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Mark Harvey

Performance
Test
Labour

Mark Harvey
2011
School of Art and Design
The Auckland University of Technology
(AUT)
Primary Supervisor: Mark Jackson

Sometimes I think people are getting more and more clever watching us be more and more stupid. (Jerome Bel, quoted in Etchells, 2004: 199)

Out in the real world, good research follows correct procedures and this prevents stupidity, and you don't want to have accidents caused by stupidity. (My 5th Form High School Science Teacher, Mr Paul)

There's no guarantee yet I'll pass the test. (Georges Bataille, quoted in Ronell, 2005: 132)

For Monique, Tui and Sanne

Performance   Test   Labour

Content

Other Left Foot: Ways of Researching *112*

Figures

Figure1. *My Unacceptable Feet*, Mark Harvey (2007/2011; Photograph).

Figure 2. *Lie Down with Me and I Will Promise: The Performance Anxiety of a Bullshit Artist*, Mark Harvey (Photograph by Dan Smith). Live Performance. Zagreb, PSi 15: Performance Studies International, 2009).

Figure 3. *The Question of Negotiating Different Genres*, Mark Harvey (2005/2011; Photograph). Image From Flyer for: Harvey, Mark. *Lazy Susan and Smelly John.* Live Performance Event. Auckland: AUT, 2005

Figure 4. *Animal Locomotion (Plate 163)*, Eadweard Muybridge (1887; Photograph). In *Charles A. Hartman Fine Art* [Web Site]. [cited 7th Jan 2011]. Available from http://www.hartmanfineart.net/artist/gallery/89/.

Figure 5. *Jerome Bel*, Jerome Bel. (1995; Photograph, Live Performance). In Michailov, Mihaela. "Falling Out of Motion - the Post-Performance BodyArt." [Web Site]. Act Magazine, 2010 [cited 1st Jan 2011]. Available from http://www.artactmagazine.ro/falling-out-of-motion-the-post-performance-body.html.

Figure 6. *Rhythm O*, Marina Abramovic (1974; Photograph of Live Performance) In Schimmell Paul. "Leap into the Void: Performance and the Object." In *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979*, edited by Russell Ferguson, 17-120. Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998.100.

Figure 7. *Interior Scroll*, Carolee Schneeman. (1975; Photograph of Live Performance). In "High Performance." [Web Site]. [cited 1st Jan 2011]. Available from http://www.artscenecal.com/ArtistsFiles/HighPerformance/HighPerformanceFile/HighPerformancePics/HighPerformance4.html.

Figure 8. *What Is Live Art*, Joshua Sofaer (2002, Photograph of Live Performance). In Cline, Rich. "Live on Oxford Street" [Web Site]. [cited 1st Jan 2011]. Available from http://shadows.wall.net/features/qx-jsof2.htm.

Figure 9. *When Will September Roses Bloom? Last Night Was Only a Comedy*, Goat Island (2005; Photograph of Live Performance). In *Liveartwork DVD* [Web Site]. [cited 1st Jan 2011]. Available from http://www.liveartwork.com/dvd/current%20issue5.htm.

Figure 10. *This is How They Tell Me to Do Correct Scientific Testing*, Mark Harvey (2011; Photograph).

Figure 11. *Don't Listen to Me*, Mark Harvey (2011; Photograph).

Figure 12. *Calling Up Freddie Nietzsche and the Gang and Judy B*, Mark Harvey (2005/2011; Photograph). Image From Flyer for: Harvey, Mark. *Calling the Guise*. Live Performance Seance. Auckland: AUT, 2005.

Figure 13. *Why We Need to Recite the Correct, True and One and Only History*, Mark Harvey (2011; Photograph).

Figure 14. *A Trace of The Other in Me*, Mark Harvey (2008/2011; Photograph).

Figure 15. *New Zealand Police Helmet*, Brian (Photograph). In Brian. *Police Collection.com* [Web Site]. [cited 2011 1st Jan]. Available from http://policecollection.com/newzealand.htm.

Figure 16. *Tools to Be Interpellated By*, Mark Harvey (2008/2011; Photograph).

Figure 17. *Where Some Good Labour Has Taken Place, I Know, I've Seen It Before*, Mark Harvey (2007/2011; Photograph).

Figure 18. *Malevich*, Mike Parr (2002; Photograph of Live Performance). In Geczy, Adam. *Mike Parr: Internet Performance*. [Web Site]. Real Time. 52, Dec-Jan [cited 1st Jan 2011]. Available from www.realtimearts.net/article/52/6946.

Figure 19. *Promise Me Effortlessness*, Mark Harvey (2007/2011; Photograph).

Figure 20. *The Last Performance*, Jerome Bel (1998; Photograph of Live Performance; name of performer not known). In Willes, Christopher. *Jerome Bel* [Web Site]. Art and Culture, [cited 1st Jan 2011]. Available from http://www.artandculture.com/feature/1735.

Figure 21. *Self Unfinished*, Xavier Le Roy (1998/2009; Photograph of Live Performance; Photograph by Katrin Schoof). In *Sculpture Centre: Curator's Notebook 2010* [Web Site].[cited 1st Jan 2011]. Available from http://www.sculpture-center.org/exhibitionsCuratorsNotebook.

Figure 22. *Panoramix*, La Ribot (2004: Photograph of Live Performance). In Michailov, Mihaela. "The Visible Spectator – The Power to Watch (Oneself." [Web Site]. Art Act Magazine [cited 1st Jan 2011]. Available from http://www.artactmagazine.ro/the-visible-spectator-the-power-to-watch-oneself.html.

Figure 23. *Café Müller*, Pina Bausch. (1978/2003; Photograph of Live Performance Rehearsal). In *One Germany in Europe (1989-2009)* [Web Site]. German History in Documents and Images, 1978/2003 [cited 1st Jan 2011]. Available from http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=3215.

Figure 24. *Broken Fall (Organic)*, Bas Jan Ader (1971/1994; Photograph of Live Performance). [Web Site]. Artnet [cited 1st Jan 2011]. Available from http://www.artnet.com/artwork/424664563/139919/broken-fall-organic.html.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby 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 explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

So Help Me Sigmund

Signature of Candidate:

Acknowledgements

This is one of the parts of an exegesis where I can say what ever I like because it doesn't promise its examination, just as long as I am accountable to the institution of learning in having an acknowledgements page. Do you really want to read this? After all, how many dance programme notes have we all read where the thank yous make up 90% of the material, and we wonder what the point of it is. I suppose I should guild the lily here, because that is the responsible thing to do. But the thing is, what if these labours of mine are not worth the paper and flooring that they are on – in that case, who in their right mind would want to be mentioned in this acknowledgement section? I stand at the precipice as to whether I should take the jump and show gratitude, or simply slide on into this thesis – and in doing so if this is acceptable enough then let this infer my gratitude to you and everyone who I should thank. But just as Slavoj Zizek's cynic always does, I yet again toe the line (even though I can't stand mushy moments).

To Mark Jackson, Carol Brown and particularly earlier on Lucille Holmes, I am in humble gratitude to my supervisors who have been patient, wise, generous, very patient and extremely patient, and have and continue to feed my excitement and will to knowledge: to Mark, especially for his guidance in calling up future science and the fine-tuning of this exegesis and project, to Carol, for her facilitation in me finding my way towards more unknown and unaccounted expeditions in my practice. To Ralph Buck, my boss-man, I thank with sincerity for his generosity and support. To my grandfather RB Harvey (our Mr Magoo), I give thanks, who had faith in me commencing with this project, shared his pride with me, and who during the course of this I had the privilege to help nurse in his final weeks of life, in the midst of this project. To my family and friends, who have stood by me through this time, where I'm sure many others would not, I am in deep gratitude to – especially to my children Tui and Sanne, for being patient with me, particularly so for small children, and for being born during this project. And I give the most and biggest thanks of all to Monique my partner, for all of her support in so many ways that are beyond mention here, who I owe a month in Paris for a holiday after this project has been accounted for. So there you have it, if you have read up to this point, you are better than I am, and thank you for doing it.

Abstract

Performance: Test: Labour is a practice-led PhD research project that systematically engages the fields of performance art and dance choreography. The research aims to offer new perspectives on the international field of choreography through its negotiations between performance art and dance choreography. The research methodology has been developed across a number of critical approaches in relation to the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Research methods have been particularly developed through a close reading of Avital Ronell's *The Test Drive*, a work concerned with a Nietzschean understanding of experimentation. Nietzsche's concept of playing the fool plays an essential role in this. Within this engagement with the test-subject, the research has drawn from an autobiography of the artist's bio-political engagements with performance art and dance choreography. This autobiographical perspective has itself been informed by Michel Foucault's engagements with Nietzsche's understanding of genealogy. In this sense the thesis examines how specific genealogies of choreographic discourse in performance art and dance have served to contextualize this practice. Key artists in a performance art genealogy for this practice include Vito Acconci, Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman, bas Jan Ader and William Pope L. Artists from a dance choreography genealogy include Yvonne Rainer, Pina Bausch, Jerome Bel, Xavier Le Roy, and La Ribot. Jacques Derrida's Nietzschean perspective of "otobiographies," on the essential otherness of the autobiographical, has also informed this process of choreographic testing in terms of how these fields have been constructed via 'the other' in the artist's practice. This perspective has also been informed by Judith Butler's reading of performativity in terms of interpellation and normativity.

This test-practice has especially involved the artist performing choreographed solo minimal endurance actions, that include repetition and spoken text, drawing attention to the processes of choreographing, through the lineages of performance art and dance choreography. These lineages are encountered in relation to the role of the 'other'. Through performative strategies of repetitions of bodily actions in relation to text, this research at first appears to propose that *physical* labour can be recognised as *the* primary aspect in making 'conceptual choreography' that Bojana Cvejic refers to as 'conceptual dance'. Such an approach differs from Cvejic, alluding to how this current genre of choreography does not focus on the role of physical labour. The core discovery of this project is how *idiocy* can be uncovered through an engagement in choreographic practice, in relation to concepts such as Giorgio Agamben's bare life, to the degree that neither 'labour' nor 'conceptualising' can take precedence in practice. The research also creates new conditions of possibility for an understanding of labour as an alternative approach to Andre Lepecki's questioning of the role of the physical body in choreography, in his call for 'ontological still acts.' Further contribution of this research is in its play with audience repair. In summary, *Performance: Test: Labour*, in its negotiations of the relations between performance art and dance choreography develops an original understanding of idiocy in terms of the physical and the conceptual as these notions have been utilized, deployed and related in performance research and practice.

Preface: Being here with you

It is a retired old folks association hall, a zone of transition, a place of community (still) in Auckland, New Zealand. I perform a selection of tests called *I am a wee bit stumped* to a gathering of people, friends, family, fellow artists, academics, others. When I came up with the name, I really felt a wee bit stumped as to what I should call it. Just like the title implies, I wonder what it can mean to play with performance work that reflects back on itself and its contexts. In thinking about this, I perform six tests as promises, where I play the fool, where I labour with what are to me simple banal yet strenuous physical actions with my body, again and again …

First test. I walk to the threshold of the hall proper and stand in the dark. Black trousers and a light pink shirt. I feel dressed up, respectable and suitably convincing, moreover, convinced. I am in my shiny shoes, the ones my grandfather wore to my Aunty Nancy's funeral, then gave me not long before his. I wear his shoes and I feel the audiences' eyes on me. The audience is in front of me, yet I am silhouetted so that they cannot see all of me. I wait, I breathe, I do a check-list of my body. I ask them, "can you see alright?" and then I propose beginning. I fall backwards onto the floor, repeating this movement again and again, and again, welcoming the floor. It doesn't feel like last time I tried to fall over again and again like this. This time I try to give way from under my legs, and land splat on my back. It is a good thing I have plenty of padding on my back from many years of physical labour, and dancing. Is this dance or performance art? I speak to the audience and the other, proposing that I will deliver a welcome speech to them. "When I begin, I will be professional, entertaining and easily accessible" … "I will have a clear beginning middle and end" … "And when I deliver this talk I will not engage with old fashioned ideas and practices", and on my text goes. I am caught in a contractual arrangement of promising. I ask for suggestions for what I should do after the welcome talk, I continue falling and wait for answers from the audience, but there are none, so I give up and walk out. They are promises that are normative in my lines of genealogy, they are what many might want me to do. Promises to my audience to myself and to the other. But what I promise is not what I intend, it is the making of these promises that I enact. Promises are promises and how can they be anything more?

An assistant, Anna, changes the lights when I leave, just like she did before I started, just like she does all of the time for me in each of these tests. Her role calls me up to for task, in some ways embodying the other as do Brent and Louise, whom we will meet later. They dial 0800 PERFORM ME and thereby help to sign my name.

Second test. I stand and present myself on another side of the hall, dressed in grey-brown trousers, a stripy shirt and sensible shoes for the bargain. They were bargain shoes from the bargain store that has the TV ad chime 'where everyone gets a bargain.' Most of the lights are on. I am handed toilet plungers by Brent, one for each hand. Thank you. I am ready, so I lie down face down. I place the plungers in front of me. I hit the floor with the mouth of the right plunger making a loud thwack noise. I do the same on the left and pull my body up to be horizontally level with them. I repeat this a few times. I know this task, my body remembers it. After every four to six plunges I ask my audience one of the following, "is this ok(?)", "is that alright(?)", and "what about that one?" I travel around the edge of the room, and at first the audience carry on talking, eating and drinking. But after a minute or two they become silent. I hope to get comments from them. They could be art critics and former dance teachers. Some of them say it's ok, others say nothing, and others make encouraging comments to me. It is like running a 400-metre sprint and I manage to finally complete the race. Anna closes the door behind me and I am done.

Third test. I enter the hall in my old gardening shorts and a rough t-shirt, and once more I find a place to stand still diagonally opposite the entrance. Louise has set up a pool of light from a spotlight for me to stand in. A light for working on your car with, connected to an old Kambrook power lead reel, all objects that my grandfather once gave me. I stare at a spot on the wall of the hall, somewhere above the photo of a long gone governor general – he holds me in place. Brent hands me my frying pans one for each hand. They are familiar objects, used at home everyday. I hold them near my head. I might clang them together with my head in the middle, I might not, it's tempting. Like in all my other tests I do a checklist of myself as I stand there. When it feels like I have checked in enough with my body, the audience and my creditor the other, I commence firing. I rapidly lift the frypans above my shoulders and back down, as though I am a weight lifter. A dumb joke perhaps? I want to see if I can play with this notion of the checklist here, with all the rules I play on myself as a performer. I do this by rapidly citing a checklist for this performance. I say a bunch of things, all with the prefix, 'I must' … "I must stand, I must be presentable, I must have direct eye contact with you, I must pay attention to detail, I must be good, I must develop what I am doing…" I suppose I could keep reciting this, it is still hardwired into my memory, into my body. My list eventually includes more and more contradictions. They are the contradictions of my genealogy, the contradictions from performance art and dance that I welcome being hailed as. I hear some people sniggering and laughing. I can feel the differentiated responses of the dance and art audiences in the room, dependent upon what I say. In a way it is reassuring to know that there are these languages that I share with them, and that they are here with me while I do this. It gets harder and harder, I can no longer sustain the frypanning. My body begins to wobble with a sense of over-compensation, because my arms don't feel like they can last. I puff but keep going. After a while Brent comes and stands beside me. I think he's trying to tell me something. He flicks out the light and takes the frying pans off me. I must therefore leave the room and get changed for the next round. Meanwhile, once again, Anna turns the lights on full and the audience can carry on and do what they do without me, for now.

Fourth test. Again I stand. This time I am on the small proscenium stage at one end of the hall. With no headroom, I feel like a giant. Brent and Louise pull the red curtains open to reveal me. I am in my favourite white clothes, including the white shirt my grandfather gave me. This is barely my grandfather, barely my life in this. I scan the audience. I see them as much as they me. Here I go again; I try to wrap myself in cardboard with just one roll of packing tape. Many people in the audience have seen a version of this, so once in a while I sporadically ask questions like, "is this how it goes(?)", and "is that how I did it?" Perhaps it is to the other. Some in the audience respond, they say yes, they say no, and some of the children present (including my daughters) jump up and down, as though they are in a mosh pit at a punk-rock concert. The audience in their responses help to police me and convince me that I am doing real work. The wrapping is hard, and when I get to placing a box on my head Anna further directs me by taping it on. By then, I wonder if I really am complete, and so I continue to follow my choreographic script to the letter by spinning until I fall over from being dizzy. Upon my landing Louise and Brent close the curtains on me. Next please.

Fifth test. Let me guess, oh yes, I stand still again. This time I am on the other side of the room and I am all in black, with nothing that was my grandfather's. The lights are all on in the hall. The audience fill the space. I slowly lean out from the top of my head … until the weight of my head drags my upper torso back, then my pelvis, then my legs and I am walking backwards through the crowd. I slowly go faster. I aim to travel around the hall, back to the place I started and keep going from there. But I am forced to stop. I have bumped into a woman in the audience. I ask her if she is okay, she says yes, then I suggest to her that she should move. I keep going. I get faster, and faster, and faster. My foot clips past other audience members. I hope they are okay. Many in the audience feel nervous. I am nervous. I do not want to cause an accident or worry anyone else. This is a different kind of relationship with my audience. I feel like I am breaking the rules of engagement, the rules of

stagecraft, perhaps even the rules of the white-walled neutral gallery. Could this be what Vito Acconci would do if he were in my shoes? There is no hiding the clumsiness of this action. Yet I attempt to retain some sense of composure through fidelity to the task. Nonetheless I get so fast that I cannot control myself. At this point I try to suddenly stop. It is a stumble. Uncontrolled, yet practiced it is a threshold I have hoped for. An act of pointless stupidity perhaps? A delibertae failure that reveals structures of performer-audience norms? But I haven't planned for quite as much of an audience reaction. You can feel the tension in the air, like a pea soup. Once stopped I compose myself, doing the usual checklist and say, "you tell me when." Someone somewhere in the room says "when." I don't listen, I wait. I don't take up the offer of repair. I wait for a while. I begin to fall backward again and attempt to repeat the same action. Again I nick on certain pairs of feet, particularly in one area of the room where the audience has not cleared much space. But they can't move, they are stuck, no escape. Just like me in a way. I stop again in another corner of the room and say "it's coming." I repeat this pattern of saying something from my memorized list that to me appears vague between my moments of falling to running backwards. Again and again. At one point I actually trip over a foot and go flying into the floor. I'm okay. I ask the person who I think I tripped over if he is okay, and he says he is. I have a feeling it wasn't him. I am corralled into going to a corner to start it all over again, and this time I can't seem to help myself and say "sorry", and many laugh at this. But I am sorry, I meant no harm. I want to repair our trust. Is there ever any true repair between audiences and performers? Later on between my backward rounds I ask "what am I doing?" I am really tired at this point in the evening. I could do with a lie down. I keep going only because I can feel the audience on me, and because *I must*. But Anna tells me to stop like a rehearsal director by shouting out "Ok, Mark" and the lights go out and I must leave the hall once again.

Sixth test. Hang on, I'm no longer standing. I am on all fours, with my head pointed to the front door at the other end of the room, while just above me the lights are out, but the rest of the room is lit. I am in the shadow. I have added a blue shirt to my black. The event has changed gear again. It is in wind down mode. But I said in the programme/catalogue that this would be my proposed crescendo. Anna, Brent and Louise instruct audience members to whisper in my ear why they think I should move (if they want me to move). I wait. It feels like everyone watches each other and not just me in their silence. Someone breaks the ice by siding up to me. She whispers to me I must move because there's light at the end of the room. I can feel the rest of the audience watching. There is this invisible barrier between my space and theirs, even with one of them taking a chance with me. So on silently agreeing that she has given me a reason to move I very carefully crawl approximately three centimetres. I attempt to be completely conscious of my every bodily action as I do this. It is like being in a somatic dance fantasyland. It's not quite the ten centimetres I promised in the programme/catalogue notes. But I'm trying. Other people whisper messages to me after this, and I move in the same way, again and again. It feels like hard work in this position. My arms start to shake, I feel sweat trickle down my face and splash near my hands, there is no let-up. A number of times people whisper things to me that I am not convinced about, so I do not move. One person even yells at me that I must not move. And so I do not. I am interpreting what I think are rules that bring about a sense of reduction of the sorts of repair and sense of being carried that I and the audience share together. After doing this for what feels like forever, Anna comes up to me and tells me out loud that it is time to stop. I listen to her, tired, I walk out. She thanks the audience for attending. I then walk out and smile and wave thanks, I appear to be myself and there appears to be a sense of genuine relation with audience members at this point, but is there really? Is there ever really any truth or falseness in any of this? Or is it something moving too and from these signposts?

… Perhaps this is all fine, but why am I doing all of this? What am I trying to promise with these tests and where does all of this come from? Is it something to do with choreography, dance and performance art? Am I getting warm? The following exegesis provides, excuses and alibis for this…

See DVD 2 for video documentation for this performance, and the Appendices for its programme/catalogue and publicity flyer.

1

Promises

beginning … running … stumbling … dropping … crawling … wrapping …
acting … actioning … repairing … repeating … pausing … fronting … reversing … speaking …
listening … seeing … ignoring … puffing … sweating … straining … grazing …

It's just not art … it's just not dance

At a symposium to do with experimental performance studies and practices I attended five years ago I met a group of academics from overseas over a breakfast smorgasbord. They told me they were interested in performance art. I told them I teach in a Dance Studies programme at a University. We then returned to our respective tables. One of them was a rather loud speaker. I overheard her from the other side of the room saying to the rest of her group: "I hate dance! It's too concerned with a lot of people looking pretty and revelling in their sense of spectacle, without little else." In response, I felt amused, and laughed. I think they heard me too. It made me wonder if this person, a senior lecturer at a university, is very familiar with the breadth of dance practices worldwide? Are many who seriously engage in

critical reflections on performance art familiar with dance? Can they see how dance might inform performance art practice? And, at the same symposium, in a conversation about a presentation on a selection of performance art works that we'd just been at, a former dance lecturer of mine said to me in response: "it's just not art, it's just not dance." It made me wonder if this person was aware of contemporary perspectives in dance, not to mention performance art and art. Here were two experts in their respective fields of performance practice that potentially link and yet neither of them appeared open to each other's approaches. Both of their comments led me to wondering: What might it mean to attempt to combine contemporary perspectives of dance choreography with current ways of seeing performance art through practice and as a form of research?

