lower and outer edges of Te Whare Tāpere Iti, moving closer to relate with the dust and discarded things of the huge studio-room at Waikato University.

For *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1) (2019)*, I rolled down an overlooked and overgrown steeply sloped bank, forming intimate relations with epic weeds and vines, rubble, glass, waste, and weeds/trees. Later that same year in *Offline Onsite Hookups (v2)*, I crawled face down sweeping and cleaning around the lower edges of a gay bar, UnPlugged Bar, in Vienna.

For *Bttm Manifesto* (2018-ongoing) we buried the paper manifesto under a circle of colonial oak trees in Rangipuke/Albert Park attuning with the subterranean realities of mycelial networks underfoot; lay down with legs up an overlooked concrete wall outside the University of Auckland Library; rested together off to the side of the marae ātea at Waipapa Marae; and lay together with/in a grouping of smelly skip bins in Vienna.

For *Bttm Methodology* (2019), we napped outside on the blanketed concrete in Artspace Aotearoa carpark, located behind and below the main gallery space.

For *Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance* (2019), we crawled and shuffled, sweeping around the margins and cracks of Shed 10 on Auckland city's waterfront, facing down and away from the human attendees.

For *Queer Napping Workshops* (2019-2020), we gravitated towards the marginal spaces of Flat 1/52 Bannerman Road, Te Wai Ōrea/Western Springs Park, and Rangimata-rau/Coyle Park to rest and nap together. In *queer walk-naps* (2020) again we gravitated towards marginal spaces; we spent time resting and napping together at four interconnected recreational parks west of Auckland's city centre - Te Wai Ōrea, 'Heron Park', 'Ken Maunder Park' and the Rooftop Terrace of Lopdell House.

After February 2020, Covid-19 lockdowns impacted on my research aims and intentions. I changed my living arrangement, moved to a different city to be more connected, and adapted to necessary online conditions. I began to practice away from the city environments I had engaged up until now. I moved again, and where I am living now, on the 'rural' edges of Tāmaki Makaurau, the notion of 'marginal urban place' brought different meanings and matters to my inquiry. Therefore, in *ill grow back* (December 2020), in collaboration with Forest V Kapo at-a-distance, we utilised our local recreational parks, backyards, kitchens and bedrooms, and digital platforms (Zoom and Messenger). In the final phase of my research, moving closer to sharing *Songs with Birds* (July 2022), this research continues to engage the potential of digital platforms, local environments including backyards, bedrooms, kitchens, and our physical proximity to 'rural' (Aotearoa) and 'suburban' (Australia). We are still lying down, crawling, rolling, resting, napping, and dreaming with place.

In what follows, I reflect on the significant findings and original terminology from each chapter, and the practice events they traverse:

1

In Chapter 1, I proposed *queer*trans/materiality* as a research paradigm that supports the actions of living response-ably by and for more-than/human beings, things, forces and worlds. Emphasising the foolishness of human exceptionalism, queer*trans/materiality points the way to a playful remediation of imposed divides that separate human and nonhuman, man and woman, nature and queer, Māori and Pākehā.

In Part I of this chapter, in a review of literature regarding transmaterialities, I experimented with the asterisk in the context of rainbowy life. I examined a shift in its positioning, from following trans*, to hovering in the midst as *queer*trans*, connecting the two terms in a mangle of feltness, non-conforming genders and queer sexuality. The theories of Barad and Hayward helped to build my understanding of tentacularity, promiscuity, proliferation, and perversion as key qualities of *asterisking*. *Asterisking* is created as a perversion of the somatic process of Navel Radiation (Bainbridge-Cohen) offering ethico-political approaches, such as: *sensorial perversity* and *gayYay*. Activated in the live work *Queer Dating Sites* (2018), the operations of the * mobilised queer*trans/materiality as a re-generative seeing-feeling, a multi-centred and rippling ontological grounding for more-than/human relations in performance.

In Part II of this chapter, I review Indigenous perspectives on the more-than/human, and critiques of 'new' materialism. I drew on cultural theorists of the hyphen and slash (Jenkins and Jones 2008; Jones 2020; Barnett 2015; Hobbs 2017) to position the typographical symbol of the slash as a mark of relationality and collaboration between Māori/Pākehā in the context of Aotearoa. Through a queering of the somatic process Cellular Breathing (Bainbridge Cohen), I argued that the slash, operates as a protective and allowing semi-permeable membrane, rather than as a barrier or separator. Through checking and questioning, I opened my research to care-fully consider the slash of Indigene/settler-coloniser as an ethico-political grounding for living and working in Aotearoa as Tangata Tiriti. The act of *slashing* informs my engagement with the marginal urban place of live work *Queer Failure Walk* (2017).