In response to these observations and questions that, from my experience, are common responses to these art forms, this research seeks to engage with making choreographic practice that involves dance and performance art in order to explore what engaging with these two fields can bring about. This research is situated within discourses and practices that emphasise performance events, and writings that have attempted to simultaneously engage with performance art and dance. Key markers of this terrain are artists and dancers of the 1960s New York Judson Church collective (Banes, 1987: 44-55) and, in more recent times, the author Andre Lepecki (2006: 1-49), the artists La Ribot (2004), Tino Sighal (2000/2010), Maria Hassabi and Robert Steijn (Sheldon, 2010) among others. Dance choreography and performance art *as practices of choreography* increasingly appear together in international arts events, research forums and periodicals such as PSi: Performance Studies International (2010), *Performance Matters* (Butt and Heathfield, 2010), *Spill Festival of Performance* (UK), *Anti: Contemporary Art Festival* (Finland), *Performance Research Journal*, *TDR/The Drama Review* and *Dance Theatre Journal*. This research aims to contribute to this current international field of research, where dance and performance art are in dialogue. It does so through a research performance practice that fundamentally questions the disciplinary definitions and performance categorisations that conventionally or historically have come to divide and name fields of practice. The research is equally a response to Bojana Cvejic (2008) who questions how dance can currently be approached since the advent of what she terms 1990s "conceptual dance." For her:

> When a name appears, like 'conceptual dance', it is rejected as a misnomer: both the choreographer and the programmer are wary of any terminology that can raise polemical acts against history in favor of dance's obsession with contemporaneity. A denomination of a current dance practice is undesirable because it can only reiterate the protocols of exhaustion and reaction whereby dance refuses historicity in order to entertain the prestige of contemporaneity that society assigns to it. This is why bringing up 'conceptual dance' does not open but forecloses any discussion with the question: and what comes after 'conceptual dance'? (ibid)

Cvejic alerts us to the problematic use of the term "conceptual dance" in how for many dance practitioners and programmers it emphasizes contemporaneity over historicity in dance, resultantly closing off a consideration of what can arise after it. However, it is useful here as the very act of naming a genre serves to delineate a field of practice from which my project can depart, precisely because it has the potential to close off discourses. Thus my research questions, the fields of their activation and the agency or agendas or possible effects of my endeavours are all caught in existing archives and legacies of performance, visual art disciplines, choreography, dance and theatre. This entanglement, which in a real sense nominates some of the fundamental scope of my research, operates on historical dimensions that are discipline defining, institutionally inscribed and personally affective. I am driven by some and not by others. I am affected differently, drawn to or away from particular practices. My thesis defines the dispersions and differences of these affects. Yet, it is not simply that my critical or theoretical possibilities have been defined by these legacies. My body has been trained, disciplined, defined, accepted or rejected, made to move or not within these same legacies.

From the outset I need to emphasise that the research is practice-led, which means that methodologically the task of locating an horizon of new disclosures comes from my bodily engagements in studio and performance locales. This is research with and through my body that is, perhaps, peculiarly unique in tertiary contexts of research endeavour. I want to return to this in some detail in this introduction so as to give further perspective on the critical and reflexive directions the research has taken in relation to its practice-led framework. I am an artist with a performance history in dance choreography. I am also an educator in a university dance department with a commitment to scholarship and research within a tertiary institutional framework that can be seen at times to marginalise paradigms of practice led enquiry. And I am undertaking a Doctor of Philosophy thesis whose peculiar contours come to question much of what we generally understand as research in an orthodox sense, and even within a practice-led framework of creative research. This research construes an approach that genuinely challenges academic norms. It is situated in what I am calling a *choreographic* practice though a choreography that I come to emphasise as an "expanded field," that is non-exclusionary with respect to the intersecting or overlapping terrains of dance, performance, theatre and the visual arts.

> This precisely is the long story of how *responsibility* originated. The task of breeding an animal with the right to make promises evidently embraces and presupposes as a preparatory task that one first *makes* men to a certain degree necessary, uniform, like among like, regular, and consequently calculable. The tremendous labour of that which I have called "morality of mores" (*Dawn*, section 9, 14, 16) —the labour performed by man upon himself during the greater part of the existence of the human race, his entire *prehistoric* labour, finds in this its meaning, its great justification, notwithstanding the severity, tyranny, stupidity, and idiocy involved in it: with the aid of the morality of mores and the social straightjacket, man was actually *made* calculable. (Nietzsche, 1969: 58-59)

> Knowledge does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason; its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject; rather, it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctual violence. Where religions once demanded sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge. (Foucault, 1998: 387-388)

In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Michel Foucault emphasises that, for Nietzsche, knowledge, the attainment of "truth" is not a neutral, rational and dispassionate act of the will, that scientific consciousness is not a slow, methodical and progressive building. Rather, will to knowledge is cruel, violent, driven by base instinct and passion: a will-to-knowledge as will-to-power. In our passion for knowledge we sacrifice ourselves, we experiment on ourselves, we commit ourselves to cruel and barbarous acts. All knowledge rests on injustice, not truth. What progresses is enslavement in instinctual violence. We recognise in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* a radical reversal of all of our understanding of the civility of human reason, an overthrowing of the very ground of knowing: "We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge—and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves— how could it happen that we should ever *find* ourselves?" (Nietzsche, 1969: 15). With something of a fundamental derailing of the rational and moral subject who knows, there is a compelling perspective in Nietzsche's thinking to which this research project is drawn. It starts, and almost finishes with my body and his, with this body of mine that I seem to subject to such great abuse and torment as the experimental site for my research. Nietzsche understood how a body thinks and I am drawn to this Nietzsche and those who seem to have most profoundly articulated the limbic resonances of an attunement to Nietzsche's styles: Avital Ronell, in particular, but also Foucault and Jacques Derrida, along with Judith Butler who at times surfaces a texture inclusive of Nietzsche, Foucault and Derrida.

Case in point: in *Ecce Homo (How One Becomes What One Is)*, in his famous chapter "Why I Am So Clever," Nietzsche never digresses from the question of nutrition, digestion and eating well or badly except when he needs to discuss place and climate or recreation. He asks,

towards the end of the chapter, why he has so emphasised these "small things." He answers that all of those "great things," ideals, or what he will come to refer to as idols: "God, soul, virtue, sin, beyond, truth, eternal life" have meant that we come to despise the little things, "the basic concerns of life itself." (Nietzsche, 1969: 256). Knowledge is first inscribed on bodies before it becomes idea. Our forms of knowing are subject to climate and soil before they are taken up in the regions of politics or education. Or rather, politics or education happens in the training and cultivation of bodies. This is what Foucault emphasises in his writing on Nietzsche. In what way am I to show I am clever enough for a PhD? All research happens through the training and cultivating of bodies. Yet, the dictates of research, in a more-and less disciplinary terrain, asks us to politely efface this harnessed flesh in the name of, in some cases, the objectivity of experimental science that presents the mathematical certitude of the world. In other cases, research presents an "I" readily equipped with an army of metaphors in the guise of the authority of the archival reference, an "I" equally effaced as the one who recognises and repeats empirical searches or hermeneutical circles. Even our practice-led creative research paradigms emphasise the artifact, the thing created and in contemporary methodologies the slippage or dispersion of an I who would want to be an embodied responsibility. And even with performance works that settle on or emphasise choreography in a conventional sense, this fleshy limbic self is that motile agency for a certain craft of movement. But with me, with this case, this *ecce homo*, my body is a site for a wild experimentation, for an un-crafted series of experiments on its limits: that it promises, that it labours, that it is stupid and idiotic, that it is calculable. These are wild experiments given to me by Nietzsche.

Though, Nietzsche is neither the origin nor ground for my practice. These limits to our being, to what we are capable of doing, the promising animal, the labouring, stupid or calculable animal, are all easily locatable in the discourses and practices of dance, dance choreography, performance and performance art. My aim, in part, is to draw on and draw out that genealogy, that legacy or lineage from the archive of texts describing and defining performance as well as that dossier of critical and reflexive engagements with the disciplines of dance and performance choreography. But this genealogy is considered, assayed or thought in a Nietzschean way, or in a manner alerted to me by Foucault and his Nietzschean emphasis on truth as a history of errancy. The archives of the field are also encountered in a manner of thinking the *autos* of a self's accountability, the unavoidable autobiography of this research, in the medium of the ear of the other, what Jacques Derrida does with his thinking of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, in "Otobiographies," in *The Ear of The Other*.

Why I am so acceptable

The thesis for this PhD happens with the events of performance; it is assayed, examined, made accountable, calculable in an encounter with my body engaging in performance. The thesis in this sense is accompanied by an exegesis, a written and, partially, audio-visual document, structured in seven chapters that adhere to well established frameworks for research and scholarship, author citation, rigour of argument and pertinence to a practice about which it purportedly has something to say. The exegesis is a friendly guide, a map of some territories, an explanation and rationale, an excuse and justification. Though it has taken research and scholarship to write, it is not essentially the housing of my thesis. On these grounds, language seduces us away from the "little things," from a body whose digestion or alertness wavered from time to time while composing its paragraphs, its logic, its sense. This is the same faltering body that throws itself around a studio or performance space and this is the essential relation between exegesis and thesis: a body still finding out what it is capable of doing.
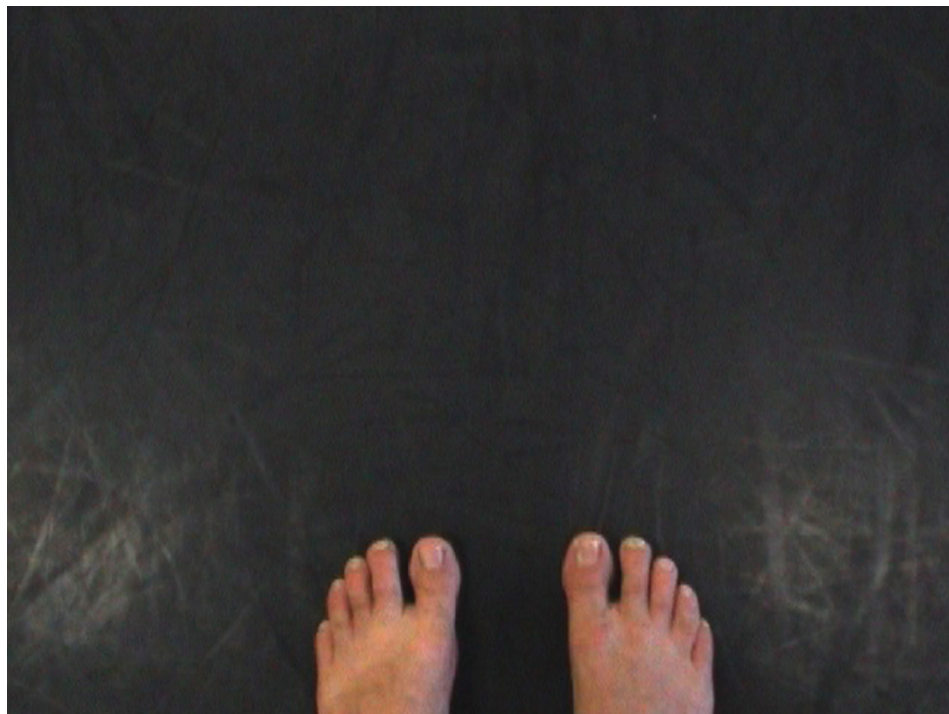
Figure1. *My Unacceptable Feet*, Mark Harvey (2007/2011; Photograph).

Apart from this introduction, there are six chapters structured in two broad sections. The initial section of three chapters engages with a particular world into which I am thrown, or a series of more-or-less intensive and extensive fields of operation that determine in myriad ways my horizon of understanding with respect to my research. These three chapters build an extended literature review that had a developmental arc in its unfolding. Initially, in

Chapter 2, "Dead Fathers," my aim is to provide a grounded understanding of the series of differential disciplinary fields that have undergone transformation over the past forty years or so. These are succinctly, perhaps hastily though certainly provisionally, named as 'Modernist' and 'Modern' Dance Choreography, Choreography of the Expanded Field, Performance Art and Live Art. This chapter works through key texts in these fields in order to lay out how, institutionally, choreography belongs to more than one legacy, and its future is contested, not so much by bodies that move in this way or that, but by discourses and institutions that define practices. A range of performance, choreographic and art writing is referenced in the chapter, particularly Lepecki (2006), Adrian Heathfield (2008) and Alan Read (2004: 242-249).

Chapter 3, "Living On," introduces what I consider to be the critical dimension to my practice, its Nietzschean archive in the writings of Ronell, Foucault, Derrida and Butler. I emphasise *making* things and not, for example, thinking things here because critical dimensions do not confine themselves to the *psyche*, as if a *soma* trails along behind. This distinction in itself, *psyche* and *soma* is dubious, questionable and something ultimately challenged. *Making* here is thought, perhaps, in the sense that one considers *techne*, the knowhow of things one does as a way of revealing how one is in one's world. Ronell is referenced via two of her books, *Stupidity* (2002) and *Test Drive* (2005). They both engage with Nietzsche, particularly his *Gay Science*. They also engage Paul de Man. I think Ronell would say she is his greatest fan. What de Man contributes in particular is Ronell's understanding of irony, and her reading of irony in all Nietzsche does. I come to realise in working with Ronell that irony is not a rhetorical trope that one applies to something being done as one might apply a veneer, shellac, lustre. Irony is a way of being, a *techne* for one becoming who one is. If in my despair I habitually ask to be acceptable in whatever I do (this thesis will never be done with that pathos), this is the habit forming of a performance knowhow of joyous wisdom, *techne* of an ironist.

Foucault, Derrida and Butler open spaces for considering the *autos* of this bodily making in relation to a plurality of armatures for understanding its legacies, the other whose ear I am to become, the "oto" of "otobiography." Butler's relentless engagement with subject formation in relation to normalisation and the performativity of an iterable norm, particularly in her own leanings on Nietzsche, Foucault and Derrida, opens the space for a wholesale reconsideration of the fields of operation of this subject in formation. From the literature on dance and performance choreographies and from the Nietzschean legacies on legacies and genealogies, something emerges that is not simply another categorisation of the fields of encounter or engagement, though that making that emerges could be misconstrued as such a

repetition. No, something other emerges, what I unearth as something like fundamental structures for how this body is performatively in its world. These structures are not boundaries or limits to what I am or am not. They are horizons from which this body sets out in its making of its world. I have already introduced the most primordial of these, promising, labouring and idiocy or stupidity. From these there develops stilling, failing, falling, being fallen and minimising. One finds each of these enumerated and exemplified in the literature. In this sense they are not mine, idiosyncratically mine. Yet I cannot escape their peculiar structure, their ontological structure for how my world happens. In Derrida's terms, they are otobiographical, a deconstruction of the autos and the oto, an undecidability of a self and other.

The concluding chapter of this section, Chapter 4, "Living Mothers," disassembles the categories we initially encountered in Chapter 2, in order to engage is a depth survey of practices that attach themselves to my performance practice. This "survey" encounters these practices, a genealogy of myself, not in terms of the securing of origins to the intelligibility of a practice within a converging or unified field of engagement, but rather in dispersions, differences, chance encounters and errant understandings in the heterogeneity of labouring, stilling, failing, falling, being fallen and minimising. Key artists and choreographers discussed in this genealogy include Vito Acconci, Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman, Bas Jan Ader, William Pope.L, Yvonne Rainer, Pina Bausch, Jerome Bel, Xavier Le Roy and La Ribot.

In response to what this practice generates, in terms of my attempts to engage with what I will come to define as "choreographic idiocy," the conventional classifications of dance choreography and performance art are reframed through what, after Nietzsche, we might think of as primordial *promises*. Primordial promises, as horizonal structures for what I may become, open a future as promise that, as Nietzsche reminds us, we will be held accountable for, construing *responsibility* and *morality* as the agents of a future potential violence meted out to us for failing, falling, stilling in the labouring production of our true selves. The chapter activates Derrida's notion of paleonymy (1981: 3-7). Paleonymy, for Derrida, is the working over without erasure of old names, a simultaneous play between old and new associated meanings that are, at once, neither and each of them. More specifically, the categories of dance, performance art, live art and choreography are not omitted but folded through the primordial choreographic promises of *Labouring*, *Stilling*, *Failing*, *Falling and Being Fallen*, and *Minimising*.

Test driven

If the first section of the exegesis provides an account of the fields into which I am thrown or the scrublands through which I am making my way, the second section has an altogether different focus. In keeping with the above metaphors, it seeks to provide something like the trajectory of the throw that landed me in these fields and not those, or the velocity of impact, or the calibrations of the launching devices. Or, perhaps, what am I wearing while walking through the scrub? Sensible shoes? How much water am I taking? Did I eat a good breakfast before setting out? In general, how goes it with me in what I want to do, am promising to do and doing? The second section has two chapters, the first of which, Chapter 5, "Provocations and Alibis," is the methodology chapter of the exegesis. It provides the structures and rationale for why, on the face of it, I am acceptable. What *am* I doing when I am performing? What methods, or ways of engaging, do I work with? And why do I work with those and not others? From what we have encountered in section one, clearly the methodology and methods for my performance practice, for my choreography in the expanded field, for my choreographic idiocy, are in many respect alluded to. The grounds are already there, horizons of possibility and encounter already demarcated. This chapter brings these into sharper relief, particularly in drawing on the writings of Ronell as they unpack Nietzsche-becoming-scientist in experimental test procedures on a self-becoming. In this sense the thesis is methodologically Nietzschean but also deconstructive in its Derridean engagements with a self's autobiography understood as a performativity of an other.

As well, I necessarily need to encounter the double scene of research. If my research happens with my body performatively, in performance contexts, this particular research happens in addition as a practice entangled in institutional sites of tertiary education. Not all performance passes through this gate; maybe the best is spared that portal. But here I am and I cannot escape it. Hence an exegesis. Hence, also, a methodology chapter that not only sways with the knowhow of the ironist but is also one that counts the ways research categories "enable" us to make sense of what we are doing. The chapter engages with some contemporary discussions in creative research within a broader panoply of research paradigms in order to shore up the questionable fields of creative endeavour as genuine research: the posts and beams that support these tunnels. And we are digging into the foundation soil of positivist science, avoiding collapses and cave-ins that cut off our own recoverable ore as well as threatening the hand that feeds us morsels. Although the work of Robin Nelson (2006) and Brad Haseman (2007) is engaged in discussion of practice-led research and practice-as-research, the key methodological trajectory with respect to my performance practice is that of "testing," as in orientating a self to itself as the subject and

object of experimentation. This is emphasised in the privilege given to Ronell's "The Rhetoric of Testing," in *Stupidity* and her book-length engagement with Nietzsche's own overtures to an experimental self in *The Test Drive*.

Chapter 6, "Without Delay," is the detailed survey of a series of my own performances that have been formulated and performed during my candidacy for my PhD. This "survey" approached the works from the vantage point of the extent to which they encounter both the primordial promising earlier outlined (labouring, stilling, failing, falling, being fallen, minimising) as well as an activation of the genealogy of performances discussed in Chapter 4. It, too, is methodological. The life source of my primordial choreographic promises is my promise of *choreographic idiocy*. "Without Delay" is the test stage for delivery on that promise, for keeping my word, my responsibility, my passion for knowledge. These four works are to be read as precursors to the final performance submission for the PhD examination, as an experimental training ground premised on promising, labouring, idiocy and calculability or reckoning. The four works are: *In the Round* (Harvey, St Paul St Gallery, Auckland, 31st August, 2005), *Check List* (Harvey, Corban Estate Arts Centre, Auckland, 15th March, 2008), *Wrap Me Up, Make Me Happy: Infectious Optimism Remix* (Harvey, Govett Brewster Public Art Gallery, Taranaki, 2nd September, 2006), *Performance: Arrival: Bullshit* (Harvey, St Paul St Gallery, Auckland, 28th November, 2009). The choreographic process of *In the Round* is discussed so as to provide an example of how my test methodology is applied in this research. DVD documentation of these works is provided with the exegesis. The paleonymy of dance, performance art, live art, repetition, endurance and failure evolves further as primordial promises of labouring in this chapter into the new names of *Test-working, Stilling, Falling: Being Fallen*. These provide a closer reflection on what this choreographic practice generates as *promises*, than does the earlier list of primordial promises in "Living Mothers." This distillation should not be mistaken for the unearthing of truth or essence. Rather, these strategies of *choreographic idiocy* via primordial promises of labouring include repetitions, endurance, attempts to create banal actions and a consideration of 'the other' through choreographic actions with my body in relation to vocalising text: not a single great Idea or Idol amongst them; just the little things of a body's experiments at becoming what it is. The proposed final performance work(s), *So Far* (provisionally titled), are outlined as a supplement to Chapter 6. Rather than discuss this final piece as if it is something fixed and done, this supplement aims to present choreographic developments in an ongoing manner so as to alert the reader to particular perspectives when they view this work after this exegesis has been written.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, "Needs Improvement," is the concluding chapter to this thesis and aims to emphasise the original contribution of this research. *Performance Test Labour* aims to make a significant contribution to current international perspectives on choreography, dance, performance art, live art and related terrains of discourse and research. A key finding is how, as practice-led research, this project shows that the performance of choreographed labour, with its emphasis on bodily testing, generates conceptual insights. In this regard, this project breaks decisively with what many involved in dance see as conceptual choreography's *somatophobia*.[1] Through a particularly Nietzschean activation of idiocy and a test drive whose *techne* is irony, my research practice is my negotiation of dance choreography and performance art choreography as a contribution to these fields of research. A further significant finding is in how my choreographic practice activates archives of practice-related genealogies, histories of emergence in their dispersions and chance, with the self of autobiography and genealogies of the artist-as choreographer, that simultaneously considers the role or locus of the other while performing before an audience, how an "audience" is not a coincident site of the other. Perhaps, a final contribution is in how this practice choreographically tests to fail-point promises of labouring, stilling and falling (as failing) and being fallen (as failed) as *primordial promises*, in addition to repair (from falling and being fallen).

In addition, this concluding chapter contextualizes the re-staging of my four previous works in my final live submission (i.e., *In the Round*, *Check List*, *Wrap Me Up, Make Me Happy: Infectious Optimism Remix* and *Performance: Arrival: Bullshit*). Two issues (at least) are important here. One is a discussion of a relation between the already-seen DVD excerpts of each of these works encountered in a negotiation of the exegesis material in relation to a further encounter of excerpts as component of the examination live performance. This activates some contemporary debate on liveness and documentation.[2] The other salient issue is the very notion of re-staging. Again, there are some strong current debates on the phenomenon of re-staging in relation to an understanding of origins and originality, performativity and iterability, author and authority.

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[1] This is a common response to Lepecki's book *Exhausting Dance* among dancers, in relation to how it champions conceptual dance. Many dance practitioners perceive Lepecki prioritising the mind over the body as a correlate with 'conceptual' dance. The perception of *somatophobia* in conceptual dance is also a reason why many dance practitioners and programmers have turned away from this genre, as inferred in my earlier citing of Cvejic.

[2] Consideration of 'liveness' engaged by Philip Auslander and Rebecca Schneider is discussed later in the thesis.

Communities of the question

A number of philosophers have on occasion emphasised the question-worthiness of questions, the difficulty of a genuine question, the construal of communities of the question. I am thinking here in particular of Derrida and his occasional aside to Martin Heidegger who famously suggested there have only been four questions asked in the history of philosophy. Fortunately, for Heidegger, he was the one who had asked the fourth. Experimental science is simply not that lofty. Questioning comes more easily. Experiments are meant to happily fail. Hypotheses are happily tested and it is great if they are proved wrong. This is progress. Right or wrong, there is progress in the labour of testing. PhD proposal documents often ask for your key hypotheses or key questions. Creative works research often rails against this part of the form and formality of a well-devised project. Creative labourers don't start with Hypotheses to test. What is interesting about Nietzsche's *Gay Science* is that he wants in this text to become a great scientist, to subject things to experimentation and hypotheses. I don't think he would object to me proposing some hypotheses to test in a programme of devising *choreographic idiocy*. After all, he famously said we have art in order that we will not perish from the truth.

Figure 2. *Lie Down with Me and I Will Promise: The Performance Anxiety of a Bullshit Artist*, Mark Harvey (2009; Live Performance; Zagreb, Photograph by Dan Smith.)

The key question that this research asks is:

What can be discovered through a negotiation between performance art choreography and dance choreography within this choreographic practice and how can *testing* as a method of interrogation be applied to this?

As already noted, a methodology of *testing* has been selected to explore this negotiation of dance and performance art choreography that aims for a sense of critical enquiry activating insights and discoveries that are not fixed, absolute or finite. The research is practice-led, allowing for *practice* to deliver on this key question. At the same time, this question concerns practice. Hence, in terms of emphasis or weighting, equal measure, generally speaking, goes to my performance to be examined and to this exegesis being read. The exegesis provides contexts and critical frameworks in which to read this performance practice though the thesis rests with my performance choreography.

In approaching the relating of dance choreography and performance art choreography, this project has been structured in three registers:

1. What are the genealogies and norms that this performance practice tests in its negotiation of dance choreography and performance art choreography and how can it test them?

This project negotiates two terrains of practice (dance and performance art), other related fields of discourse and perspectives (such as live art), in relation to the impact of my own sense of autobiography. Examining these contingent histories and conventions as they manifest in this choreographic practice will generate insights and discoveries.

2. How can the concepts of repetition, endurance, failure and a consideration of the other be engaged with as methods of testing these genealogies and norms within this performance practice?

The research activates specific choreographic performance strategies in terms of its negotiation of dance choreography and performance art choreography. 'The other' in this research in particular references Derrida's engagement with notions of self or *autos* through "otobiographies."

3. Through negotiations of dance choreography and performance art choreography, what can this practice-led research contribute to current discourses on choreography?

The research aims to have an agency in the critical discourses on performance, liveness, dance choreography and so on. It is hoped that its critical registers that emphasise a body's

performativity, circulating in Nietzsche's writing, can contribute to current discourses in the field.

Figure 3. *The Question of Negotiating Different Genres*, Mark Harvey (2005/2011; Photograph).

Left Foot

Literature Review

2

Dead Fathers

If modernity's "only changeless element" is, paradoxically, movement, then it could very well be that by disrupting the alliance between dance and movement, by critiquing the possibility of sustaining a mode of moving in a "flow and continuum of movement", some recent dance may be actually proposing political and theoretical challenges to the old alliance between the simultaneous invention of choreography and modernity as "being-toward-movement" and the political ontology of movement in modernity. In this sense, to exhaust dance is to exhaust modernity's permanent emblem. (Lepecki, 2006: 7-8)

As Jacques Derrida puts it, Kantian aesthetics is thus a *parergon*, or discursive (and ideological) *frame* that is put in place, I argue, to contain, or exclude, the potentially scary, fleshy, joyous, wounded, and/or abject vicissitudes of embodied human experience. This frame prohibits the attachments of embodied desire and '[a]rt (in general) […] is inscribed here', inside its borders. The 'inside' of art, defined by the logic of aesthetics as the true artwork, is established and contained by the frame, which keeps art safe from the threatening abjection of the 'outside' (particularly ever-present dangers of bodily pleasure or affect in general). If the aesthetic is thus geared towards what art historian, Lynda Need, has argued to be 'the creation of distinct boundaries to one's sense of self, the creation of an absolute distinction between the spiritual and the corporeal', then clearly the live enactments of bodies presented as 'art' completely destroy its most basic premises, as do works presented in non-sanctioned exhibition spaces, soliciting non-traditional audiences in performative and temporally extended ways.

live
art
body
duration
public
space
Works in which these terms intersect, then, activate the 'de-containing' potential of performance … (Jones, 2009: 31)

> Live Art is barely live and barely art. In this exposed state it is absolutely exceptional. Whether Live Art describes the various activities associated with a lifetime's work … there is no escaping the conundrum that the condition for the continuation of this work is the imaginative sustenance of exceptional acts in cultures that are constantly concealing their own conditions of production. (Read, 2004: 243).

Choreography in the 'expanded field'

Choreography, a key mode of practice for this research, is defined differently in different contexts. A point of departure and lineage for this project, and what was a starting point to my own training as an artist, lies within the realms of Modern and Modernist dance where choreography is positioned as the art of creating *dance* through the *movement* of a human body.[3] This definition situates dance and movement as the essential elements of choreography. While it is not disputed that choreography may involve movement with dancing bodies, this project intends to focus on a wider perspective whereby choreography does not prioritise movement and dancing bodies. To locate choreography primarily as *movement* resonates with the notion that it should be movement-for-movement's-sake: movement and dancerly motility as the *raison d'être* for choreographing. This emphasis on movement is significant for dance modernism, about which Lepecki provides some insight. He cites Peter Sloterdijk: "modernity's project is fundamentally kinetic: ontologically, modernity is a pure being toward movement." (Lepecki, 2006: 7). As Lepecki suggests, modernism projects objects through motion. He refers specifically to the motion of choreographed form through the dancing body. Harvie Ferguson notes: "the only changeless element in Modernity is the propensity to movement, which becomes, so to speak, its permanent emblem." (cited by Lepecki, 2006: 7). Bodies that are choreographed are primarily framed, as Lepecki suggests, through "a constant display of motion, to the ontological agitation" that "Sloterdijk identifies as modernity's 'kinetic excess'." (2006: 9). Lepecki adds that dancers are subjected to movement via the isolated focus of the moving

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[3] For further contextualising of this, see the debate between Susan Manning and Sally Banes over these definitions as well as the notions of modernism, post-modern and post-modernist that relate significantly to dance in ongoing issues of the journal *TDR*. For the purpose of this research, Modern dance and dance modernism are referred to as 'modernism,' despite at times having different interpretations in certain dance scholarly contexts. Generally speaking, modernism adheres to a positivist empirico-rationalism when it comes to truth: truth to authorial intention, truth to materials, truth to one's self, equivalence of beauty and truth. The work of art no less than the work of science happens within the purview of such disciplinary procedures. See Foucault (1970: 320). Dance company directors tell their dancers that their technique is the ideal in activating truth in terms of expressing their inner selves, as Gabriele Klein suggests of Wigman, as discussed in what follows in this chapter.

spectacle that is positivist as it adheres to the purist forms of truths where the choreographer is the ultimate author of these so-called truths (2006: 7-10).

To situate choreography as a *dance* form stems from the modernist positioning of choreography as movement for its own sake.[4] Assumptions of choreography *only* concerning dance may be elucidated in terms of Foucault's understanding of a break that modernity makes with what came before. In a discussion on this threshold break with respect to language, Foucault enumerates the modes of its dispersion that secrete disciplinary difference:

> For philologists, words are like so many objects formed and deposited by history; for those who wish to achieve a formalisation, language must strip itself of its concrete content and leave nothing visible but those forms of discourse that are universally valid; if one's intent is to interpret, then words become a text to be broken down, so as to allow other meaning hidden in them to emerge and become clearly visible; lastly, language may sometimes arise for its own sake in the act of writing that designates nothing other than itself. This dispersion imposes on language, if not a privileged position, at least a destiny that seems singular when compared with that of labour or of life. (Foucault, 1970: 304)

We recognise these four sets of dispersion only too well with the "language" of choreography. There is the "for its own sake" of modernism's self-referential solipsism. To locate choreography as a practice of dance is to close off its potential relationships with other disciplines. One also thinks of the immuring of art in Kantian aesthetics, referenced by Jones, in one of the opening quotes of this chapter. Historically speaking, or for the philologist of choreography, this practice was defined as 'the writing of dance' by Thoinot Arbeau in 1589 (Lepecki, 2006: 6).[5] In more recent modernist contexts, the term 'choreography' has maintained its dance-centered-ness. Gabriele Klien, for example, implies that much modernist dance choreography, such as Mary Wigman's practice, has been viewed as its own independent, 'pure' and 'authentic' *dance* kinaesthetic knowledge, that must have "nothing to do with dialogue about it" (2007: 29), including attempts to 'write' it through verbal and literary means, that is, as a language.[6]

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[4] Some examples of dance texts that take this position include Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohens' *What is Dance* (1983) and *The Intimate Act Of Choreography* by Lynne Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin (1982). Cvejic (2008) also makes reference to dance practitioners who are trained through this modernist position.

[5] In Arbeau's manuscript, titled *Orchesgraphie*, '*orchesis*' refers to dance and '*graphie*' translates as writing (Lepecki, 2006: 6). The term 'writing' for this research refers to any form of mark making, or performance making, including choreography. For Peggy Phelan, the 'marked' is that produced by the artist and seen by the spectator (1993: 14-27). There are many who emphasize the 'writing' of dance. A seminal example is Rudolf Laban with his Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) and Labannotation (Reynolds, 2007: 4-10; Dance Notation Bureau, 2009).

[6] "Traditionally, modern concepts of dance have defined dance knowledge as a physical, transient, non-classifiable type of knowledge, bound more to experience than to cognition. The argument,

Figure 4. *Animal Locomotion (Plate 163)*, Eadweard Muybridge (1887; Photograph, *Charles A. Hartman Fine Art*).

In a number of texts Lepecki takes the word 'choreography' as the starting point for what he emphasises as a political investment in performance. I want to elaborate a little on this, as there is a remarkable coincidence of concern with *choreographic idiocy* in this thesis, in the context of Lepecki's use of 'idiocy' with respect to the choreographic. In "Exhausting Dance," Lepecki explains the etymological origins of the term, with reference to Arbeau. In doing so he thickens this history lesson significantly by introducing Arbeau's apprentice, Capriol, a lawyer. Lepecki stresses an understanding of the emergence of choreography as the writing of dance in terms of a profound melancholy that construes Modernity's essential relation to time: "I would like to insist on this idea: it is on a melancholic complaining that Western theatrical dance finds the source of its force, and by extension, the source of its complicated relation to time" (Lepecki, 2004: 122). What does Capriol teach us? A pupil's very writing of this formation of temporality, the graphisms of dance's movements, may well happen "even in your absence … even in the seclusion of his own chamber" (122). Modernity's drive to its own futurity that emphasises the impermanence of things, the passing fragility and decay of the organic or inorganic calls for the ideal as memory trace, a writing that enables the perfected repetitions of bodies, increasingly construed in terms of disciplinary techniques of production. Lepecki also references Freud's understanding of the reification of time as a thing, as "love-object" of an "inexorable loss." Hence, we recognise in

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postulated by Mary Wigman, that dance must remain a pure medium and that the experience of dance has nothing to do with dialogue about it, was prototypical and persisted throughout the history of dance in the 20th century." See Klein (2007: 29).

Modernity that dance idealises a perfected body, yet one in permanent motility, what Lepecki suggests as:

> … the inextricable alliance between writing and dancing … They show how the ground of Western theatrical dance is less-architectural or scenic than it is primarily, onto-historically, existential and phantasmatic. Dance is that art form in the West that finds itself by taking hold of, and by introjecting deeply, the melancholic relation with time that is the hallmark of modern subjectivity. (123)

From Paola Mieli, Lepecki adopts the term "idiot" in order to define this melancholic figure of modern subjectivity, primarily understood as a solitary figure. "Idiot" is not here referencing the stupid one or the fool, common motifs in performance practices and literature. Rather, from its etymology, it references the privacy of a person: "from *idios*, one's own, separate, removed from social responsibility" (124).[7] A solitary melancholic working against the abrasive force of time produces the idea or ideal figure of a subject who may be *in time*. The choreographer becomes the disciplining agent, and choreography the disciplinary technique for the panoply of body works, for a host of writings or tracings, rectifications or perfections on movements. Lepecki's thesis, in short, is that this choreographic idiocy, this writing motility as antidote to time's corrosions, is betrayed (etymologically "translated") by or with what he terms 'Conceptual' or 'Minimal' dance. He suggests that accusations have been levelled at these current practices: "… Conceptual dance is nothing more than a sort of inexcusable betrayal, because it is a self-betrayal: the betrayal of dance's very essence and nature, the betrayal of dance's signature, of its privileged domain. That is the betrayal of movement" (121). While Lepecki emphasises that dance's ontological question remains open, he does account for this "betrayal" in a powerful and transformative way, by suggesting that what he here terms "stilling" has reconfigured an essential understanding of choreography. "Stilling" is not to be understood as being within the modulations of movement. If it is simply a binary pair with motility, nothing changes. There is something more radical at stake, and in this an understanding of "writing movement" that is no longer that of the *idios* of solitary life.[8]

Nonetheless, choreography as dancerly motility is still a dominant and populist perspective in Western contexts and there are examples of it in almost every cultural milieu in Western

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[7] We will discuss this notion in more detail in Chapter 3, in relation to Avital Ronell's *Stupidity* and her extended discussion on the idiot.

[8] We will return to a fuller introduction to and discussion of "stilling" in Chapters 3 and 4. Note, also, Emilyn Claid's reference to Lepecki in her important essay on stilling, precisely in terms of a phenomenological re-founding of the I-Thou relation as understood in the work of Martin Buber. See Claid (1998: 133-143).

society[9]. Lepecki anecdotally cites an incident that establishes something of a paradigmatic exemplar for the public reception of dance. This relates to a 2004 performance by Jerome Bel in Ireland where Raymond Whitehead sued the International Dance Festival of Ireland on grounds of profanity (nudity and urinating on stage) after viewing *Jerome Bel*, choreographed by Jerome Bel (1995; quoted in Lepecki, 2006: 2). The *Irish Times* quoted Whitehead:

Figure 5.
Jerome Bel, Jerome Bel. (1995; Photograph, Live Performance, Michailov, 2010).

"There was nothing in the performance he would describe as dance, which he defined as 'people moving rhythmically, jumping up and down, usually to music but not always and conveying some emotion'." (Holland quoted in Lepecki, ibid). Whitehead was suing the Festival for not receiving a requested refund on the basis of his discontent. Though dangerous to extrapolate from one disgruntled audience member, perhaps it is not so much Whitehead's complaint, as its news-worthiness, its public circulation, not requiring much by way of evaluation or comment and its further mention in Lepecki's text that points to a general expectation of choreography as dance, movement, motility and, hopefully, a foot-tapping tune.[10]

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[9] Institutionally, choreography as dance is foundational for school curricula, community classes, the majority of tertiary dance training institutions, Contemporary dance classes for freelance professional dancers, the mass media, as well as the genre of choreographic projects that are funded by government funding agencies such as Creative New Zealand (2009) and the Arts Council England (2009).

[10] This perspective is also concerned with dancers conforming with codes understood as a physical 'vocabulary': moving for the purposes of responding to sound with kinaesthetic phrasing and rhythms

There are more open perspectives on dance that are not necessarily 'modernist' strictly in the sense suggested by Lepecki, for example, one suggested by Janet Adshead-Lansdale:

> It is sufficient to say that whatever is labelled 'dance', and accepted as such by those who do it and watch it, is regarded as 'dance.' Thus questions concerning the structure, meaning or significance of particular dances, or which ask about the dance culture of different societies might offer a more secure starting point. While some fundamental features may link one form of dance with another, the form which dance takes, and its function in a given society, varies with the *context* in which it occurs. (Adshead-Lansdale, 1981: 4)

For Adshead-Lansdale dance can involve anything that is mutually defined as dance by its participants and spectators, which varies across contexts (1981: 4).[11] As writers such as Adshead-Lansdale and Lepecki generally show, dance differs from choreography, or dance choreography as it is *not* the process of making. Rather, *it is concerned with performing what is made*. Lepecki infers from his reading of Homi Bhabha that dance is a hybrid location of discourse (2006: 6)[12]; it is a site of multiple engagements and imbrications of political, cultural, social, psychic means. Klein also adds to Lepecki's citing of Bhabha, that dance is a site of conflicting discourses (2007: 33).

This research is premised on an alternative reading of the term 'choreography'—choreography involves *creating actions*. In one sense, this perspective draws from William Forsythe's reference to "choreographic objects" and actions (2008: 5-7). As Forsythe suggests:

> Choreography elicits action upon action: an environment of grammatical rule governed by exception, the contradiction of absolute proof visibly in agreement with the demonstration of its own failure. Choreography's manifold incarnations are a perfect ecology of idea-logics; they do not insist on a single path to form-of-thought and persist in the hope of being without enduring. … The blind French resistance fighter Jacques Lusseyran, writing about the inner sense of vision which enabled him to see and manipulate forms and thoughts, famously described it as being like a boundless mental canvas or screen which existed "nowhere and everywhere at the same time." … And so it is with the choreographic object: it is a model of potential transition from one state to another in any space imaginable. (Forsythe, 2011)

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or through expressionist feelings and affects, such as influences of Martha Graham, Eric Hawkins and Merce Cunningham.

[11] However, Adshead-Lansdale remains fixed in the notion that dance always involves physical movement of some form (1981: 78-79). Despite this, she does not limit this to modernist codes of practice. We also recognise some modernist ground in the passage cited above, with its reference to the "form" and the "function" of dance as the two pivotal structuring principles. This position of Adshead-Lansdale is not one she adamantly adheres to in her later writings, as she later 'reads' dance through deconstruction. See, for example, her book *Decentring Dancing Texts* (Lansdale, 2008). Her earlier text has been referenced for its seminal role in the development of dance scholarship, albeit, thirty years ago. It provides a significant standpoint to reflect on in this consideration of choreography, with its combining of postmodern and modernist perspectives. While dance is 'movement', it is yet dependent on different audience contexts for its naming.

[12] Lepecki infers this in relation to outlining his chapters in his introduction – and does not elaborate on this, as Bhabha is not presented as a significant part of his project.

Using the example of the blind French resistance fighter, Jacques Lusseyran, Forsythe proposes that there is no universal form for choreography. Choreography involves grammatical actions that are not fixed or restricted to forms, while demonstrating its own failure continuously, where 'new choreography' continuously surpasses errors 'of the old' (2008: 5-7).

In this research, choreographic actions refer to an endless array of possibilities: organised temporal acts, events or physical behaviours performed through time. This definition in part draws from Alan Read's note that 'acts' and 'actions' refer to pushing the performer's body through time (2004: 247). How significant is the difference being drawn here between "actions" or "acts" and "movement" or "motility"? How is this difference drawn out in a suggested break with orthodox understandings of choreography? In one respect, the difference is paradigmatic in the sense of establishing incommensurable fields of understanding. Modernist dance choreography has foundational grounds in the sense we outlined above with respect to Lepecki's references to temporality, melancholy, and an individuated and solitary self, which may be traced to an assumed or implicit subject or agency of being in the world, and an implicit or assumed understanding of the spatio-temporal nature of that world. The subject is Cartesian, an ego-agent whose autonomy is traced in homogeneous and empty space and time. Movement and motility, the kinetics of modernity traces bodies in movement, plots their coordinates and trajectories. Action, in the sense used here, opens an altogether different notion of being in the world and a different understanding of spatiality and temporality, marked in part by the advent of phenomenology and post-phenomenological thinking that makes a fundamental break with Cartesian positivism. [13]

Rosalind Krauss's premise of sculpture "in the expanded field" is also pertinent here (1983: 31-42). Krauss's seminal essay was first published in 1979 in the journal *October*. Its radicality lies, in part, in the emphasis given to new approaches to understanding a disciplinary field, moving from the diachrony of historicist perspectives, that discern the origin of a practice and subsequent chain of continuities to the present, to the synchrony of a structuralist demarcation of a field by locating the contemporary plays of oppositions by which a field defines its limits. Hence, sculpture is not organised around the truth of its essential material lineage but rather around a shifting field of oppositions that establish what it is not—

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[13] We will come back to discussing the notion of "action" when discussing an understanding of 'labour' with respect to choreography and the literature that discusses this, particularly *Work Ethic* (2003), edited by Helen Molesworth.