2

Chapter 2 is a review of performance practitioners and practitioner-researchers who are addressing materialisms, including 'new' materialism, and the turn to the nonhuman internationally. I found Eurocentric epistemologies and philosophers to be underpinning much of the research and white artworks I encounter at the meeting of materialisms and performance, including my own. This chapter suggested the need for further unpacking of

‘new’ materialism’s vibrancy and agency of matter in tandem with critical whiteness inquiries, and a foregrounding of Indigenous knowledges.

I found Minty Donald and Nick Millar to be seeking out their own languages and rituals as urban Scots, informing their take on more-than/human vitalities and agencies through water-human interrelations. I established the significance of Annette Arlander’s meeting with remarkable and unremarkable trees, to be the care-full witness of her multispecies collaborations. I then considered the contributions of Māori artist-researchers, Louie Zalk-Neale, Rachel Shearer and Tru Paraha, who are addressing materialisms in and of Aotearoa. These artists are evolving strategies that centre tangata whenua concepts and mātauranga Māori, such as whakapapa (a framework that binds all things), the consciousness of Te Pō (Darkness Perpetual), and Māori vitalism (an understanding of all beings and objects to be filled with mauri). Their experimentation and theorisation activates these non-dualistic views, rooted in Indigenous Māori ontologies and decolonial discourses.

I found a need for more queer and trans perspectives in the field of more-than/human performance. I located queer practitioners (Keith Hennessy and Jeremy Wade) to have created performances and workshops that incorporate the material and ethical complexities of a social-justice stance. Most closely aligned to my own queer*trans performance experiments, their performances provided me a reference point from which to develop and expand my queer*trans/materialist perspective, and *Choreoqueueing* techniques.

3

In Chapter 3, *Choreoqueueing* emerged as a queer*trans approach to more-than/human performance. *Choreoqueueing* moves at the speed of trust, in a reciprocal and respectful manner, whilst also displaying proliferative, promiscuous and tentacular tendencies. Strategies of soft/ening and slow/ing queer the substance of dance. A more-than/human relationality emerges that I suggest is pleasure-seeking and polyamorous, non-linear and connective. Live events locate a collective practice of pausing, to notice, rest-with or ‘do nothing,’ reinforcing a slow/soft ontology of dance.

Chorequeueing’s speculative strategies rebound the ‘possibilising’ (Protopapa) of the asterisk to reach-radiate queerness and transness as modes of possibility, hopefulness, and resiliency. The perversion of somatic practices is key to *Choreoqueueing*. This contributes to critical discourse around Somatics already underway (Ginot, Kampe, George, Manning and Massumi, Hozumi). I called for further critical and creative questioning of Somatics, particularly with regards to an analysis of whiteness at the intersection of discourse regarding disability justice, gender, sexuality and class.

I explained two *Choreoqueueing* techniques: *scat-tending* and *flotsy*. *Scat-tending* has built a take on the ethico-politics of collective care in performance, driven by haptic relationality and founded in unconditional love, for the judged and projected upon (*the uuddd* – unworthy,

unvaluable, dirty, disgusting, and dangerous). The perverse technique of *scat-tending* reveals a more-than/human **co-shimmering**. *Flotsy* offers a queer*trans logic to the practice of anarchiving live works, folding the seeing-feeling of the * and the breathability of the / back into more-than/human kinship and performance, and always open to perverse experimentation.

Scat-tending's collective care-full-ness circulates through live works, as does *flotsy's* logic of unknowing, proliferation and fabulosity. In *sex/es on site (v1)* (2019), I activated *scat-tending* to build closeness and support between myself, attendees, collaborators, and the place of performance. This work proposes more-than/human queer intimacies and consensual connectivity, in a communal bonding rite. The *flotsy* of the later iteration, *sex/es on site (v2)* (2018), offers an improvisational wondering-wandering establishing interconnectedness in the performance and on the page. The horizontal orientations and perceptions of this work brought me closer to sensing more-than/human realities. In *Offline Onsite Hookups (v1)* I embraced queer and kinky relation forms, welcoming non-typical entanglements and sensorial perceptions. Paying attention to the call of the more-than/human, I realised the generative return of listening and moving with openness and care for the unseen.