Saussure finds his pertinence in art history. Nonetheless, Krauss does hold on to a rigidity of the "logic" of a finite set of oppositions:

> Thus the field provides both for an expanded but finite set of related positions for a given artist to occupy and explore, and for an organisation of work that is not dictated by the conditions of a particular medium. From the structure laid out above [Klein group diagrams demarcating in a regular geometric figure the limits to a field via the nominating of oppositions: for sculpture "not landscape/not architecture"] it is obvious that the logic of the space of postmodern practice is no longer organised around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material. It is organised instead through the universe of terms that are felt to be in opposition within a cultural situation. (Krauss, 1983: 41)

Krauss calls for a malleability of forms, concepts and questioning within art practice, that is not entirely limited to disciplinary parameters. Her own legacy with structuralism positions this text, seminal though it is, at a particular threshold moment in the emergence of what is now looked back on as 'postmodernism.' Certainly, the then contemporary writings of Derrida on structuralism, Saussure and the performative would have challenged the strictures of Krauss's adherence to the logic of her Klein group diagrams. Her text operates more as a marker of a fundamental break with modernist boundary definitions, than it is cited for our strict adherence to its methods, seen now, perhaps, as somewhat arcane. What can be implied from Krauss's perspective on sculpture is that choreography in the expanded field has the potential to encompass any form of timing and space, so long as it has multiple relationships with concepts and questioning. If Krauss construes a 'field' for sculpture subtended by the oppositional terms of architecture/landscape and sculpture/site-construction and in passing suggests that for painting a key oppositional pair might be uniqueness /reproducibility, we could productively read Lepecki's 'expanded' reading of a politics of choreography in terms of a field whose boundary horizons are movement/writing and power/potentiality (Lepecki, 2008).[14] Such framing of choreography is potentially more open to conditions of discovery than framing that limits it to dance or movement. There is potential to not only include dance, movement and the body, as Forsythe (2008: 5-7) suggests, but also what lies beyond this in negotiations between dance and performance art. Other related perspectives include Jeroen Peeters's premise that choreography is the *process* of creation as much as what it produces (2007: 112), while Andrew Hewitt stresses that choreography concerns social relations, experiences, aesthetics and politics (quoted in Pristas, 2009).

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[14] Lepecki is discussing modernity in terms of a political ontology of movement, the bio-political regimes of technologies of the self and disciplinary mechanisms for the training of bodies: "Movement as the 'imperceptible par excellence' (as Deleuze and Guattari constantly remind us), would therefore balance between two poles: of Power (pouvoir) and powers (pouissance) corresponding to two different modes of understanding how movement can be politically and aesthetically activated." (Lepecki: 2008, 1)

My research emphasises somatic contexts in its understanding of an expanded field of choreography.[15] It is, as Johnathon Burrows suggests of choreography, "a negotiation with the patterns your body is thinking" (2010:27). The term 'somatic', as Sylvie Fortin (2009) notes, refers to an understanding of a body as something caught in relations of power and relations of knowing, in "games of truth" and techniques of domination:

> …all body practices can be emancipatory or oppressive (Markula, 2004). What somatic practices offer is an alternative 'game of truth' to that which is predominantly validated. Games of truth are linked to accepted consensus about what is sound knowledge and the accompanying hegemonic procedures that legitimate power relations. Foucault (1998) contends that games of truth are unavoidable, but he emphasizes that the practice of the self allows us "to play these games of power with as little domination as possible." (Fortin, 2009: 50)

Somatic practices, reflection and analysis, for Fortin, allow the embodied researcher the possibility to establish modes of resistance to dominant (constrictive) ways of being in the world, so as to recognise how techniques of the body construe our little games of truth, or how power, which acts on bodies, construes possibilities to be. This research engages with the somatic perspective of the live and mortal human body 'in-the-flesh', activated through choreographic actions of the expanded field. As Susan Leigh Foster notes, the choreographed body provides for physical articulation and mobility (1996: xi). She refers to a notion of choreography beyond dance that includes language, writing and the 'everyday', encouraging an activation of conceptual discovery in research driven by somatic perspectives and presenting the choreographed human body—not just the dancer's—as a platform with which to script as well as locate conceptual insight and analysis through a wide range of viewpoints.

Performance art

Performance art has been defined in a range of ways, which may be summarised as follows[16]: conceptual performance that owes its lineage to early twentieth century visual arts influences such as Marcel Duchamp and the Bauhaus, involving temporality, task-based or theatrical actions, 'real time' or mediatised events, bodily engagement or embodiment, as well as spatiality (Carlson, 2004: 110-112; George, 2003: 10-13; Hoffmann and Jonas, 2005: 11; Stiles, 1996: 679-694). For Martha Wilson performance art is where:

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[15] By 'somatic contexts', I refer to emphasizing choreography of the expanded field through working with the performing body in-the-flesh, which activates somatic readings, histories and contexts.

[16] The term performance art is generally used across the Americas, Asia and Australasia. This is significant for this research because of its site of engagement in Aotearoa/New Zealand — with the reference points that this brings.

> Confrontation is apparent even in tamed pay-your-money-and-sit-in-chairs performances nowadays. Performance artists… …hope to change the world. Never mind that artists have little impact on social, political, economic and philosophical life. If they don't shake you by the lapels they'll go mad. (Wilson, 2005)

Wilson proposes that performance artists aim to confront and challenge the status quo, that performance art's primary object is to question norms. This is nowhere more emphasised than in Gómez-Peña's script of a typical interview with journalists on performance art in his "In Defence of Performance Art":

> Journalist: What is the function of performance art? Does it have any?
> GP: [Long pause] Performance artists are a constant reminder to society of the possibility of other artistic, political, sexual or spiritual behaviours, and this, I must say, is an extremely important function.
> Journalist: Why?
> GP: It helps others to re-connect with the forbidden zones of their psyches and bodies and acknowledge the possibilities of their own freedoms. In this sense, performance art may be as useful as medicine, engineering or law; and performance artists as necessary as nurses, schoolteachers, priests or taxi-drivers. Most of the time we ourselves are not even aware of these functions. (Gómez-Peña, 2004: 85)

Performance is widely considered to emphasize the embodiment of process, *how it* manifests, rather than its final object-based products, as many authors note (Stiles, 1996: 679; Goldberg, 1998: 12-17; Lippard, 1973: 7-8.) Nicholas Tsoutas draws attention to its sense of lived experience, live bodies or liveness (2006: 3).[17] The liveness of performance art, for

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[17] 'Liveness' refers to the performance of acts that take place in the present with immediacy and a sense of "moment-by moment" becoming (Quick, 2004: 93). In contexts outside of the creative arts, 'liveness' implies a sense of mortality that, to some extent, is how it is viewed within genres associated with this research, particularly by those who critically engage with performance and the bio-political. Liveness, has been subject to debate since the 1990s and is discussed more fully in the next section of this chapter. Peggy Phelan infers that liveness is only present in the 'in-the-flesh' and mortal body, that stands in direct physical proximity to a spectator (1993: 3). Where the performing subject is reproduced—depicted and reprojected via various forms of mediatisation, photography or moving image—this is not live performance (1993: 13; 24-27). Part of her argument comes from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective where the subject that is present in 'the here and now' is continually displaced from his or her self through unconscious processes. The subject's performance for Phelan is therefore rendered unrepeatable. To her the mediatised body does not undergo such processes, because it is not 'in-the-flesh'. Theorists such as Philip Auslander (1997) and Schneider (2008: 117-120) have long negated this premise. While Auslander and Schneider agree with Phelan that liveness is 'being in the moment'—whatever is performed 'live' cannot be repeated identically—this is where they each depart from her perspective. In contrast to Phelan, they each argue that any form of performance can be considered live, including that which is mediatised. Auslander adds that even mediatised performance has a limited lifespan, which is dependent on a number of factors, such as the temporal nature of the performance and its conclusion, and the deterioration of media: a web-cam signal breakdown or the 'rotting away' of video tape. Another aspect that defines the 'live' is the audience that witnesses it, with their differing perspectives that change over time. Schneider argues that even the document of a performance has a live nature, through how its viewer determines its experience as being live (2008: 117-120). While Auslander and Scheider are not concerned with a psychoanalytic perspective of the unconscious, they open a wider consideration of liveness in terms of a performance's materiality and the role of an audience. Andrew Quick argues that live performance takes (its) place prior to and with a sense of displacement of the formation of knowledge and conceptual representation to do with it (2004: 93). This is a different emphasis on the term

Tsoutas, hinges on a sense of 'being in the moment' in performing and viewing actions, rather than its subsequent documentation (ibid).

Figure 7. *Interior Scroll*, Carolee Schneeman. (1975; Photograph of Live Performance; cited by "High Performance", 2011).

Many writers, such as Roselee Goldberg (2001: 7), Kristine Stiles (1996: 679, 683) and Francesca Miglietti (2003: 88-91) have suggested that performance art has often not only been a site of visual-arts-based experimentation but one of societal, cultural, political and aesthetic questioning and transgression.[18] These authors do not necessarily acknowledge that the 'transgressions' performed by artists have been and at times still are specific to particular cultural contexts. Performance art is never universally transgressive.[19] There are many examples of performance artists who have transgressed collective values, in relation to the specific cultural contexts that are outside of the institutional norms of the art gallery or

'displacement', wider and more general than Phelan's psychoanalytic emphasis. For Quick, live performance evades any pre-existing knowing related to the live act that it performs. While it takes place, it cannot be fully analysed.

[18] These authors in general locate a political and social agency for performance art in challenges to notions of public and private, specific institutional sites of government and legalities, educational and cultural institutions that include galleries and museums, locating spatial borderlines of transgression with respect to legitimacy or normalcy of practices.

[19] As Jones (2009: 31) suggests, performance art does not necessarily question, rupture or interrogate dominant values systems. It only does in certain contexts. Jones suggests an example of where it has failed to transgress dominant values-systems in Marina Abramovic's re-staging of 1960s and 70s performance art in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where by doing this she removed any politically radical connotations these works previously had by conforming with the capitalist and 'safe' marketable packaging of MOMA (2010).

museum. Some examples include, Marina Abramovic's *Object O* (1974, quoted in Schimmell, 1998: 100) by allowing an audience to decide her fate with a range of objects, Vito Acconci's *Seedbed* (1972; Acconci, 2002: 95-98) when masturbating underneath a public art gallery floor, and Carolee Schneeman's *Interior Scroll* (1975, Stiles, 1998: 296-297), where she pulled a scroll out of her vagina and read quotes from her male critics from it.

Figure 6: *Rhythm O*, Marina Abramovic (1974; Photograph of Live Performance; cited by Schimmell: 1998: 100).

Goldberg's 'coffee-table' styled book *Performance* (1998: 12-14) consists mainly of images of live performance art works and some experimental dance, theatre and music/sound pieces. Where there is writing, it is primarily descriptive rather than critical. Goldberg's framing of performance art tends to be in accord with two of the most common defining attributes for performance art when compared to Classical and Modernist approaches to dance theatre, theatre and music or opera. Firstly, she sets out to define performance art in terms of a modernist perspective on disciplinarity by maintaining defined boundaries between dance, theatre and music when the lines of differentiation have continually been crossed with these fields, such as in the practice of Bel's *The Last Performance*. Secondly, she notes:

> It has been in art spaces—at first in small galleries or so-called alternative spaces, later in museums—where the most experimental new work [framed as performance art] in music, dance, or live events found its audiences, before it was eventually understood and embraced by the establishment of a particular discipline. (Goldberg, 1998: 12)

By this she positions performance art as more transgressive and experimental than other performance genres, due to its housing within the visual arts and art galleries; it is primarily through this field that other disciplines have become more experimental and developed. This leads to the premise that galleries have been the only safe breeding ground for culturally transgressive and experimental performance. In contrast to this, there are examples in dance choreography where non-art gallery venues such as theatres and studio-styled spaces have served to foster experimentation and cultural transgressions. One need only consider Yvonne Rainer's naked dancers wrapped in the American flag in Judson Church, which was considered by many in the United States at the time to be anti-patriotic (Banes, 1987: 53). There is also Emilyn Claid's studio performance of a striptease in a tutu that questioned gender issues such as the 'male gaze' and the aging of the female dancer's body (1979; Claid, 2006: 63; 218).

The majority of recent seminal texts that emphasize performance art as transgressive (Goldberg, 1998: 12-16 and 2001; Schimmel, 1998: 17-39; Stiles, 1996: 679, 683) are also generally restricted to providing historically descriptive accounts and examples of the genre's transgressions without critically examining this premise. Through a descriptive and historical account of the continuities, lineages, legacies and origins of performance practices these texts exemplify what Hal Foster (1996:10) and Russel Storer (2003: 3) suggest as 'historicist' texts. Historicism was briefly mentioned when discussing Krauss's sculpture in the expanded field in her shifting a framework of analysis from the essentialism of origins in historical accounts of form making to a synchronic field of oppositional practices that disperse an essentialism with respect to materials or mediums and a continuity of formal concerns in a lineage of form makers. Foster and Storer refer to how such essentialist writing examines the cause and effects of art-related events through a linear perspective, while not questioning in any detail the visible and non-visible contexts of culture, power and the conditions of subjects.[20] Storer notes:

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[20] As we have noted in Chapter 1 with respect to Nietzsche's genealogy and Foucault's uptake on this, our thesis works against the grain of historicism, aiming to trace Nietzsche's understanding of "emergence" and "descent" in their dispersions, their relations of force and their effects on bodies. We also note, in passing, that texts such as those of Lepecki on choreography or Fortin on the somatic recognise an implicit political framework with respect to a disciplined body in any accounting for dance or performance practices. Storer recognises the complicity of the totalising closures to historicist narratives and the potential for commodity forms of these little packets of performance history.

> The relationship of documentation to performance art is traditionally that of a photographic or filmic record of an event enacted in a gallery or other public site, retaining that moment for posterity. This has the result of producing a saleable object, thus negating one of the primary impulses for performance, that is, to resist commodification. Performance has subsequently been historicized, and its initial startling incursions into the 'real' have dissipated. (ibid)

The predominance of historicist texts on performance art is due in part to the simple fact that such histories until recently were to a great extent unwritten. As Laurie Anderson notes in her foreword to Goldberg's book, although immersed in the cultural terrain of performance practice she was quite unaware of its twentieth century history. Texts such as Goldberg's are perhaps a first-wave accounting for what until recently was a scattered archive of practices, many of which were partially documented and many of which exist by name and memory only. As Stiles suggests (1996: 679), these accounts have largely remained unwritten until relatively recently. There is an irony here in that while attempting to write about experimental and at times transgressive performance art practices, many authors have conformed to the modernist paradigm of historicist writing, potentially closing off processes of questioning and its resultant discoveries. Rebecca Schneider takes this argument further by arguing that such positivist depictions of performance art serve to reinforce dominant conservative Western values, with the privileging of white masculinity, by locating white male artists such as Jackson Pollock as the so-called original masters that all other performance artists (should) follow (2004: 25-28).[21]

Because of its ontological emphasis on an expanded field of action, performance art also invokes somatically informed choreography. As already noted, many authors on performance art such as Goldberg who present performance art as an isolated discipline do not explicitly discuss linkages or crossovers between performance art and dance in relation to choreography. This is a legacy of an understanding of these practices in terms of the essentialism of their particular mediums and the immured writing of their individuated origins and modes of succession. What is missed in this archival practice are the dispersed interconnections, the borrowings and "unofficial" practices that invent the differences within each named mode of moving. One of these interconnections is in how they have each employed choreographic approaches through somatic actions. For Lepecki:

> The fact that… [certain] …artists are not 'properly' dancers, and do not describe themselves as choreographers, but have nevertheless explicitly experimented with choreographic exercises (Bruce Nauman) or explicitly addressed the politics of motility in contemporaneity (William Pope.L) is methodologically important for my argument. Their work allows for reframing choreography outside artificially self-contained disciplinary boundaries… (2006: 5)

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[21] Schneider (2004: 25-28) makes explicit reference to Schimmell (1998: 17-39) concerning Pollock. As she suggests, Schimmell locates Pollock as the mythical first and original performance artist.

In his discussion of why he has included Pope.L and Nauman in his book on choreography, Lepecki contributes to the potential crossovers and convergences in choreography between performance art and dance through the idea that choreography can be employed within performance art. His thinking, archiving and critique mark a significant advance on what I have tentatively named as the first-wave chroniclers of performance art. Of course there are many others such as Heathfield and Cvejic who, like Lepecki, are currently reinscribing the field. This thesis aligns itself with this current body of critical and political writing across all of those movement movements: dance, theatre, performance art and live art. Lepecki argues that by framing choreography outside of a narrow understanding of dance and into other artistic approaches we may provide new ways of considering "relationships between bodies, subjectivities, politics and movement" in dance and beyond dance modernism (ibid).

Live art

> 'Dance', 'theatre', 'happenings', 'actions', 'performance' and many other names can be and have been applied to an entire spectrum of work by artists who have created live art events. An all-encompassing definition is almost impossible, but to put it at its simplest, live art contains a living element, a human presence — a body (or bodies) in space and at a specific moment, or for a definite period. However, it becomes very complicated when historians try to categorise and pigeonhole such a diversity of work. Take an installation that requires a human presence to activate or complete it — could this be defined as a performance? If the work is staged, with a set and recognisable movements — is that theatre or dance, or is it performance art? Does wearing a swan costume make it ballet and performing naked make it live art? These are just some of the many difficulties encountered when trying to discuss such actions. (Adrian George, 2003: 10)

Adrian George, in his introduction to *Art, Lies and Videotape: Exposing Performance* goes on to suggest that the very difficulty in naming these practices with a sense of closure or totality makes them "inherently subversive," particularly in those contexts of historically summing up what actually has happened. Hence we recognise the significance of this title to a publication accompanying the Tate's *first* major exhibition on the history and contemporary importance of performance held in 2003. The term 'live art' in certain respects sums up all artistic practices that engage with experimental performance, involving a wide range of potential lineages such as dance choreography in its various forms, performance art, visual arts, digital media, theatre, music and sound[22]. It is particularly discussed here because

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[22] Live art as a term owes its lineage to the development of national arts funding institutions in the United Kingdom, that has served instrumentally to provide a grant fund category for live forms of performance practice that would otherwise not be supported (Keidan, in Live Art Development Agency, 2005). Despite its geographical and theatre influences, this does not stop the term being

writers such as Read (2004: 242-249) in discussing live art serve to contextualize this research's negotiations of dance and performance art choreography. Read emphasises live art's open-ended potentiality (2004: 242-249), while for Lois Keidan "live art is all about the development of new cultural contexts and critical discourses around the work of artists … who cannot be easily placed, culturally, formally or critically" (2009: 6).[23] Live art is inherently interdisciplinary to the point of being transdisciplinary, where it cannot be pinned down to any previously existing discipline:[24] It includes choreography in the expanded field in dance, performance art and other experimental performance approaches such as contemporary theatre and sound art, within a context of liveness and sense of mortal presence. As a result of its translating of other disciplines and now named as a unique aesthetic approach, it is now, as we have recognised in Keidan's enthusiasm for its containing capabilities, in many respects its own discipline.[25] Live art, like performance art, is open-ended in its potential variations of media, sites and practices, though does not privilege visual art lineages above those of other disciplines. Its practitioners draw from a range of disciplinary orientations, with no definitive disciplinary approach, other than its performance

applied beyond the UK and the theatre contexts. I use the term 'theatrical' in reference to performing, choreographing or making performance that draws from conventions normatively associated with the black box theatre, where performers' actions are produced with a stylized sense of affect, commonly associated with dramatic theatre or stage dance.

Considering what has so far been discussed here, it may be asked, in this case, why not label the terrain that this research is focussed on as simply 'live art'? However, to simply fold the fields of practice for this research into live art, would run the risk of shutting out specific disciplinary discourses that are still significant outside of the UK, in relation to performance art, as well as potentially close off some of the conceptual themes that this practice attempts to generate to do with choreography.

[23] Keidan mentions this in her discussion of the UK artist Oreet Ashery, with her cultural-political questioning of religious value systems. Indeed, she emphasises the extent to which the name 'live art' has provided a home for Ashery: "For many at the time such an itinerant approach to genre context, site and subject made Ashery's work difficult to contain, problematic to discuss and hard to locate, but not those engaged with Live Art" (Keidan, 2009: 6). One wonders about the disarmingly simple way in which Keidan potentially and unintendingly neutralises the radicality of practice by 'containing' it in its proper place.

[24] The term 'interdisciplinary' refers to work or research that draws from two or more recognized disciplines (Austin, Blau and Rauch et al, 1996: 271-282), in this case, performance art and dance choreography. As Michael Seipel cites of William Newall and Julie Thompson: "the interdisciplinary scholar draws on appropriate disciplinary insights and reconfigures them in novel ways to address the question at hand" (2005). Interdisciplinary approaches "build on, rather than supplant the strengths of the disciplinary model or conventional disciplines" (ibid). 'Transdiciplinarity' in the arts is often defined through practices that are hybrid or new in form. While influenced by disciplinarity (or single disciplines), (*Trans*, 2006) it is 'stand-alone'. Transdisciplinarity differs from interdisciplinarity in how it is concerned with new forms. Transdicipinarity consists of "not only hybridising crossings" of disciplines "but also the forging of structural transformations" beyond them (*Trans*, 2006).

[25] There has been a significant number of publications and performances, particularly in the UK, explicitly on live art. We note that however live art may be developing, it is more and more the 'historical avant-garde' in Fosters terms (1996: 15-17). While in one sense live art has been neo-avant-garde because it engages with inter/trans-disciplinarity, where inter/transdisciplinarity is aligned conceptually with notions of transgression, disciplinarity is aligned with norms, and live art is increasingly a practice-based norm. One could make parallel comments concerning performance art, though it is less open to disciplines that are often considered outside the border regions of the visual arts, such as theatre and dance.

focus, despite its earlier theatre influences. The live art practices of, for example, Tim Etchell's Forced Entertainment (*Spectacular*, 2008/2009) and Goat Island (*When Will September Roses Bloom?*, 2005/2007) draw more from theatre and physical theatre legacies than is the case for some live artists who have been more influenced by the visual arts, such as Joshua Sofaer (*What is Live Art*, 2002) and Oreet Ashery (*Greasy Instructor*, 2004/2005).[26]

As we have noted with performance art, much live art involves choreography in the expanded field, often to differing degrees and for different purposes. Each of the artists just mentioned, Forced Entertainment, Goat Island, Sofaer, and Ashery, differently employ somatic choreographed actions. Goat Island in *When Will September Roses Bloom?* engages with choreography in the expanded field through rhythmic bodily movement phrases, while Forced Entertainment's *Spectacular* treats somatic choreography as something that the actors perform through 'pedestrian' or apparent movement of 'everyday' body language that assists the actors' roles.[27] Ashery, in *Greasy Instructor*, performs choreographed actions that theatrically exaggerate her body language so as to parody the role of demonstrating live art, while Sofaer's *What is Live Art* strips the choreographed actions down to him walking and standing among his audience, the general public on a street, with his bare buttocks exposed. All the while he is reciting a monologue that defines live art. Theatrical performance strategies are usually incorporated in live art. Though Sofaer and Ashery produce mainly visual arts influenced performance, they also work with dramatic theatrical form. A specific example of this is in Ashery's use of personae in her *Marcus Fisher's Wake* and *Say Cheese* (Ashery, 2009: 9-14), where she posed and performed 'pedestrian' choreographed actions as an orthodox Jewish man.[28] Such visual arts trained live artists, sometimes known as 'visual performance practitioners', and performance artists demonstrate that theatricality can provide new possibilities for them. This is in contrast to what a number of performance artists, such as Marina Abramovic and Mike Parr (Parr, 2000), have argued. Abramovic suggests:

> To be a performance artist, you have to hate theatre. Theatre is fake: there is a black box, you pay for a ticket, and you sit in the dark and see somebody playing somebody else's life. The knife is not real, the blood is not real, and the emotions are not real. Performance is just the opposite: the knife is real, the blood is real, and the

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[26] Forced Entertainment and Goat Islands' practices have tended to appear more influenced by dramatic theatre than is the case for Ashery and Sofaer, with techniques associated with conventional modern dramatic theatre such as the use of black box theatre spaces, working with trained actors and text-based performance.

[27] The notion of 'pedestrian' somatic movement and actions is specific to certain dance contexts and often refers to movement of the so called 'everyday.' And yet, the 'everyday' is precisely what escapes reflection or reproduction. It is impossible to *truly* capture, reproduce, and pinpoint.

[28] Ashery performed structured improvised actions that are also a form of choreography. This consisted of her posing as an orthodox Jewish man. She 'acted' this role as this 'character' with public bystanders and in the context of an orthodox Jewish dance party.

emotions are real. It's a very different concept. It's about true reality. (quoted in Wilkinson, 2010)

Abramovic locates theatre as a site of the untrue, the fake, the false, false life, live but not live and therefore unacceptable for performance art. Notwithstanding the institutional set-ups that construe the 'reality of performance,' Abramovic, perhaps somewhat naively, suspends the *techne* that makes every 'nature' recognisable, and suggests a touchstone with the true of the real. While Parr and Abramovic have suggested that theatricality prevents conceptual discovery in performance art, Ashery, with her engagement with persona, and Sofaer, with his public speaking, suggest otherwise with their theatrically choreographed interventions that function to interrogate dominant Western societal values. They more overtly point to what is always already readable in the works of Parr or Abramovic with respect to the staging, the choreography, the props, sets and personae that they unavoidably adopt from work to work, from audience to audience, from situation to situation. Theatricality, associated more with dance than performance art, provides potential within the negotiation of performance art choreography and dance choreography in the context of live art.

Figure 9. *When Will September Roses Bloom? Last Night Was Only a Comedy*, Goat Island (2005; Photograph of Live Performance; cited by "Liveartwork DVD", 2011).

Figure 8. *What Is Live Art*, Joshua Sofaer (2002, Photograph of Live Performance; cited by Cline, 2011).

I want to conclude this chapter with a series of critical and provocative insights we recognise in the writing of Alan Read (2004: 243-247) that are significantly in step with the directions this thesis takes:

> Live Art is barely live and barely art. In this exposed state it is absolutely exceptional. Whether Live Art describes the various activities associated with a lifetime's work, in the case of Alastair MacLennan or Marina Abramovic, say, or the socio-cultural interventions, associated with Ricardo Dominguez or Guillermo Gómez-Peña, or the interface of theatre, performance and things inherent in the work of Goat Island or Forced Entertainment, there is no escaping the conundrum that the condition for the continuation of this work is the imaginative sustenance of exceptional acts in cultures that are constantly concealing their own conditions of production. (Read, 2004: 243)

Read's position and argument is complex. In "Say Performance: Some Suggestions Regarding Live Art" he references, in five "suggestions," not only contemporary performance, choreography and Live Art but also the thinking of Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, and the Nietzsche of *Twilight of the Idols*. The "exceptional" referenced by Read needs to be read in relation to Agamben's thesis on bare life and what he terms the "state of exception." Read, himself, references all of this from Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* in discussing "suggestion" two.[29] But let's engage these "suggestions" in the order of their exposition. The first is 'simultaneity.' What, for Read, is *simultaneous* in the

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[29] See Read's subsequent book *Theatre Intimacy and Engagement* for an elaboration on his position presented here on Agamben's bare life (2008: 84-101).

works of live "artists of calibre" as he refers to them? In a reference to Derrida's *Without Alibi*, and in describing the performance of Oleg Kulik, Read suggests that what interests him is the unconcealed "honesty" of this performance: "Kulik would appear to have collapsed his alibi, the ubiquity of the theatrical alibi … into himself, his self" (244). The simultaneity is the at once recognition of all of the constructions exposed in the real of an autobiographical self, itself exposed in public, conditions of production expropriated in the exceptional act. Read explains with subtlety and finesse what Abramovic hastily proclaimed as a "hatred" of theatre, and the "true reality" of performance. Read recognises there is always a double happening whose sensibility is that of the performative. He again references Derrida: "It is often said that the performative produces the event of which it speaks. One must also realise that inversely, where there is the performative, an event worthy of the name cannot arrive" (Derrida, 2002, 34 quoted in Read, 2004: 244).

The second "suggestion" concerns the intrinsic relation between the politics of performance and what Read calls the "auto-*bio*graphical" (ibid). It is here that Read links a question of the *autos*, the self-referentiality of a self to Agamben's notion of 'bare life': "The kind of autobiography being written by live artists is one that suspends the 'simple fact of living' within the properties of performance, which are always qualified and complicated by the social" (ibid). The "exceptionableness" of live art relates to the exposition of the bare life of the artist as "something that is included solely through exclusion" (245), exposition of anonymous life as the political substance of relations of power. Read references Walter Benjamin's understanding of "a continuous state of emergency" as the very condition for Live Art as moments of resistance in relation to the practices of Franko B, Ron Athey and Kulik. The third suggestion refers to the question of 'truth' with respect to performance: "My third suggestion is that performance is just as acquainted with lies as all other spectacle." Referring to Nietzsche's "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth" (Nietzsche, 1968, 40-41), a history of metaphysics in six steps, Read emphasises Nietzsche's final moment: "We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps? … But no! *with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!*" (41). It is not that performance and Live Art set about practices of deception. It is not lying in that sense. Rather, 'truth' is not the ground on which we secure our being; truth is for cutting. Hence deception, lying, tells the truths of deceit, of feigns of feigns, of masks of masks, of the apparent indifference of the true and the apparent world. Franko B's 'sacred' performances are every bit the "… showmanship, the huckstering gory glory of the artist formerly known as charlatan" (246). The fourth "suggestion" stems from the third. If 'truth' is more the "raison d'etre of the university, not the artist" (246), then there is the free play in Live Art for the artifice of games of the true. Yet, there seems to be a day of reckoning even for Live Art,

with what Read suggests is the arrival of a third party, an other, what Read, referencing Derrida calls "*myself.*" And, again referencing Nietzsche on *anthropos* as the promising animal, Read suggests that it is not so much "truth" that is at stake in Live Art but the *promise*, everything that opens a future as possibility of not fulfilling what one promises, not so much lying but perjuring oneself to those who bear witness to the promise, failing and falling: the opening to the morality of responsibility and the violence of those you disappoint.[30]

The fifth and final suggestion continues to build on the others and returns us to the first. It concerns the power to act, not in terms of force, as with political power, but in terms of potentiality to act: what I can and cannot do. Referencing Agamben's beautiful and subtly argued essay on potentiality (Agamben, 1999: 177-184), Read insightfully shows that Live Art's potentiality lies not in what a self is capable of doing, but rather a self's impotentiality:

> What is human being and performance's identifying mark is its lack of potential. It is one thing to be, as all living being are, more or less capable of their own specific potentiality; they can do this or that and often know it. But human beings show through their performances their own *impotentiality*. … It is the exposure to an equivalent state of *impotentiality*, shared by performer and audience within the Live Art act that marks out the experience of me as remarkable and worth remarking upon again. (Read, 2004: 246-247)

We note that for Agamben it is precisely that capability to 'not be' that marks for human being what he suggests is a passage from morality to ethics. Heathfield (2008) provides another summary of live art, which, with Read's analysis, applies to choreography in the expanded field in dance and performance art:

> Live Art, with its aesthetic history of testing physical and psychological limits, and its persistent focus on the performing body, offers itself as a primary site where the contradictory impulses of the culture towards corporeal integrity and its dissolution may be played out. In this somatic test-site performance presents and interrogates transformations of the base matter and foundational meanings of fleshly existence. Being live has facilitated a questioning of the definitive boundaries of nature and culture, of the human itself, and its relation to the animal and the machine. The findings of the test, the meanings and resonances of contemporary embodiment are received in and through a phenomenal relation.

Heathfield suggests that Live Art is a terrain of testing human embodied experience in terms of the live physical, 'flesh-and-blood', bio-political, cultural and technological contexts that individuals connect with. Live Art thus provides the grounds in which boundaries of these contexts can be tested and experienced somatically by the artist and viewer. As Jean-Paul

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[30] Perhaps Read's call to fail has influenced Forsythe's focus on choreography as being failure with grammatical rules that emphasise exceptionality? And perhaps, too, Daniel Brinbaum is influenced by Read when he states in a conversation with Forsythe that the future promises newness, but this promise is futile because "the future is but a figment of speech, a specter of thought" (Forsythe, 2008: 111-112).

Martinon stresses, the performance of spectacle only reveals the surface of the performing body or subject (2003: 45). Spectacle conceals deeper meanings and processes that drive the performer. Live Art cannot tell its viewers the truth about the universe, rather it invokes questioning and reflection through its various forms of spectacle that attempt to reveal its processes and spectre or what is concealed.

These concluding frameworks from Read and Heathfield provide genuine support for the directions this thesis takes up regarding an understanding of choreography in the expanded field, or what I have termed *choreographic idiocy*. We have been introduced to an understanding of choreographic idiocy by Lepecki, though he explicitly defines this in terms of modernist dance practice and sees a fundamental or paradigmatic shift with contemporary 'conceptual dance.' I too see such a break, though aim to explore 'idiocy' in an expanded field as well, and will do so in the next chapter in engaging Ronell's *Stupidity* and *Test Drive* as well as Gilles Deleuze's understanding of idiocy from *What is Philosophy?*. We also recognise the emphasis by Read on a Nietzschean approach to error, as well as a bio-political understanding of the self as *autos*, or in Derrida's reading of Nietzsche, '*oto'*, where 'other' has a simultaneity with '*myself*' and performance is underwritten by the performativities of iterable normative regularities in Butler's sense of identity as the constant performing of oneself. Read also emphasises the *promising* animal and the potentiality to *not be* as human being's possibility. Heathfield squarely locates the fundamental ground of 'testing' as paradigmatic. Performance is a test-site that drives performers. In the following chapters we will be delineating in stronger relief initially the critical grounds for further engaging these themes of the test, the auto-*bio*graphical, the promise, as well as corollary terms, such as labouring, failing, falling and minimising. Following this is an engagement with how we have come to understand these key notions as drivers in what we have termed choreography in the expanded field with respect to practices that have emerged since the 1970s.

3

Living On

Sometimes I think people are getting more and more clever watching us be more and more stupid. (Jerome Bel, quoted in Etchells, 2004: 199)

Not without consequence, Nietzsche distributes the tyranny and discipline of stupidity equally among slave morality, Christian values, and scholarship. Narrowing perspective and limiting freedom, these forces of historical moment—tyrannical and arbitrary in the way they have regulated human affairs—are viewed by Nietzsche as instances of "this rigorous and grandiose stupidity [that] has educated the spirit." (Ronell, 2002: 3-4)

The soul is precisely what a certain violent artistry produces when it takes itself as its own object. … This fundamental artistic production of bad conscience, the production of a "form" from and of the will, is described by Nietzsche as "the womb of all ideal and imaginative phenomena." (Butler, 1997b: 76)

The space of what I am calling the test drive is circumscribed by an endless erasure of what is. (Ronell, 2005: 10)

Perfuming the text (or Coke ® is Life!)

If in the closing paragraphs of Chapter 2 we have placed particular emphasis on accounts by Read and Heathfield, in part it is not simply that they engage the nominalism of "Live Art" but rather that they palpably recognise and extol life in art, not even *in* nor explicitly *as*, as if "life" and "art" qualified one another. No, life pure and simple, though there is never something that simple here. And if we palpably employ the writing of Ronell on Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*, it too is because Ronell recognises that for Nietzsche science needed to be

made accountable for life, that the joyousness of the gaiety of science was not a resentment of science but an overwhelming affirmation of the scientific attitude, to the extent that Nietzsche could see himself as a scientific object, a test-site for experimentation on a future to come:

> The call put out by Nietzsche remains the urgent question of a text that bears the burden of an enigmatic encounter with science. Nietzsche gives us science as an assignment, as a trust to be taken on unconditionally. Neither the first nor the last to make science part of an irrecoverable curriculum, Nietzsche saw in science the potential for uncompromising honesty in terms of understanding who we are and what we can become. (Ronell, 2005: 154-155)

In his *Perform Or Else*, Jon McKenzie discusses Ronell in relation to performance.[31] Extolling the valency of test-citing, McKenzie sets us up with his own gay spell in something like his version of the famous "Pepsi Challenge." He makes a difference: perfumance *not* performance: "One might say perfumance counters the challenging tonality of performance with the tonality of laughter, but what's really at stake are at least two tonalities of challenging, two tonalities of laughter" (McKenzie, 2001: 231).[32] The taste-test here comes down to *nose* or *knows*, the homophone doing and undoing our sensibilities. We become a little gay in taking seriously what testing straps us to. He suggests that Ronell's text is a "high-perfumance" reading of Nietzsche. We laugh a lot, certainly, though the lesson can still be painful. More to the point, we feel alive and not just thoughtful. His reading is acute and cutting, like all good truths. He quotes Ronell's pressing questions, apt for our project: "What is a science that predicates itself on gaiety without losing its quality of being a science? And how does Nietzsche open the channels of scientificity that, without compromising the rigor of inquiry, would allow for the inventiveness of science fiction, experimental art and, above all, a highly stylized existence?" (McKenzie, 2001: 233). Hence the emphasis on experimentation, trial runs, hypotheses, re-trialling and more testing: "If anything, Gay Sci signals to us today the extent to which our rapport to the world has undergone considerable mutation by means of our adherence to the imperatives of testing" (234).

There is also the confluence for Nietzsche between testing and tasting, his Pepsi Challenge engaging blindness and insight as well as a rewriting of Kant's Judgement of Taste as

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[31] McKenzie's reference is not to Ronell's book *The Test Drive* but to an early version of the chapter in that book bearing the same name that appeared in 1995, some ten years prior to the book's publication, in a collection, *Deconstruction is/in America: A New Sense of the Political* (1995: 200-220).

[32] If we emphasise the notion of 'challenge' for McKenzie, it is precisely because he foregrounds this test driving in his own work. His chapters include: "Challenges," "Challenger Lecture Machine," "Challenging Forth," "Professor Challenge and the Performance Stratum," and so on. We will come to recognise how Nietzsche, in one respect, and in a bald-faced way (if that expression makes sense considering Nietzsche's visage) suggests, in a very un-PC way that we are all in some ways challenged. He uses the blunter term, 'cripple'. We are all cripples, with too little of most things and too much of one, such as ears.

something that sharpens our instincts. And it works both ways. If taste becomes more scientific, more experimental, then science takes on the absolute freedom of taste: "Keeping the body intact and thinking tactile, Nietzsche develops an experimental ethos, a modified judgement of taste. The experience of freedom with which Nietzsche associates genuine experimenting has a double legacy" (Ronell, 2005: 175). This double legacy is, on the one hand, that science is answerable to no one. Scientific freedom is absolute. Yet, on the other hand, this absolutism inexorably leads to the ethical question of the future. Science promises while it experiments and fails. For and from all of these perspectives, we recognise Heathfield's prognosis on performance as test-site on what a body is capable of doing, with all of the political and ethical ramifications this has with respect to the test/taste subject. He outlines what he terms the "drive to the live" that has been a long concern for performance and Live Art, where the modalities of the drive have been "trajectories of experimentation with time and space [that] have necessarily involved the exploration, use and examination of the human body … as sites of experimentation" (Heathfield, 2004: 11). These test-drivers transgress distinctions between subject and object, between life and art. This is particularly relevant for this research in its key question calling for strategies that test the negotiation between performance art choreography and dance choreography. Ronell's trial run on Nietzsche tests Nietzsche's model of science, particularly in his call for "the experimental disposition" that, in part, prescribes in research endless questioning, negating and affirming (2005: 10) that "overtakes certainty" (2005: 5) and legitimates while delegitimating "assumed forms of knowledge" (2005: 14).[33] In terms of its application to this studio research, the process of testing that Ronell presents involves a measuring of how various contingencies are negotiated between performance art choreography and dance choreography. An example of this is the degree of 'acceptability' or 'unacceptability' that is endlessly measured within choreographic test-objects, through judgements, questions, affirmations and negations, made by spectators and artists, however such 'taste' is defined. This also relates to Heathfield's notion of 'somatic test-sites' in live art and Forsythe's proposition for choreography to endlessly question in its failings.[34]

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[33] Ronell's focus on testing in her reading of the *Gay Science* affirms that testing is the foundation for contemporary Western society. The marking, regarding or measuring of objects of acceptability is the test-bed of reality: it is used to link what subjects perceive as real for their lives, a "test-gaze", what Nietzsche calls the "*epeuve*" or "trial" in the modern world (2005: 19; 63; and 78; quoted in 63). This, of course, applies not only to measurements of acceptability for contemporary life but, more specifically, this research. Ronell's Nietzschian scientist is not quite the positivist lab-rat specialist or determinist thinker, for whom "testing itself is never questioned, but posed" in a "closed manner" as measure of so-called truth (2005: 183).

[34] As Heathfield (2004: 11; 2008:) suggests of the 'test-site', it is where there is the temporal testing of the contingencies of a live performance where contingent concepts, perspectives and spatial fixtures and their accompanying discursivity are tested.
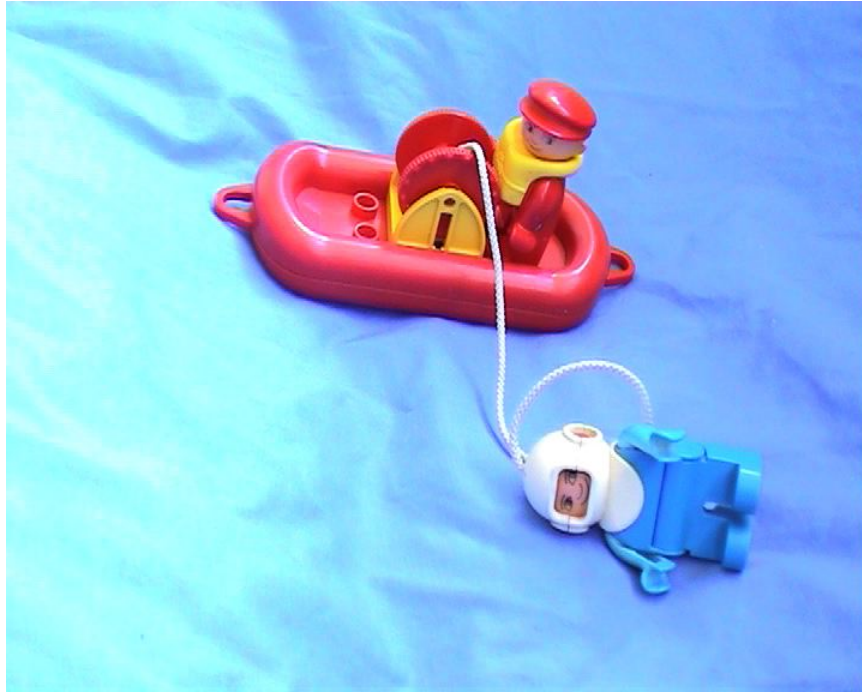
Figure 10. *This is How They Tell Me to Do Correct Scientific Testing*, Mark Harvey (2011; Photograph).