These Choreoqueering assemblages press at hierarchical and exclusionary assumptions about species, bodies, genders and sexualities. Each work touches on the potentiality of more-than/human collaboration; imagining other modes of collectivity that emphasise multispecies care, creativity and tenderness.

4

Chapter 4 traced the emergence of **queer*trans rituals of care and protection** in a further examination of Choreoqueering. Three perverse techniques —*bttm//bottom*, **Queer Clean(s)ing** and **Queer Napping** — are offered with gentleness, love, trust, and care. I propose a choreographic economy that values in/significance, safety, and mutual respect when building more-than/human kinships.

bttm//bottom was established as a friendship-based collaborative practice rooted in lowly, receptive, sub-missive, and pleasure-seeking tendencies (building on Halberstam's 'queer failure' 2011). This perverse technique worked to unsettle cis/heteronormative logic producing subjugated and sometimes illegible knowledge, also democratising hierarchies of value within the arts. In the project *Bttm Manifesto*, Richard and I engaged *bttm//bottom* and *flotsy*, elevating the bubbling joy-full flows and fountains of our friendship, and producing generative writing techniques such as ~~queer~~ erasure. This project celebrates the conversational, fluid, playful and promiscuous of *bttm//bottom*, and leads to the unfolding of a queer*trans ethics of care.

Queer Clean(s)ing found its way into *Promiscuous Emplacements* in a movement from the periphery of performance research to the centre of the inquiry. Everyday sweeping and

cleaning actions are centred as choreographic practices worthy of attention and care-full consideration. In *Untitled Arts Foundation Ball Performance*, a ritual of care, I also develop protection spells, summoning the powers of hi-vis safety gear, and exploring the role of a queer protector to safeguard queer and trans performers.

Queer Napping examined the possibilities of 'queer time' (Halberstam 2005), by refusing the do-do-do of capitalism, resisting the insistence on productivity and success, and turning instead to performance methods that slow down to rest, rejuvenate, and come together in collective care. The naps at 3pm of *Bttm Methodology*, *Queer Napping Workshops*, and *queer walk-naps*, possibilised affective attunement with environments and spacetime for dreaming better worlds for rainbowy communities. The emergent resting and napping forms are found to be reparative and re/generative for queer and trans folks.

5

In Chapter 5, I examined two works exploring situated and embodied methods for more-than/human communing, developed and enacted through a Māori/Pākehā collaborative practice with Forest V Kapo. *ill grow back*, through engagements with plants, improvisation, tarot, and online technologies, revealed an inter-species relationality (*human*plant*). This live work realised the potent possibilities of engaging collaborative Zoom life as the material terrain for *human*plant communing*. The live work traverses language, intelligence and communication difference, revealing possibilities for inter-cultural and inter-species exchange.

In *Songs with Birds* our Māori/Pākehā take on *human*plant communing* is extended through a choreographics of queer*trans divining, reciprocity and support; how to love, with a sense of caring. Delving deeper into the slash of cultural and species divides, a pluralistic space for meeting, sharing, and negotiating practice emerged, as well as revealing an intimate digital/in-person spacetime to commune with the more-than/human. Promoting unconditional acceptance, both the * and / undermined the colonial powers of the cis, straight, and hegemonic in this work. Through enactments of Pākehā response-ability, this work offers performance processes of *Welcomes and Blessings* and *Rolling Land Acknowledgements*. This last cycle of the research also dips into a somatic process that we call *transit*ioning*, describing the sensuous, sometimes erotic, exchange of transgender bodies and environments that emerged in *Songs with Birds* (informed by Hayward).

Through the processes and insights of both in *ill grow back* and *Songs with Birds*, we find *Choreoqueering* to offer a re/generative methodology of becoming-with place and communing with more-than/human things, beings, entities, elements, and forces. These live works also centre the potency and radiance of queer*trans friendship as a collaborative research method. This chapter proposes the meta-physical and multisensorial realms of more-than/human communing through the entwining of symbols (* and /). What is felt as

impactful is the activations of queer*trans divining, *transit*ioning*, Zoom, and digital technologies in the live works.

Implications of Choreoqueering and queer*trans/materiality for contemporary performance and artistic research.