Ronell makes mention of Nietzsche's "test-writing" (2005: 10). He is a permanent makeover, signing him every-which-way: "At any given moment, his test writing interrupts any *presentable* determination and provokes instead an instantaneous dissociation from the present, what Derrida calls a *différance* in being-with-itself" (ibid.). Writing in general and writing in Derrida's sense is important for our thinking of choreography in the expanded field: as movement-writing in an expanded field and incessant not-being-determinable-to-oneself as an idiocy-writing-movement. We will momentarily fix on *différance* though will return to Derrida on Nietzsche later in this chapter:

> In a conceptuality adhering to classical structures "différance" would be said to designate a constitutive, productive, and originary causality, the process of scission and division which would produce or constitute different things or differences. But because it brings us close to the infinitive and active kernel of *différer*, *différance*... neutralizes what the infinitive denotes as simply active... [Also,] that which lets itself be designated *différance* is neither simply active nor simply passive, announcing or rather recalling something like a middle voice, saying an operation that is not an operation, an operation cannot be conceived either as passion or as the action of a subject on an object, or on the basis of the categories of agent or patient, neither on the basis of nor moving toward any of these *terms* (Derrida, 1982: 9).[35]

Différance for Derrida, as he suggests here, is the movement of meaning for a sign in "irreducibly polysemic" directions (1982: 8) – where meaning is endlessly multiple and never certain. It is where the desire to fulfil 'desire' or 'will' in that which is written is temporised and has its recourse or *différer* (ibid). Not only does *différance* arrest the assuredness of meaning

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[35] This is cited from "Différance" published in two collections of Derrida's early writings: *Speech and Phenomena* and *Margins of Philosophy.*

(the *active*) but also non-meaning (the *passive*) because it plays and displaces the will to define. It is where the artist-as-tester endlessly defers the absolute finality of defining, concluding and answering questions, while continually displacing the establishment of any fixed and unfixed outcomes and points of reference to what has been written or made (1978: 374; 1982: 317, 322-327). *Différance* never simply refers to that which is named or its opposite, but both and neither simultaneously[36] – and because of this only its tracks or traces are discernible in what is written, where "writing" as the trace-structure of an absence is the primordial structural possibility for both speech and writing in their orthodox sense. With respect to Lepecki's and our radical reading of 'choreography' as movement-writing that traverses modernism's being-towards-movement, we recognise the extent to which *différance* would make undecidable a clear line or boundary between choreographic acts and writing, that writing, in Derrida's sense is inextricably an originary trace-structure differing and deferring in itself, an originary moving that is at once a marking or inscribing.

Test writing is excessive and unstable (2005: 10 or, rather, all writing in the expanded field of *différance*, which is to say in the possibility of the intelligibility of any mark or differential trace, is excessive site and citing of experimental procedures on anonymous life, always encountered and accountable as somatic choreographic objects failing to give up their truth. In our engaging with *différance*, we put the stress loading on a test writing as application of Read's and Forsythe's calls for a live art and choreography that is exceptional in how it uncovers what is concealed. *Différance* unconceals what in truth is undecidable in any determination of meaning, not in order to forever obscure a wanting-to-know but to present that which requires decision and not the fiction of a naturalised standpoint of truth, an ethics of a possible future for becoming what we are. In this sense, for Ronell's 'perfumance' of the *Gay Science*, test writing engages "the essence of future science … when thought catches it in flight without really knowing what is thought" (2005: 156). Through testing, discovery comes about without the researcher knowing that it will or might be taking place. Hence, we consider choreography of the expanded field where the choreographer cannot predict the outcome of somatic test-processes—following Quick's premise on liveness in performance, where the live act is beyond accountability or reckoning in its moment of becoming (2004: 93).

Ronell's test-pattern perspective on Nietzsche draws attention to the test *promise*, where creative practices as tests set an *estimated time of arrival* (ETA) that can never arrive (2005: 153). Artists' practices can never truly fulfil their promises and intentions. Why cordon off the

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[36] In this sense, *différance* structures Derrida's paleonymy.

artist as a failure? No promise, in general, in truth is delivered. This would in fact be a condition of the promise: the unconditional it affords with respect to the word it will never really keep. Test works are "in the end" ones that promise "keeping themselves as promise." They do "not promise anything but [their] own future: therefore they do not *actually* promise what they promise" (2005: 224). Thus testing for Ronell inhabits the "aporetic logic of never accomplishing [itself] as the principle means of becoming" (ibid). If these tests "really tested" what they performatively promise, then they "would not need to test" (ibid).[37] Hence, as well, Read's call for live art, including somatic choreography to make promises that are only promises, that call for the need to test, making nothing truly complete or completely incomplete.[38]

Nietzsche was no stranger to failure; in fact he embraced it as he would life itself: "A thinker sees his own actions as experiments and questions as attempts to find out something. Success and failure are for him *answers* above all" (Nietzsche, 1974: 41 quoted in Ronell, 2005: 174). Ronell emphasises the fool's cap as compulsory head gear when action-writing in the expanded field: "In order to take ourselves seriously we must get over ourselves, we must don the fool's helmet. The fool fuels the heroic passion of knowing, switching at the controls into something other than itself" (ibid). Choreography in this sense is fuelled by idiocy-in-the expanded field, what Ronell emphasises as test-site becoming "a homestead of being-not-at-home" (ibid), going beyond understanding, norms and redemption, capable of holding a mirror to the world and revealing its previously unknown discoveries (2002: 177-180). Foolish research is heroic, enabling researchers to break from the constraints of "normatively secured" attempts to test, which only confirm knowledge that already exists (Ronell, 2005: 187-188).[39] For Forsythe, choreography should display its failures, not just past failures but failures of the present. However, failure and stupidity are no more fixed or guaranteed than is truth. They, too, are "structured" by *différance*, at best promised in choreography.

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[37] We will discuss 'performativity' more fully in a later section of this chapter in relation to Judith Butler.

[38] The promise of testing in the expanded field of choreography does not produce finalised outcomes, proving or dismissing hypotheses. The proof is not in the performance, nor in the critics' test report-cards; there is no proof in this sense. It is not that the test-pattern construes the grounds of the promise but rather the promise generates wildly and somewhat unpredictably the need to test, inventing its test questions, negations and affirmations, and out of this it only generates more of the same: trials and re-trials, aberrant redressing of hypotheses on the backs of envelopes, but no absolute final answers.

[39] We will discuss 'normativity' more fully in this chapter in relation to Butler.
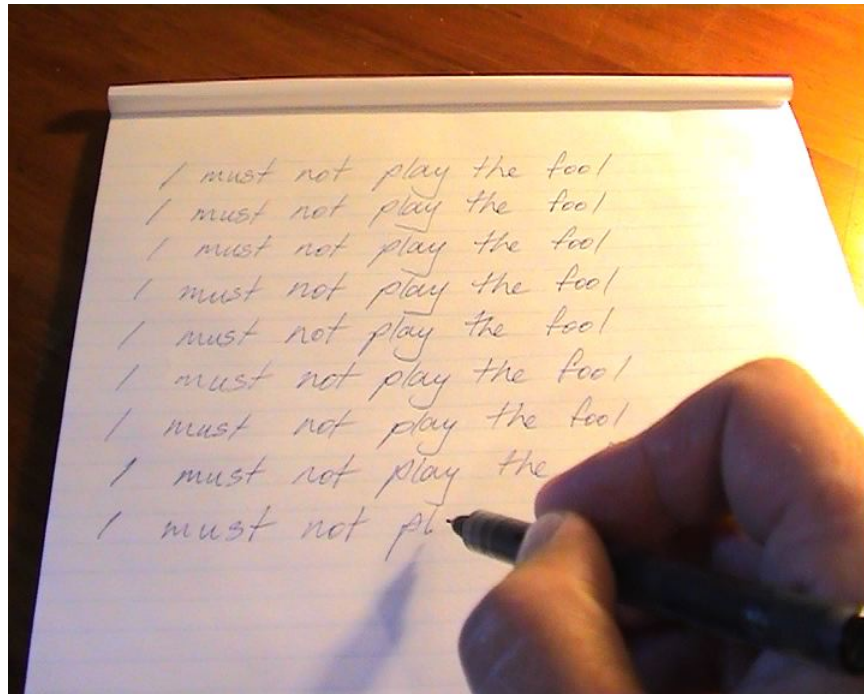
Figure 11. *Don't Listen to Me*, Mark Harvey (2011; Photograph).

If the fool's cap is the safety-helmet of choice when taking the ride of one's life, then perhaps Ronell's *Stupidity* is the auto manual in the glove box for test-driving one's preferred vehicle. It was Deleuze's discussion on stupidity in his *Difference and Repetition* that lit the flame, particularly the emphasis given to the immuring of a transcendental cogitation from error, as if error lies in an empirical realm of dim wits. In short, why is there no transcendental stupidity? Why isn't it at the heart of thinking: "The concept of error, however, cannot account for the unity of stupidity and cruelty or for the relation of the tyrant to the imbecile. According to Deleuze, that which has made us avoid stupidity is a transcendental problem of the continued belief in the *cogitatio*" (Ronell, 2001: 20). While Ronell gives particular focus to Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* as a writing that opens a new question of the ethical, this is an expanded field of idiocy rather than the one defined earlier in Lepecki's application of the notion to a more general understanding of modernity's individuated subjectivity: "Dostoevsky teaches us about the assumption of ethical liability by placing responsibility close to the extinction of consciousness" (Ronell, 2001: 19). In his final collaboration with Felix Guattari, in *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze provides an expanded philosophical account of idiocy, an account that gives us a better sense of the transformative possibilities of idiocy from Lepecki to Ronell. Deleuze and Guattari find harboured in Descarte's cogito the "I" with private doubts: "It is the Idiot who says "I" and sets up the cogito but who also has the subjective presupposition or lays out the plane. The idiot is the private thinker, in contrast to the public teacher" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 61-62). We recognise here Lepecki's idiot. They mention a mutation we associate with Dostoevsky: "The old idiot wanted indubitable truths at which he would arrive by himself. … The new idiot had no wish for indubitable

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truths; he will never be "resigned" to the fact that 3 + 2 = 5 and wills the absurd. … The old idiot wanted truth, but the new idiot wants … to create. … The new idiot will never accept the truths of History" (62-63). With modernity's bio-political uptake on the pathological or abnormal as that against which normalisation happens we see the emergence in literature, the arts and medical records archives of the activities of the dim witted and the stupid that, on the one hand, explain why we are so acceptable and, on the other hand, prop up the regulatory mechanisms that make transgressions so fascinating but so stupid, even intelligently stupid, even works of *idiot savants*.

Drawing further on Nietzsche, Ronell calls for experimentation to have not too few or too many habits. Nietzsche advocated small habits, changed often; he distrusted life-long habits, habits set up and established as precepts for living one's life (2005: 194). In a sense what Ronell is calling for is clarity in research methodology, while allowing methods to remain open to perspectives not previously thought. McKenzie suggests that Ronell's version of habit calls for neither a sense of continual negation nor affirmation but both in order to maintain a sense of experimental methodology (McKenzie, 2001: 234).[40] From this perspective, Forsythe's call for choreography to endlessly question and negate is mediated by the choreographic-tester also affirming experimental habit. Ronell proposes the activation of the personality of the tester, experimenter, the artist and choreographer within test writing with unique personal projections, insights, desires, physical and somatic behaviour patterns, influences, conditioning and so forth. For Nietzsche, tests are answerable to personality:

> To whom are we answerable? Nietzsche appears to make it a matter of "whom" rather than "what," a decision that in itself denotes ethical resolve. Turning aside from essence as its destination or agency, answerability, embedded in procedure, intention, or method, always implies the future of the experiment and something like the "personality" with which it is associated or to whom it is addressed. (Ronell, 2005: 175)

She adds, for Nietzsche, "personality-with-passion" is the key driver of the experimental disposition (2005: 177).[41] This call for the activation of personality in testing is fundamental to this research in the sense, for example, that Read activates the auto-biographical in Live Art, or this project articulates the *autos* or *oto* of myself as exceptional in the simultaneity of an indifference of life to its history of truths and errors.

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[40] To take away affirmations and only negate and question in one's test practices is to simply approach the test through a perspective of positivist subjectivity.

[41] As R. Lawrie cites of R. S. Peters, passion is defined here as "something which provides inducement to act" (1980:106) and, for Lawrie, it is a spontaneous process of desiring, in a strong manner, that is not bound by logic and at times is uncontrollable (113-117). Of course, passion can be read through Lacanian psychoanalysis in relation to the subject's drives and desires. See, for example, Lacan *Seminar I* (1988) and *Ecrits* (1977).

> Examining the history of reason, he learns that it was born in an altogether reasonable fashion—from chance; devotion to truth and precision of scientific methods arose from the passion of scholars, their reciprocal hatred, their fanatical and unending discussions, and their sprit of competition—the personal conflicts that slowly forged the weapons of reason. … What is found at the beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin: it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity. (Foucault, 1998: 371-372)

An indifference of life in its history of truth and error would, perhaps, encapsulate Michel Foucault's understanding of what he terms "games of truth" that we briefly mentioned when discussing Sylvie Fortin's somatic research and her application of Foucault's thinking to her project. Foucault is important for this thesis particularly for his reading of Nietzsche and for his approach to what he terms will-to-truth with respect to our practices of making histories and archives, of gathering what we consider formative influences that have shaped our thinking. In part, Foucault's corrective is that it is not so much our thinking that has been shaped but our behaviours, our small habits, our bodies. They are marked, inscribed by formative influences. I want to briefly outline some of the most salient aspects of Foucault's work for this project and then provide similar accounts for the influence of Derrida and Judith Butler.[42] The following activates some of the precepts of a Foucauldian approach to genealogy in setting out the expanded field of influences on my performance practice.

In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (NGH) Foucault engages a number of Nietzsche's texts on history and genealogy, (1998: 369-391).[43] He commences his text with a reminder that the house is never really in order, that a tidy desk produces nothing of interest, that the ideal of recoverable facticity is chimeral: "Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (Foucault, 1998: 369). Nietzsche challenged the pursuit of origins in the name of a history of errors. His challenge happens through the activation of two notions, that of 'descent' and that of 'emergence'. Ideal forms of history, positivist history, trace *descent* through cause and effect continuities. They lead, via the determinations of the essence of things, to the reality of what has happened. Such histories eschew the accidental, the dispersed entanglement of events, the undecidability of causes, overdeterminations of effects. The German word used by Nietzsche is *Herkunft* that

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[42] There is precedence in dance scholarship for engaging Foucault in relation to Derrida and Butler with Ramsay Burt's reading particular practices by Rainer, Bausch and Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker (2004: 29-44). However, the approach here differs, firstly, in its practice-based framework and, secondly, in the binding agency of Nietzsche who traverses Foucault, Derrida and Butler.
[43] Foucault references *The Gay Science*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *Human, All Too Human.*

means literally, or generally, 'stock', 'race', bloodline'. He applies this in the sense of recognising numberless beginnings, the multiplication of accidents and faulty calculations: "Truth is undoubtedly the sort of error that cannot be refuted" (372). Descent attaches itself to the body, to the "nervous system", the "digestive apparatus" (375). The other replacement term for origin is "emergence." Where positivist history needs to find the origin in order to make sense of the present, "emergence" as the moment of arising concerns itself with the forces in play that produce something, the strength of the strong, the resentment of the weak, struggle in all things as will-to-power. Foucault suggests that if 'descent' qualifies the strength or weakness of an instinct, emergence designates the place of confrontation. In tandem, descent and emergence produce what Nietzsche calls "effective" history to be opposed to the history of the historians: "The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holiday; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances" (380).

Figure 12. *Calling Up Freddie Nietzsche and the Gang and Judy B*, Mark Harvey (2005/2011; Photograph). Image From Flyer for: Harvey, Mark. *Calling the Guise*. Live Performance Seance. Auckland: AUT, 2005.

The task of "history" is to become a "curative science" (382) opposing three modalities of history we see installed from Platonism: parody directed against reality; the dissociative directed against identity; and sacrifice directed against truth (385). Foucault stresses this transformation of history into a totally different form of time. Hence, with parody, we have the "buffoons of God" as parody of monumental history, history of iconic events and personae, of great men. For the great ironist Nietzsche we have no immortal soul but many mortal ones. With dissociation, we recognise that all knowledge rests on injustice, not truth, "enslavement to instinctual violence" (387). And, finally, with sacrifice, where once religion

asked for sacrifice of bodies, now our scientific and calculative will calls for experimentation on ourselves, risking our extinction in our passion for knowledge (388). This reading of Nietzsche is something Ronell's test-framework also calls for, and it relates to Forsythe's choreographic emphasis on error, and potential for research discovery. For Foucault, genealogy occurs through a sea of imbrications where it is endlessly written, even ideas do not "retain their logic" in any genealogical account (Gutting, 2005: 59). He emphasizes that genealogies should be where one carefully sees and cultivates: accidents, jolts, surprises, divergent events by drawing relationships between things, defeats and victories, unsteadiness, dissipation, discontinuities, dysfunctions, weaknesses and strengths, showing attentiveness to malice.[44]

Figure 13. *Why We Need to Recite the Correct, True and One and Only History*, Mark Harvey (2011; Photograph).

The emphasis on rupture and constructive evaluation is not unrelated to Ronell's reflections on Nietzsche. What constitutes a genealogy for one choreographic research may not be for another, nor for any other time or perspective. The same may be said, of course, for the disciplines of dance, performance art and live art, which problematises their very definitions as constituting or constituted in fixed identities. In emphasising the body in historical genealogies, Foucault articulates a sense in which the body is where marks of historical

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[44] In relation to this, and not unlike Ronell's call for test habits, Foucault further draws from Nietzsche that the historian's focus should be on genealogies that are meticulous, involve patience and a focus on a singularity of events and attention to detail in an 'archaeological manner' (Gutting, 2005: 59). He stipulates that this should be done with rigour so that events that at first appear as "insignificant truths" can be traced within a genealogy (ibid). A genealogy is situated among a range of other genealogies, that may not necessarily be interconnected and lead to the same events. To view genealogies from this angle is not to privilege any one perspective, or any notion of *the* truth.

languages are traceable, which in turn gives rise to current desires and errors, echoed in my reading of Ronell and Heathfield as choreographic test-writing, test-failures and somatic test-sites.[45] Fortin suggests, in reflection on Foucault, that the somatic choreographed body is subject to discourses and processes of power (2009). There is also Read's recognition of bio-politics in theatre and Live Art (2008: 68-69). We can trace the emergence of Foucault's understanding of modernity as the threshold moment for the appearance of a new agency of power in the bio-political, in part, to his reading and application of Nietzsche. In this research, genealogies are traceable through the somatically choreographed actions of others and myself.

Foucault stresses that for Nietzsche it is the passions of the historian that produce the truths of their labour. Where History attempts to erase the fingerprints and spilt ink of its writing, erase the prejudice or bigotry of its scribes, Nietzsche extols their passions, their hatred, their interminable quarrelling, in short, the very genealogy of the historian: "Nietzsche's version of historical sense is explicit in its perspective and acknowledges its systems of injustices" (Foucault, 1998: 382). For Foucault the historian's own genealogies are always subject to fabrication, just as much as his or her subject matter – the former contaminates the latter (ibid). This provides a justification for this genealogical choreographic researcher to consider his own histories, passions, prejudices, his whole system of entangled half-truths, ill-considered alliances and cruel and unjust accusations so as to attempt to recognize the contaminations these cause to a will-to-truth, not in order to stupidly imagine they can be purified but simply to come clean on the accidents and errors of his life.[46] We see with Ronell that the tester needs to engage with his or her personality and with Read, for live artists to

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[45] Foucault does not refer to any one particular language here; therefore there is a sense of open-endedness about this use of the term. In this sense it refers to the wide range of bodily and linguistic codes and forms of communication from different cultures and sub-cultures. A further instance of Foucault locating genealogy through the body is found in his reflection on the self-confession of Pierre Riviere's murder of members of his family (1975: 202-205). Within the self-confession Riviere traces a genealogy of events that led to his crime. Riviere attempts to cite what he sees as the truth of the events connected to his embodied violence. As Foucault illustrates of Riviere's account, within genealogical accounts the human body is imbricated within discourses and the socio-political. There is an interrelationship between conceptualisation and the body in this way for Foucault. In relation to genealogies, as Gutting summarises, Foucault in his notion of the archaeological perspective also follows Georges Canguilhem's concept that biological experiences and reflections are through concepts, and not subject-centred phenomenological *vecu* (lived experience)" (2005: 62). Two points come to mind here: 1. Concepts for Foucault are formed through discourses and perspectives and 2. for Foucault, genealogies, histories and archaeologies cannot be formed without any conceptualisation by individuals, and therefore it is impossible to perform what phenomenology prescribes – to account for lived experience as isolated intentional consciousness for a world of phenomena.
[46] We have mentioned Foucault on Nietzsche's "will to knowledge", which refers to "instinct, passion, the inquisitor's devotion, cruel subtlety, and malice" (1998, 387). The genealogist has the opportunity to consciously negate, appraise and affirm events in order to locate "poisonous traces" of his or her own genealogies and prescribe antidotes to them (382).

engage with auto-*bio*graphy and *bio*graphy, so that they can attempt to activate the lies, fabrication and false promises or poisons that their own genealogies bring to their practice.

Auto-spectating

> The good fortune of my existence, its uniqueness perhaps, lies in its fatality: I am, to express it in the form of a riddle, already dead as my father, while as my mother I am still living and becoming old. This dual descent, as it were, both from the highest and the lowest rung on the ladder of life, at the same time a decadent and a beginning—this, if anything, explains that neutrality, that freedom from all partiality in relation to the total problem of life, that perhaps distinguishes me. (Nietzsche, 1969: 222)

Thus opens the first 'chapter' of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Am So Wise." Derrida's "Otobiographies" (1985: 4-38) quotes this opening in two phases, as if Derrida wants to echo the very tactics of his reading of Nietzsche's doubled fatality: "In a word, my dead father, my living mother, my father the dead man or death, my mother the living feminine or life. As for me, I am between the two: this lot has fallen to me, it is a 'chance', a throw of the dice; and at this place my truth, my double truth, takes after both of them" (15). We recognise with this how descent and emergence are not simply operations thought through by Nietzsche in order to complicate a thinking of origins. Genealogy is marked by his very relation to him becoming what he is, his "*ecce homo*." Derrida's Nietzsche provides ways of viewing performance art and dance choreography's sense of writing and viewing, in terms of 'the other.' Christie McDonald's "Preface" to *The Ear of the Other* sets the scene:

> …the *autos*, the self as the subject of biography is displaced into the *otos*, the structure of the ear as perceiving organ, so that 'it is the ear of the other that signs.' This means, among other things, that text does not fully control its interpretation; nor can any single reading pre-empt the field of readings. Both text and its readings remain plural (1985: vii-ix).

Thus Derrida opens "Otobiographies" with Zarathrustra's account of coming across a giant ear, "an ear as big as a man," with a tiny wriggling human body attached, an "inverse cripple who had too little of everything and too much of one thing" (quoted in Derrida, 1985: 3). Derrida's theme is autobiography, the *ecce homo* of a life, understood in Nietzschean terms, in terms of the "umbilical" attachment of our knowing to the ear that listens, our signature. Our *autos* is not simply counter-signed by the other. In the first place, signed by the other, by the ear of the other, it is a promise, a credit line whose general economy is that of *différance*: "There is here a difference of autobiography, an allo- and thanatography. Within this difference, it is precisely the question of the institution—the teaching institution—that

gives a new account of itself" (19). If for Derrida descent marks the *autos* in the dispersions of an *oto*, emergence marks the site of forces as those of the teaching institution that demarcates, for example, the disciplines of philosophy and literature, performance and choreography, Live Art and dance, institutions "which have need of ears" (20).

The *autos* in authorship is always displaced by the reading 'the other' performs through its 'ear.' 'The other', whose 'ear' or sense of perception, interpretation and reinscriptive force (dis)places the author, activates the reading of a 'writing' as simultaneously plural. It may be located not just in the presentation of other bodies, but in the thought, linguistic references, associated forces and their metaphors, and the author or artist's relationship with them. Yet, for Derrida, the other is never fixed to any one of these entities.[47] The 'other', *myself*, has the structure of *différance*, a writing-movement, a choreography of differing/deferring with respect to the finality of meaning's inscriptions, that dis/places that which is neither/nor an 'actual' author, forces coextensive with the formation of an author or the agencies and affects of these entities. Thus, it is never simply 'not the author' or 'the author', or what these forms of naming represent and might become. Derrida emphasises one's auto-spectating: "as Nietzsche said, here is the story that I am telling myself; and that means I hear myself speak" (1985: 49). It is 'the other' within the autobiographer that hears what is written, not simply the author in-the-flesh as this fleshy being is itself multiply techniques of training, diet, habit and passion. The ear of the other is plural. It oscillates outside, inside, around, between and not quite yet in any of the contexts of the auto-*bio*graphy, deconstructing the very boundary conditions that settle on us regarding 'outside' or 'inside', 'self' or 'other', 'belonging' or 'not belonging'. Because of this, what is written, choreographed, does "not fully control its interpretation" (ibid), within what Nietzsche calls "the labyrinth of the ear" (Derrida, 1985: 11), an 'ear' reinscribing somatic choreographic acts in terms of accidents, inaccurate and selective translation, never finite, absolute or clear-cut.[48] The same applies to readings of

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[47] 'Otherness' has a significant history in French thought of the twentieth century, with some of the legacies converging and others playing games of aberration. Kojéve's famous lecture course on Hegel installed the question of the other as fundamental ground for defining identity and difference as such, introducing identity in terms of the locus of the other (Kojéve, 1993). Variously taken up by Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, this 'other' of the 'other' operates diferentially and cannot be collapsed. Hence Lacan has a 'big' Other as well as a 'little' other which themselves cannot be confused. Derrida's reading of difference, following Heidegger's understanding of ontological difference, will install a radically different economy. Levinas suggests a primordial Other that comes before Being. This exegesis follows Derrida's path of the other, not really venturing into psychoanalytic parlance. On Lacan's perspective of the 'Other', see Bruce Fink (1997:32), Lacan's *Ecrits* (1977: 286-287; 311) and *Seminar I*, (1988: 147), and also specifically in relation to performance art, Antony Howell (1999: 45).

[48] Part of what contributes to this is the process of translation that occurs whenever the ear of the other engages with attempting to read what is written. As Claude Levesque notes, for Derrida, inherent in any translation is that which resists translation (1985: 93). This displacement of what is written tallies with Foucault's emphasis not on *truth* but on the effects of *speaking the true*. The ear of the other can never translate and transcribe what has previously been written, whether by oneself or

choreography in classifying its disciplinarity, as performance art, dance and so on. It is not simply an audience who reads and defines and legitimises choreography, as Adshead-Lansdale intimates about dance. Deconstructively, it is the other. An 'audience' in its multiple anonymity and dispersion is not an identity but itself a movement-writing, a choreography whose *autos* has the specificity of its particular umbilical attachment to a giant ear.

Figure 14. *A Trace of The Other in Me*, Mark Harvey (2008/2011; Photograph).

The other's 'ear', or sense of omnipresent listening and force of the other, is involved in giving meaning to writing and, therefore, also often writes as if author in-the-flesh and not as the author whose name is attributed.[49] The other's ear, 'countersigns' (1985: 35-36; McDonald, 1985: vii-ix).[50] This is where the other's interpretation of the text signs or assigns the name of the author to the text. The auto-biographer 'lives on credit' in writing, having a 'name' on loan from the other (Derrida: 1985: 9). Building on Ronell's testing, Heathfield's somatic test-sites and Foucault's genealogies, it is not just the choreographer but the other's ear that writes the choreographic somatic test, its histories and named choreographer. Because the other's ear simultaneously 'test-choreographs' with the choreographer, signs off

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another. The ear tunes in and out, focuses upon specific details that it 'reads', while omitting others (Derrida, 1985: 36). This labyrinth of interpretation is neither logical nor mappable.

[49] For Derrida, the name *assigned* to the autobiography should not be "confused with the so-called life of the author, with the corpus of empirical accidents making up the life of an empirically real person" (Gasche, 1985: 41).

[50] Nietzsche here dabbles with autobiographical intentionality, drawing up a contract "with himself", implicating "*us in this transaction through what, on the force of a signature, remains of his text*" (Derrida, 1985: 8; emphasis by Derrida).

the experimental procedures and test-results, its being is that of the promise to redeem the credit advance we have already encountered in the writings of Read and Ronell and her sense of an ETA. There is no finality to a finished truthful notion of a choreography or named artist; they fail expectations, renege on promises, borrow and steal from everyone. The displacements of meaning 'caused' by the other's countersigning of choreography happen in its ear writing itself into them (Derrida, 1985: 38). The other often attempts to write its own somatic, cultural and political traces into what is choreographed. For Read and Forsythe, 'exceptional' choreography and Live Art allow themselves to be activated by these processes incurred by the ear, and for Ronell, by their potential test-discoveries.

Despite how the name of the autobiographer, and the identity of this signed name, is written by the other, for Derrida it is sustained by "a ruse of dissimulation" or 'mask' (1985: 10) and the "eternal return" (1985: 10;13). *Ecco Homo*, for Derrida, shows that the autobiographic text masks its identity, which relentlessly 'returns' or iterates (1985: 7; 10; 13; 19; 45; 46). The autobiographic text speaks to a 'living' author, while feigning that *only* he or she has written it, as living and immortalised.[51] This mask of the so-called living author in a sense protects itself from disappearing because it functions to continually reinstate itself in the other's ear on an implicit level, even if the author's work is cited by another (Derrida, 1985: 76-77). In terms of autobiographic and genealogical choreographing, the ruse of the name of the choreographer in-the-flesh is sustained by the ear's eternal return, a version of Read's premise that performance is concerned with 'lying'. Authorship and identity in dance, performance art choreography and Live Art employ the (live somatic) bodies of performers to make their ruse of naming convincing. In this sense, being alive is inscribed in a test-site as old as Platonism: the self-presence of oneself to oneself, what Derrida emphasises in Plato's attention to the voice that hears itself, even as a silent murmur of thought, as *phonocentrism* and a metaphysics of presence (Derrida, 1973). Deconstruction, as radical rupture of this auto-affect, introducing the decentring of the other, never quite lets this subject who knows get back onto centre stage. The audience is often convinced that these live in-the-flesh bodies are simply the artists or their performers. But what they witness is 'written' and authenticated by the other. Hence the assignation of titles and ownership to performance happens performatively through a counter-signing that will never be done with the event of forging ahead, in anybody's name.

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[51] What sustains the 'line of credit' of the dissimulation of the living author to the other's ear is the written name of the author, which 'eternally returns' through the other's continual countersigning (Derrida, 1985: 13; 19).

In relation to the double-truth of Nietzsche's feminine operation, the living dead of patriarchal identity and living on of maternal inheritance, the choreographic autobiographer draws from practice-related and personal histories, parental or otherwise: Foucault's genealogist recounting the poisons and passions of an *autos*; Ronell's test-subject 'personality'. The 'dead father' suggests that the other is not explicitly locatable, yet is an omnipresent force, a ghost-work, perhaps a work of mourning, in what the choreographer writes. The 'living mother' is not simply a sense of maternal lineage and Western archetypal notions of fertility and generation of the choreographer as writer, but also a sense of the named presence of the artist and his or her restless questioning that brings about a sense of discovery and generation. Derrida suggests in the closing sentences of "Otobiographies":

> The mother is the faceless figure of a figurant, an extra. She gives rise to all the figures by losing herself in the background of the scene like an anonymous persona. Everything comes back to her, beginning with life; everything addresses and destines itself to her. She survives on the condition of remaining on the bottom. (Derrida, 1985: 38)

Derrida calls for sensitivity and keenness to listen to those who write, in this case, to listen carefully while choreographing (1985: 50-52). This implies that any choreographer in-the-flesh should, for Derrida, respond openly, carefully and attentively in his or her practice to detecting or distinguishing "the active from the reactive, the affirmative from the negative," when it comes to the legacies of 'dead fathers' and 'living mothers' and a politico-ethics of the other that reads, writes and choreographs. In a roundtable discussion with Christie McDonald, Derrida notes:

> The most important thing about the ear's difference, which I have yet to remark, is that the signature becomes effective—performed and performing—not at the moment it apparently takes place, but only later, when ears will have managed to receive the message. In some ways the signature will take place on the addressee's side, that is, on the side of him or her whose ear will be keen enough to hear my name, for example, or to understand my signature, that with which I sign.(50)[52]

Derrida's emphasis on the performativity of signatures opens powerfully to our concerns with choreography in the expanded field. Judith Butler takes up the performativity of subject-positions, in Derrida's sense, in her discussion of how power becomes inscribed in our psychic life. She also engages aspects of Foucault and the writings of Nietzsche and

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[52] From Derrida and Read's call for the live artist to be *bio*graphical and auto*bio*graphical we recognise that the choreographic autobiographer, otobiographer and genealogist require a sense of reflexivity from the subject who writes. However, as Judith Butler argues and draws from Foucault, reflexivity of the subject is not fully possible because he or she only ever partially sees the power relations in which he or she is located (Stern, 2000: 118-119). Any attempt at reflexivity in one's autobiographical-genealogical choreographic account is therefore also subject to power relations that remain impossible to completely disclose. See the following section on Butler's understanding of performed subjectivity for a fuller discussion on reflexivity and power.

Freud. The following section outlines her thinking and some of the uses and abuses we can make of it for our project.

Persistence of the subject

If Deleuze and Guattari ask somewhat simply and straightforwardly "what is philosophy?" Judith Butler's simple and straightforward question might be "what is a subject?" How do subjects stay the same when there is nothing about their formation that suggests their ongoing viability? What is the "persistence of subjects"? (Butler, 1997b: 9). In her approach to this question, Butler's understanding of performativity (1999: vii-44; 84-100; 163-190; 1997a: 135-137), contextualizes interpretations of Nietzsche by Ronell, Foucault and Derrida, and provides ways to consider constructions of 'acceptability' in dance and performance art choreography, providing moments of negotiation between them.[53] Her work adds to this Nietzschean-influenced framework a way for approaching the contingencies, definitions, constructions and boundaries of choreographic discourses in terms of questions of politics and identity. Butler has in places drawn significantly from Derrida and Foucault on Nietzsche while her perspective on performativity adds to elements of Ronell's propositions on testing. The term 'performativity', first coined by John Austin in 1956, refers to any forms of speech that produces acts or performs operations, be it through naming or doing (Butler, 1993: 224-226; Hoffmann and Jonas' 2005: 12-14; Failler, 2005: 100).[54] Responding to Austin, Butler stresses that performative speech acts or disclosures employ authority, enacting "binding power," or power that calls for conformity or obedience in achieving the effects it names (1993: 225).[55] 'Choreography', from this perspective, is an

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[53] While Butler's focus has usually been the construction of identity in gender and sexuality, this research primarily draws from her perspectives on performativity. There are specific conceptual entanglements that require analysis and questioning in how Butler's theories integrate Derrida, Foucault, Louis Althusser and psychoanalytical authors such as Lacan and Jean Laplanche. Not unlike Burt's reading of Butler in relation to dance choreographers (2004: 29-44), this research does not attempt to resolve this heterogeneity, but attempts to draw relations and points of compatibility between these perspectives within Butler's approach to performativity that, unlike Burt, relates to this performance research practice.

[54] Butler also interprets this in relation to "heterosexulaization" and positivities to do with gender and sexuality.

[55] We recognise an emphasis Butler has of 'power as authority' in performativity. She references Foucault's emphasis on 'power' as productive of the formation of subjects, though she emphasises the policing and coercive effects of relations of force, where Foucault places particular emphasis on power's *invisibility* and productive effects in its 'authority'. The visibility of such coercions, for Foucault, happens through *resistances*, counter-practices to dominant relations of force, productive of the visibility of marginalisation and what he terms the 'abnormal' (Foucault, 1972:134-145; Foucault, 2003). In this respect, many contemporary 'choreographic' practices, such as those emphasised by Lepecki, Heathfield and Read can be considered as 'counter-practices' in Foucault's sense, resistive to

act that situates other actions in their emergence, performing a normalising of subject agencies via authoritative codes that are not necessarily *authoritarian*.[56] There are two key concepts in Butler's perspective on the performativity of identity that this practice engages: normalisation/normativity and 'policing'/interpellation. The first of these significantly borrows from Foucault in its thinking; the second comes from Louis Althusser, the structuralist Marxist political thinker who developed a theory of subjectivity based on "interpellation" or, literally, being called up into one's subject-being. These concepts serve to reveal how dance and performance art choreography are constructed as disciplines, in terms of 'acceptability.'

'Normalizing' or making 'proper' for Butler is enacted through "oppressive structures", or via alternative sites or "rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression" (1991: 13-14).[57] Butler's reference to 'normalizing/normalization' is influenced by Foucault, where power is activated through attempts to 'make normal', teach, homogenize, include yet exclude, compare, differentiate, make 'acceptable' as well as classify via the hierarchical ordering of subjects (Foucault, 1977: 182-184).[58] Butler suggests:

> Consider, in *Discipline and Punish*, the paradoxical character of what Foucault describes as the subjectivation of the prisoner [one could replace here 'worker', 'student', 'actor', 'dancer', 'performer', 'researcher']. The term "subjectivation" carries the paradox in itself: *assujetissement* denotes both the becoming of the subject and the process of subjection—one inhabits the figure of autonomy only by becoming subjected to a power, a subjection which implies a radical dependency. For Foucault, this process of subjectivation takes place centrally through the body. In *Discipline and Punish* the prisoner's body not only appears as a sign of guilt and transgression, as the embodiment of prohibition and the sanction for rituals of normalization [one could replace here the pleasure and transgression of Live Art's

the normativity of disciplinary structures that performatively call up dance, choreography, performance, performance art and Live Art as it increasingly becomes institutionally codified.

[56] An 'everyday' example is the performative and normalised ritual that takes place, in the sense of making or inscribing the place of 'theatre' when a performance is about to commence: the lights dim, perhaps atmospheric music fades down, an audience responds to these choreographed marks of authority by stilling its chatter and directing its eyes towards the stage.

[57] Butler brings up these notions in "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" in relation to a critique of dominant lesbian and gay theories, that normalize constrictive definitions of gender and sexual identity – at the time of her writing this.

[58] 'Acceptability' here refers to the degree to which an object or subject is deemed acceptable/approvable or not and anything in between, to a body (individual or otherwise), according to a set of values/feelings. As Butler suggests, 'acceptability' is constructed performatively through institutions or regulatory regimes, such as censorship (1997a: 128). Her employment of the term 'institutions' appears to be based on Foucault's; which refers to, "carefully defined" hierarchical social structures that distribute "power relations", which can consist of "legal structures," "matters of habit," "fashion," or "traditional conditions" (1994a: 344). Examples of institutions relevant to this research include the fields of dance choreography, performance art, live art, visual arts, dance, theatre, art galleries, theatres, university PhD programmes and even schools of thought like modernism and post-structuralism. Butler's consideration of regulatory regimes, which include everyday behaviour, extends more widely than Althusser's concept of 'ideological state apparatuses' that apply to Governmental states where power is used to uphold 'status quo' belief systems.

counter-practices to rituals of normalization], but is framed and formed through the discursive matrix of a juridical subject [all practices on bodies have their juridical subject, the discursive laws of their normalization]. (Butler, 1997b: 83-84)[59]

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[59] 'Transgression', for Butler, is the subject actively resisting the normativity of 'the law'. Althusser names this a 'bad subject' (1993: 122). Transgression itself is not a key theme in this research; it does not become one of the key structures to 'primordial promising. Too much and too little can be made of 'transgressive' acts, too much naivety around the romanticism of law-breaking, too little understanding of the fact that most 'transgressions' have their normative rituals and frameworks of acceptability. Perhaps this is why Read turned to Agamben's more complicating thinking from *Homo Sacer* on the state of exception, bare life and the 'ban' that forms the 'bandit' or 'outlaw.' In as much as "life" is a Nietzschean concern that Foucault adopts in its political and ethical dimensions in the bio-political, this research is concerned with the transgressive as *choreographic idiocy* at times relating to failures and breakdowns: of norms, of promises, of bodies, of a general climate of acceptability. In this reference to the limit of 'the law', Butler not only cites Foucault, but also Lacan. The incorporation of Lacan and Foucault presents a problem of congruity, as Charles Shepherdson notes (2000: 15). Yet, for Shepherdson (2000: 157-160), it is possible to incorporate Foucault and Lacan in terms of how they each focus on the subject-formation of individuals, as they do not uphold individual testimony as 'true' (ibid). For Shepherdson 'the law' for both Lacan and Foucault produces a form of "excess" that facilitates 'what is beyond its limits' (2000: 180), the transgression that Butler writes about (1999: 163-180). For Butler, performativity inherently fails to truly achieve its intended normalisations, which lays the ground open for subversion (ibid; Failler, 2005: 98-107). While Butler locates this as a psychoanalytic process, she does not elaborate on its ramifications that Tim Dean, for example, might question in Lacanian terms.

From a Derridean perspective, this failure in performativity is structured and guaranteed by *différance*. In his deconstruction of the performatives of J.L. Austin, in "Signature, Event, Context," Derrida emphasises that, for Austin, the agency or authority of a performative is context-bound, specifically sited and cited in the strict normativity of a locale (Derrida, 1982: 307-330). For Derrida, there is nothing that grounds or ultimately decides the boundary closure to this context, except an assumed naturalisation of things as if they are simply that. In this sense, the bounding and binding condition for performatives, in their structuring on difference, are never closed or saturated. There is installed the unconditional possibility for failure (Derrida, 1982). In Althusser's terms, what and who ever is performatively policed or called up, or interpellated inherently experiences the deferral and displacement of 'the law' that is being cited, in relation to transgressive potentialities. In addition, there is Foucault's premise that transgressions, which involve activities that cross and re-cross the lines of norms, are in a continuous spiral with "the limit" that precedes and exceeds them (1994b: 73-74; quote from 73). 'The limit' here refers to the boundaries in which normative and normalizing rules occur. Choreographic practices that are said to be transgressive defer to norms of transgression. It is the other who signs a work as transgressive, regardless of what the choreographer intended. Choreographic transgression also plays within the realms of failure and stupidity. Ronell emphasises test-failure and Forsythe choreographic-failure in terms of potential sites for discovery in a Nietzschean spirit for discovery. Not all failures are transgressions. Well trained subjects on either side of the 'fourth wall' test themselves every time and sometimes perform below par without the slightest thought of this as a slipping outside of the test-bed sheets, or into them for that matter.

From Ronell's test-score on *The Gay Science* we recognise that the occurrence of such choreographic failure still opens up the promise of blindness, insight and discovery for the researcher. Many of the orthodox histories of performance art, and their sometime references to choreography, particularly when framed within the legacies of visual arts contexts, emphasise transgression as an over-determining trait or fundamental driver of practices. Exemplary here is Schneeman's *Interior Scroll* (1975, Stiles, 1998: 296-297). Considering that performance art is usually sited through conceptual visual art practices and sites that throughout the twentieth century have fostered cultural and political transgressions, this in itself throws into question the assumption that performance art is necessarily transgressive where *anything* may be art and *transgressions* are considered essential. But remembering our *otobiographical* perspective, and the credit line that every permissive artist holds as a promissory note, it is the other who makes good the currency transaction, who authenticates and validates. One thinks of the Franklin Furnace projects of the 1980s and the sulphurous hell raising that they seemed to be stoking from the viewpoint of a Congressional elite bent on protecting the sane views of normal folk. That ended up with defaults on credit lines all round. On this score, Heathfield (2004: 9-11) notes that performance, in art contexts, that questions in open-ended ways is often transgressive, functioning to critique and displace cultural norms of fixed notions of site, place, object and concept.