This investigation contributes to the fields of Performance Studies, practice-oriented research (specifically Research-Creation), Transgender Studies, Transmaterialities, Queer Theory and Critical Somatics. My research adds to discourses regarding more-than/human and inter-species collaboration, kinships, communication, and an ethics of performance. The haptic and material methodological offerings of this inquiry suggest further openings for sensorial perversities at the meeting place of contemporary performance and the more-than/human. I discuss these openings here, as the future directions of *Promiscuous Emplacements*.

Glimmering more-than/human collaboration and communion

In this research-creation, I have danced with pigeons, plastic wrappers, rotting smells, weeds, glass bottles, a rat, a dripping tap, air and light, micro-organisms, moss, gorse bushes, drains, stagnant puddles, bits of wood, an eroding concrete wall, and broken pipes. I have immersed myself in the already-underway forces and textures of outdoor city and 'rural' ecologies. I have assembled with the aliveness of performance environments alongside the affective tones, pulses, rhythms and tics of more-than/human players. Working alongside the more-than/human as collaborators, friends and performers has added to growing discourse internationally regarding a co-constitutive ontology of performance. There are many glimmers of potential pathways of more-than/human collaboration in this inquiry; the inter-species communing of *Choreoqueering* is one such pathway.

I see the value of *Choreoqueering* techniques to reside in the possibilities for networking and circulating non-cis/heteronormative relations, intimacies, and connectedness, as well as in the conversations, social practices and workshops that have already occurred. As an example, in a post-performance conversation with people who attended *Queer Dating Sites* (2018), I noticed a perceptual shift from seeing and understanding discarded things and overlooked spaces as abject or disgusting, to being beautiful and loveable. In another instance, a felt hope-fullness was shared by someone who attended *Sex on Site with Air and Light* (2020), sparked by my soft/ening into the cold and hard architecture and institutional space of Enjoy Gallery. I see the dispersal of my methodologies through performance and writing as a way for this inquiry to further its consequence.

I intend to re-engage with tertiary and community teaching opportunities, contribute articles for journals (*Performance Research* and *JAR, the Journal for Artistic Research*, for instance), and develop public-facing performance work in different contexts. I will find ways to locate

the perverse techniques of Choreoqueueing in the everyday interactions and exchanges I have in these various arts contexts, slipping the queer*trans logics, subjugated and sometimes illegible knowledge of Choreoqueueing into moments (perhaps unnoticed). I yearn to vibrate the radiant warmth of bttm//bottom to democratise hierarchies of value within the arts alongside my wonderful friends/collaborators. I will look to the cracks and corners of institutions to do this work. Rusting and crumbling whiteness and cis/heteronormativities from the inside is of great importance to me, whilst remembering and drawing attention to the *co-shimmering* potentiality of more-than/human relationality.

I discussed a brief intimate encounter with a single pink plastic rhinestone in rehearsals towards *Queer Dating Sites* (2018), explaining how this created a portal for an exchange of human*thing energy. This fleeting experience, a seemingly insubstantial encounter, offers insights to the field of practice-oriented research, where the potential of the small, short, unseen, the slight, unnoticed, or unplanned become events worthy of attention. This moment of communing through diffracting light, a queer and vital feltness, suggests a luminous exchange that foresees a future tendril of this inquiry (a performance study addressing *the queerness of light*).

Choreoqueueing is an improvisational approach that composes attention with more-than/human ecologies. I see this composition of attention, a space to glimpse more-than/human choreographic approaches to come. Rather than focusing on one entity, such as a tree or plant, bird, or animal, which emphasises singularity and individuality, I have dispersed choreographic attention tentacularly across and beyond the marginal urban places. This involved a fluid shift in perceptual scale from the micro to macro, a telescoping awareness that builds on the practices of many dance/somatics/performance practitioners, some not mentioned in these pages, nonetheless important in terms of attention and awareness practices in dance.⁶¹⁸ In its improvisational wandering, Choreoqueueing has formed a relationship with the horizontality of Performance Ecologies (Heddon & Mackey 2012), another scholarly area that I see this project could contribute to.⁶¹⁹

Carrying forward acts of Pākehā response-ability

Promiscuous Emplacements contributes to discourse regarding Pākehā engagements with place through performance in the cultural context of Aotearoa. *queer walk-naps* triggered a shift where I more fully recognised the significance of my living and working as Tangata Tiriti

⁶¹⁸ Nancy Stark Smith's Underscore is significant in this regard. Also see the work of Nita Little. Little, Nita. "Restructuring the Self-Sensing: Attention Training in Contact Improvisation," *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices* 6, no. 2 (December 1, 2014): 247–60, https://doi.org/10.1386/jdsp.6.2.247_1

⁶¹⁹ Who propose the horizontality of a "*performance environment* as ecology." See Heddon, Deirdre, and Sally Mackey, "Environmentalism, Performance and Applications: Uncertainties and Emancipations," *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 17, no. 2 (May 1, 2012): 166, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2012.670421>

on Māori land. Through this work, I gained more knowledge of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, ongoing land contestation, and the impacts of land alienation, confiscation and stealing by the Crown. I checked my white perspective, questioning my bias, privileges, and way of emphasising trans and queer perspectives when engaging place in performance. I plan to continue to activate the slash as a mode of Pākehā response-ability (drawing on Bell and Ream) through choreographic practice.

There may be benefits in developing a journal article that speaks to how I located and explored the complex dynamic of yearning to belong as Pākehā in relation to my yearn for acceptance and love as queer and trans. Exploring *Pākehā response-ability* has opened a critical-creative space for choreographic practice that continues to hold me to account, informing a sense of my place to stand as a Pākehā practitioner-researcher when engaging in inter-cultural (and inter-species) collaboration (beholden to Te Tiriti o Waitangi). I view my engagement with the corporeal knot of belonging/not belonging as Pākehā, queer and trans non-binary, to be an ongoing bodily and ethico-political inquiry. However, this personal quest has potential significance for other Pākehā practitioners and practitioner-researchers wishing to engage in critical-creative practices. Circulating my insights may be of benefit for Pākehā practitioners in the pursuit of undoing whiteness and developing collective settler awareness. Having said this, my immediate intention is to support Indigenous rights movements, locally and internationally. There has been a huge shift over the last decade with Land Back rallying cries spreading locally and internationally, connecting Indigenous peoples⁶²⁰, such as the water protector movement on Turtle Island, and the Ihumātao land occupation in Aotearoa.⁶²¹ I want to get behind, to stand alongside and support this mahi, this work.

I see my next steps in creative practice to imagine how to best be in service of Land Back in Aotearoa, an insight that surfaced in collaboration with Forest when developing *Songs with Birds*. Keeping in mind Tina Ngata's (2020) suggestion to be prepared to make sacrifice, which speaks to the restoration of justice, addressing the power imbalance, and by transferring power back, my interest in supporting Land Back, look to Indigenous-led processes of repatriation, repatriation, land reparation, and land returns (Thompson 2020).⁶²² I pay attention to Māori artists who are already activating Land Back, such as Sarah Hudson (Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pūkeko) whose exhibition *re:place he rokiroki, he penapena, he rākei whenua* at Blue Oyster art project space, centres connection with the whenua through

⁶²⁰ McDonald, Jack. "LAND BACK: What If We Reopened Treaty Settlements?," *Metro Magazine*, March 22, 2022, <https://www.metromag.co.nz/society/land-back>

⁶²¹ Mika, Jason Paul, et al. "Indigenous Environmental Defenders in Aotearoa New Zealand: Ihumātao and Ōroua River," *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, May 13, 2022, 11771801221083164, <https://doi.org/10.1177/11771801221083164>

⁶²² Thompson, Claire Elise. "Returning the Land: What Is the Indigenous Landback Movement — and Can It Help the Climate?," *Fix*, November 25, 2020, <https://grist.org/fix/indigenous-landback-movement-can-it-help-climate/>

the use of earth pigments. One small way I feel I can support Land Back is by developing collective settler awareness and the analysis of whiteness amongst my peers and associates. Therefore, one interest I have moving forward is in initiating space for a critical whiteness circle of artists wishing to work on these issues through practice, and energising an interest in engaging in this work, with Land Back being the goal.

***Bttm//bottom*, a subterranean force, a reckoning with sub-version**

The friendship-based collaborative practice of *bttm//bottom* radiates a proximal potency, a pluralistic love. Several artist-curators and academics have been encouraging Richard and I to develop a publication of *Bttm Manifesto*, with offers to help us produce either an artist book, or to adapt the manifesto for a journal article. The drive behind such a possible direction for our work, would be to make this exemplar of *bttm//bottom*-in-action more available to emerging queer and trans artist-researchers, and educators of queer research and practice-oriented research. I can see the methodological ramifications and relevance of *bttm//bottom*, as a friendship-based collaborative approach that contributes a different perspective to the field of research-creation (at the intersection of art practice, theoretical concepts, and research). This kind of research dissemination is worth pursuing for the rainbowy researchers to come.⁶²³ I also see the future reach of *bttm//bottom* to live and extend in collaborative practice with friends, circulated in social practices for queer and trans communities. I give an example of this next, in thinking about a direction for *Queer Napping*.

Circulating the re/generative potentials of Queer Napping

I have proposed in this exegesis that *Queer Napping*, given enough time and space, has the potential to be re/generative for queer and trans folk, through settling our (real and valid) fears and anxieties, calming our nervous systems, and soothing mental distress and trauma.⁶²⁴ The Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected our rainbow youth and support organisations.⁶²⁵ Spaces to find support, be together and connect are even more essential now, for rebuilding mental well-being amongst our rainbowy communities.

Queer Napping is a social practice that generates rainbowy self-love and collective care. I am envisioning a future project with Richard that travels through the centres and peripheral towns of Aotearoa, to share *Queer Napping* and other *bttm//bottom* methods with our communities and organisations (especially our most vulnerable youth and elderly). The

⁶²³ Springgay and Truman, 'Propositions for Research-Creation'.

⁶²⁴ Reversing the patterning that sets up for hypervigilance and alertness in our nervous systems, napping restores energies, returning to a bodily home to rejuvenate.

⁶²⁵ Rainbow youth face higher rates of mental distress, linked to experiences of social exclusion and discrimination. Our transgender whānau are "more likely to face unemployment, housing insecurity and barriers to accessing health and social services." Retrieved from Te Ngākau Kahukura, 'Covid-19 Support', Te Ngākau Kahukura, 2019, <https://www.tengakaukahukura.nz/covid19>

intention of such a project would be rooted in inter-generational community-building and well-being, celebrating diverse queer intimacies, and for esteem-building and the facilitation of dreaming better worlds together.

Forest and I have plans to produce more collaborative work at the meeting place of inter-species divination, digital spaces, and transgender embodiments (building on *Songs with Birds*). We are currently working on a web-based video work that extends the experiments of *Songs with Birds*, in a curatorial project led by Lydia Zanetti (to be launched in the second half of 2022). We are also searching out exhibition and residency opportunities for 2023, to extend our capacity for engaging digital technologies in queer*trans performance, and further developing queer*trans divining in performance work that engages *more-than/human communing*.

Flotsy: popping and spurting future projectiles of research

Perhaps it is in *flotsy* that I pin my dearest hopes for the future re/generation of this research. This inquiry has offered methods for anarchiving and disseminating the more-than/human relationality of performance as research, recognising the lively and loving spirit emanating from flimsy attempts to make sense of something that is never fully knowable. Experimentation with digital microscope moving and still image in *Scat Hunt* (2020), and the adaptability of digital drawing technologies in *Songs with Birds* (2022) for example, possibilise the immediacy of close-up photography, to amplify the forces and voices of the small, the unnoticed, the slight, and in/significant of choreographic research. The animations and ~~queer~~ erasure of drawing over, using iPad and iPencil, have helped to make visibilised and valid the ephemeral trace of *gayYay*, and the life and liveliness of queer*trans performance beyond this project.

In the otherwise unseen, easily missed, queer*trans energies and capacities, I see a thriving future for the feltness of more-than/human relationality in performance (as politically impactful). I continue to stand up for and send my unconditional love for *the uuddd* (challenging everything white, cis/het, classist, patriarchy, ableist). I do this for the better futures of our rainbowy peoples, floating on the dreamy performance atmospheres carried forward by *flotsy*.



Figure 65: val smith, *Drag Dag* (Auckland Pride Parade flotsy), 2018. Image: val smith⁶²⁶

⁶²⁶ *Drag Dag* is currently part of the exhibition 'twisting, turning, winding: takatāpui + queer objects', 4 Jun-21 Aug 2022, Objectspace, curated by Richard Orjis. Orjis, Richard, 'Twisting, Turning, Winding: Takatāpui + Queer Objects', Objectspace, 4 August 2022, <https://www.objectspace.org.nz/exhibitions/twisting-turning-winding-takatapui-queer/>

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