Transgressions often become the vanguard for norms. We recognize the dynamic in the relations between norm, normativity and normalization. If, as Butler stresses, norms govern identity, it is within a contextual field of agencies determinable by normativity, the general milieu of legalities that construe juridical subjects. Norms and normativity establish a discursive field of subject formations, a discursive field that is neither fixed nor particularly stable, in some senses but in others may have extended continuities and institutional structures. Normativity for Butler "also pertains to ethical justification, how it is established, and what concrete consequences proceed there from" (1999: xx). Hence there is the normativity of a milieu to the constitution of the family, with successive though juridically stable norms. There are norms and normativity for buying your groceries, which operates on less stable continuities and juridical structures. Normalisation concerns training and correctional procedures. It is why I have many supervisors, to correct me into the 'normativity' of a PhD project. Normalisations are not discursive but rather techniques of power that at once props up failures through training but also enacts new procedures, invents new techniques, displaces norms and at time whole normative fields. We see the emergence of discourses on Live Art in such a way. It did not start with discourses; it started with practices, with bodies doing this rather than that, with breaking from codified procedures and inscribing new ones. Haphazard and accidental link ups, and the kick-in of a discursive field that rewrote the rulebook without knowing it at the time, construe a normalizing technique correlate with the recognition of a new milieu and the tentative consolidation of some new norms. With what follows in Chapter 4, one aim is to make note of some of these new norms within a milieu we are naming *choreographic idiocy in the expanded field*. Therefore, normatively formed judgments of 'acceptability' by institutions and individuals carry moral justifications, where positivist notions of 'good' and 'bad' are used to signify cultural practices.[60] Normalizing and normativity institutionalize what is judged in terms of 'acceptability' in the location of identity (Butler, 1997a: 134-135; Kirby, 2006: 94).[61]

In many contemporary galleries where performance art is a commonplace, such as Artspace in Auckland, the question of transgression does not arouse curators and artists, or, generally, partisan audiences, that is to say those already inculcated in the normativity and legacies of art's seminally disruptive project.

[60] It was not for nothing that Nietzsche's 'genealogy' was a genealogy of morals or that he wrote in a likewise manner, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Obvious social structures and institutions are the Church, Government, the media, non-government organizations, protestors and social cliques; then, perhaps, less apparent realms such as the teaching of choreography and art practice. Each of these institutions and social sites is established on the values it derives from practice, values normatively driven with attendant moral judgements.

[61] Butler brings this up in relation to hate speech and institutions' roles to do with it.

Examples of where the normativity of 'acceptability' governs choreographers and audiences through institutions include theatres, galleries, studios, academies, specific written publications, community milieu, aesthetic perspectives and movements, and their respective norms of performance spectacle and practice, via the languages of dancerly motility and performance art anti-theatricality. These are often each linked to the specific *value* of practices, as illustrated by Parr and Abramovic who call for no theatricality in performance art. Moreover, the disciplinary significations of performance art, dance choreography and live art operate to normalize the 'acceptability' of practice via such institutions, even as they interrogate these terrains, as do theorists like Lepecki, Read and Heathfield. While Lepecki or Read might extol the performances of Jerome Bel, they will do so in a discursive ensemble that approaches a new normativity: at once transgression and the law showing their inseparability. These disciplines function as contextual bodies of an identity always already subject to normalizing and normativity.

For Butler, subjects are 'policed', via normalization and normativity into becoming whom they are (1993: 117; 121-124; 1997b: 106-107; Kirby, 2006: 86-107).[62] Individuals are 'policed' into seeing and fantasizing themselves in terms of 'acceptability', normatively 'speakable' or 'unspeakable' (ibid). The term 'policed' connotes actualised power that is productive and not necessarily oppressive.[63] Butler refers to policing and Athusser's concept of 'interpellation' in stating that individuals are 'hailed', 'named' or 'called up' into being as subjects through binding unilateral, performative acts, by the other who represents 'the law' (1993; 121-124).[64] Butler notes that this process of performative identity formation is not necessarily *forced* on subjects, as they are also compelled to welcome their being interpellated

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[62] Butler mentions policing at times in relation to cultural conformity. Further insight into the performativity of 'acceptability' is provided by Butler on the *formation* of the identity of individuals *as subjects* within the social field drawing from post-Freudian psychoanalytic readings of Lacan, Laplanche as well as Althusser (1991: 18; 1993: 121-124; 1997a: 134-135). This research does not particularly focus on the psychoanalytic aspects of Butler, notwithstanding our Nietzschean focus and Butler's own teaming up of Nietzsche and Freud on the training circuit of 'Bad Conscience': "Circuits of Bad Conscience: Nietzsche and Freud" (Butler, 1997b, 63-82). For discussions of Butler's psychoanalytical approach see: Angela Failler (2005: 95-103), Kristen Campbell (2005:81-94) and Tim Dean (2000: 16; 68-72; 75-78).

[63] For Foucault, in as much as 'policing' is visible it is ineffectual as an exercise of power. Power is most effective when unknown. In fact, for Foucault, power, ontologically, is unknowable. What it produces are forms of knowing and subjects who know. He suggests that power is mistakenly thought as a substance that one has or does not have and, hence, that it has a form. Althusser, in his Marxian legacy, considered power in this way as substantial. Foucault makes a break with this. Butler attempts to work both ways, with an Althusserian 'policing' as oppressive, and a Foucauldian productivity of power as that which construes our possibility to be.

[64] Despite the centrality for Althusser of the term 'interpellation' in relation to the functioning of ideology, Butler somehow manages to avoid this. Instead, she incorporates norms, normativity and normalisation, more Foucauldian in their approach, with the notion of interpellation, which only partially accounts for ideology. One is hard pressed to find anywhere a discussion by Foucault valorising 'ideology' as a useful term for analysis.

or 'called up' (1995: 1-7).[65] Those who identify as performance artists, dance choreographers, live artists, and viewers are 'called up' by the other as an agency of normalization and normativity, to conform or resist institutional 'acceptability' voluntarily or not. This policing occurs in any context related to these disciplines: the private studio and public performance space; the classroom and institutional funding agency; the journals and monographs and for all of these their reception, valediction or abuse. It occurs even if individuals claim to not be choreographers, artists and so forth. No matter how you sign, it is the counter-signature that pays out the credit. The other hails you the performer into being, your cultural conventions, locations of identity, and passion for an outside to thinking performance as such: Ronell's reading Nietzsche's passion, his experimental personality; Butler showing that the artist's personality and passions, even on a somatic level, are informed and catalysed by the call. A key aspect of Butler's perspective on performativity is iteration, which she draws from Derrida's deconstructive reading of Austin's performative:

> …"written communication' must, if you will, remain legible despite the absolute disappearance of every determined addressee in general for it to function as writing, that is, for it to be legible. It must be repeatable – iterable – in the absolute absence of the addressee (1978: 315).

Writing, though inscribed by a hand that wants to say, has as its possibility that it can be encountered in the absolute withdrawal of the writing hand, but further, the absolute absence, not only of the one who writes, who intends the writing for, but in the absolute absence of the *addressee*, the one for whom it may have been written. We have recognised this already in the 'logic' of the other's counter-signing a work. However, this also undoes the assured 'logic' of performatives that authorise a closed context of meaning. We earlier made reference to Read's citing of Derrida on performatives: "inversely, where there is the performative, an event worthy of the name cannot arrive" (Read, 2004: 244. Writing, for Derrida, thus displaces itself (1978: 314-115) with its *meaning* operating through the economy of *différance*. Butler reads 'writing' performatively, through interpellation, normalising and normativity, in relation to identity. Derrida is activated in her consideration of the iterability of identity: the possibility the identity must have as a possibility its arrival for the one not addressed, its non-arrival for the one addressed.

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[65] This aspect of Butler is, for Burt, a reason for engaging with Butler in relation to Foucault's genealogies, with respect to a subject's body as politically inscribed. Burt suggests that Foucault does not recognize that subjects can situate their bodies in this way (2004: 33).

Figure 15. *New Zealand Police Helmet*, Brian (Photograph; Brian 2011).

For Butler, every normalizing and normative act by subjects is a forlorn attempt to iterate and imitate identity, endlessly displaced in its sense of writing's abyssal openness (1991: 21; 1993: 244). Derrida's approach to Nietzsche's 'eternal return' is locatable with the *iter*, with the 'true' name of never being finally written or choreographed absolutely, despite repetitions and iterations that cite it into existence. Iteration is not unrelated to Foucault's Nietzschean genealogy: there being no historically true template of origin that can be cited, rather the dispersion of entangled events of and on one's body coupled with the multiple forces that site moments of emergence that are accidental dice throws. The choreographer cannot in truth or authentically performatively repeat interpellated identity as a dance maker, performance artist or live artist. Recollections and anticipations are somatically blurred body traces. Yet the practitioner continues to somatically iterate an identity through the performance of practice-based norms, Forsythe's perennial failures essential to choreography. Vicky Kirby's criticism of Butler's theory of policing (2006: 100-107) suggests an approach to 'policing' as 'otobiographical' in Derrida's sense. For Kirby, Butler mistakenly suggests that subjects *cannot* interpellate themselves, which overlooks the dynamic structure of the 'other' whose boundary definition disassembles interiority and exteriority of a self. Kirby argues that individuals or subjects can and do interpellate themselves through their own construal of the other (ibid). One recognises this with Derrida's credit-line of otobiographies where the author is a promissory note to the other who in all respect may well be indistinguishable ontologically from that promised existence, what Derrida elsewhere

calls "the elsewhere within."[66] Somatic choreographic actions involve 'policing' by the other of and within the choreographer and his or her work – where the other, in/as its *différance*, is never fixed to being, never quite belonging within or outside the choreographer, a dehiscence iterably speculating on audience and choreographer for a return on investment.[67]

It is the agency of the other that interpellates a choreographer as an identity of acceptability that is normatively based. On an everyday basis choreographer identities are construed on perceptions of being 'told' during or after a performance, either literally or by inference from behaviour, that things are working, that as an identity, one 'belongs' or doesn't, is 'good enough' or isn't, for this or that somatico-politico-cultural site, in terms of normative standards of performance. The testing is never over, never tough enough, never testy enough. The choreographer's 'acceptability', policed by the other, result in test batteries, measurements taken against perceived choreographic norms in various contexts: audience reception, critic reception, peer reception, not to mention the mood these put you in when reflecting on whether the returns are worth it, whether you are worth it. Butler's notion that fantasy plays a part in the interpellation of individuals may be related to aspects of Ronell's test framework, Derrida's otobiographies and also Foucault's genealogies.[68] In *The Force of Fantasy*, she defines fantasy through the writings of Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontaliss as being the potential of that which oscillates between what is unreal and real, rather than simply being a realm of imagination, that wishes itself to become real (1990: 106-110).[69] In this sense, and in this research, Ronell's notion of the experimental promise, the ETA may be understood through the choreographic fantasy: the oscillating uncertainty on delivering the promise; the unreality of a real situation in which failure is imminent (or is that the reality of an unreal situation?). Read says as much concerning Live Art. Building further on Read, and also Forsythe, interpellating choreographic fantasies activates lies by never actually fulfilling what it promises, which is a (test) driving component for choreography's ontological quest to fail. For both, the audience and the artist, the fantasy in 'calling up' choreography and choreographer is subject to personality and passions. Building on Foucault's genealogies with Butler, such fantasies blur the genealogies that they drawn upon within the other's somatic policing of the choreographer. Butler's approach to the fantasy of identity in the oscillations of an unreal and real, resonates with Derrida's otobiographies in

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[66] See the film *Derrida's Elsewhere* for a discussion by Derrida on this (Derrida, Fathy, Nancy, 1999).

[67] This complicates the specular economy offered by Simon Frith who suggests the guarantee of performance lies in reciprocal recognition of performer and audience (1995-96: v and vii).

[68] Generally speaking, Butler's discussions of fantasy in many of her writings do not cohere into a clear definition (1991: 20-21; 1997b: 518) However, she makes a clear position in *The Force of Fantasy*.

[69] This perspective on fantasy differs to post-Lacanian readings. See, for example, Dean (2000: 33-35; 71-72; 263-264), and Slavoj Zizek (Dean, 2000; 260). As Dean and Zizek note, fantasy can be a collective occurrence, not just an individual one.

their deferral of the absolute truth of the name, staked out for a future-to-come that promises the potentials, the return of and returns on that name and, in this way, behaves like Butler's version of fantasy.[70]

A further pertinent reflection on Butler's performativity, relevant to the practice-based genealogies of this research, concerns the extensive iterative training and conditioning that performers, dance choreographers, performance artists and audiences undergo, *that I have experienced and bring to this research*. Training and conditioning, whether formal or informal, interpellates artists and performers and is, therefore, normative for them – as they are called up in part by the other to conform to normative discourses of power and fantasies of 'acceptability' to do with their performance genre.[71] It involves a sense of 'disciplining' in order to "bind" bodies into artificial notions of 'correctness', which is managed through a normalizing hierarchy of power (Foucault, 1977: 170-194). For the dance choreographer, performer and performance artist, it takes place via their teachers, critics, viewers, peers, themselves, contingent institutions and physical sites of performance as the judges and somatic testers of their work. Emilyn Claid stresses that performers have a *memory* of practices and physical vocabularies in their bodies. Evidence of training for performers is found in the outward appearance of their kinaesthetic behaviour, movement and body language (2006: 211-212). Resultantly, their bodies serve as ongoing conditioning and policing devices, functioning to remind them of how they must be interpellated. This is equally the case for those who *make* performances. For the audience, it occurs through: following socio-cultural codes that other spectators perform, their experiences of viewing performance and choreography, reading reviews, their own lifetime experiences and education. Claid's observation on body memory applies equally to audience members, in terms of their kinaesthetic empathy and responses. Additionally, contingencies to conditioning for dance choreographers and performance artists usually differ significantly. Dance choreographers often undergo years of Modern and Western Classical dance technique training on their bodies, while performance artists, on the other hand, are usually trained to conceptualise with their practice rather than refine their technical studio skills in making.[72]

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[70] Butler's perspective on fantasy is one that Tim Dean suggests is conceptually problematic because of her incorporation of binaries in much of her writing (2000: 192-193). The problem lies in her working with Derrida whose deconstruction is precisely the unhinging of binaries, and a certain tension between the remains of a binary logic coupled with a manoeuvre that supposedly undoes them.

[71] This also includes the physical sites where choreography is performed, sites that always call up an appraisal of the training or conditioning of the choreographer.

[72] Examples of dance choreographic training that are Modern and Western are found in tertiary education training institutions throughout the West and very often across the Eastern hemisphere. A similar geo-spatial mapping may be made for conceptual art training for performance artists. The conditioning for the artist in this research has involved years of body training in order to, in Agamben's terms, activate the impotentiality of his being, in taking up modalities of performance art

In this chapter we have stressed approaches to the understanding of choreography that have aimed to amplify some of the key thinking in the fields we recognise in the writings of Lepecki, Heathfield and Read. The question of *life* in a Nietzschean sense seems important for a genuinely critical engagement with the question of choreography. We approach Nietzsche through contemporary critical registers: the promise, the test, history thought genealogically, the beyond of good and evil, the beyond of truth and error, the beyond of self and other, subject and object, performer and audience. The expanded field of choreography disseminates these structures and opens consideration of a negotiation of dance choreography and performance choreography in other terms that will be explored in the following chapter. Chapter 4 thus aims, on the one hand to recoup the trajectory we have made, an arc that questions the proper names of disciplinary differences in Chapter 2, and the critical and philosophical underpinnings to a substantially new thinking of an ontology of choreography in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents a series of key structures that subtend from the promise as guarantor for a future-to-come of the name and its practices: labouring, stilling, falling, being fallen, failing and minimising. On the other hand, Chapter 4 presents these structuring elements in the milieu of a genealogy of my own practice, in terms of those practices that haphazardly, accidentally or unavoidably became the root stock, the entangled blood-line of my self practicing, and equally erupted from site to site, within an ever changing play of circumstantial forces, to become a neatly packaged and coherent history of my artistic practice presented in Chapter 6. I should be so lucky that my life was this ordered.
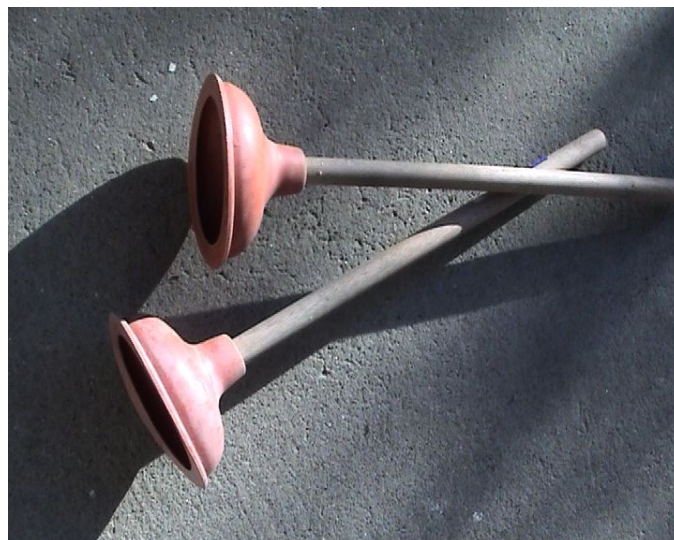
Figure 16.
Tools to Be Interpellated By,
Mark Harvey
(2008/2011;
Photograph).

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that generally eschew the strictures of body training in their modes of practice. In my case and in general, recognizing processes of training and conditioning on performers equips choreographers to be able to reprocess such disciplining into new possibilities and hybridisations, towards new discoveries and research possibilities (Claid, 2006: 140-142).

4

Living Mothers

After World War II, the basis of the United States economy shifted from manufacturing to service, transforming traditional definitions of labor. As the conditions of labor changed for the vast majority of the American populace, so too it did change for artists. Many artists (like their working and professional counterparts) no longer felt compelled to offer a discrete object produced by hand. Rather, they explored ways of producing art that were analogous to other forms of labor. Art could thus be made with unskilled manual labor, with highly regimented managerial labor, or with labor that resonated with ideas borrowed from the service economy. While art was being created by the same mechanisms that governed other forms of labor, it did not *look* like work (or art, even), much like sitting at a desk might not look like work to someone laboring on a factory assembly line. (Helen Molesworth, 2003, 18)

The "still-act" is a concept proposed by anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis to describe movements when a subject interrupts historical flows and *practices* historical interrogation. Thus, while the still-act does not entail rigidity or morbidity it requires a performance of suspension, a corporeally based interruption of modes of imposing flow. The still acts because it interrogates economies of time, because it reveals the possibility of one's agency within controlling regimes of capital, subjectivity, labor, and mobility. (Lepecki, 2006, 15)

Positioning the performing body as the vital means through which to access and articulate this wound [to the sexual and social body], they [Pina Bausch, Lloyd Newson] also offered it up as a promising means of cure, or at least resistance, through the exertion of movement itself. Perhaps this is why the repetition of falling became such a dominant figuration in the choreography of dance-theatre: trusting in relation, in the will and flesh of others, dance-theatre's emblematic, sacrificial body fell again and again, subject to the violent disregard of the other. The other couldn't catch that fall. But the fall contained an imperative, like all sacrifices, for the social body (the audience): the imperative to recognise, remember and repair. (Heathfield, 2006, 189)

It is correctly said that those who do nothing tire themselves most. (Deleuze, quoted in Lepecki, 2006, 130)

Primordial promising

This chapter investigates the practices of other artists that are counter-signed by and, in turn, contextualize my practice. There is no attempt at presenting a totalising or continuous history of the emergence of performance and live art but, rather, the contours of a line of descent, marking out a topography of folds, repetitions, points of inflexion and moments of discontinuity, in general the hazardous plotting of the memory blanks of one's actuality as a dance-trained performance choreographer. Criss-crossing these topographical folds of the practices of others are the affective intensities localised or drawn from the literature we have previously engaged, places of confrontation that establish the emergence or beginnings of things from the plays of forces that define our knowing as something for cutting. These concerns unfold strategically. If we have initially defined choreography as "action," we engage how action and labour are inextricably entwined, particularly in defining a 'work' whether or not it is 'of art'. The "promising animal" labours to clear the debt of a name-in-credit; from this open all of the ways in which this animal defaults: stilling, failing, falling, being-fallen. Then there is the profitability of 'minimising', doing as much as possible with as little as possible.[73]

In reflecting on my practice activating these themes through its test-discoveries, this chapter builds on concepts from the previous chapters performing its version of Derrida's paleonymy. It does this by renegotiating the disciplinary definitions of dance choreography, performance art and live art into the primordial choreographic promises of: *Labouring*, *Stilling*, *Failing, Falling and Being Fallen*, and *Minimising*. These test-themes activate aspects of Ronell's testing, Derrida's otobiographies, and related elements of Butler's performativity, combined

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[73] This is the case for all but the last theme, minimising, about which we, perhaps appropriately, say less. Most of the performance art and dance works cited in this chapter have been encountered on video and some have been made specifically for video (such as the work of Ader, 2007). Two reasons for this medium of encounter: (i) many of the works were performed live before this researcher got underway with his project, such as the work of Graham and (ii) the geographic location of this artist, based in New Zealand, makes it difficult to see live versions of these works (distance and costs), such as the work of Bel. While the following works cited are no doubt influenced by the video format and the sense of liveness that occurs in viewing them, the focus of this literature and research is not particularly concerned with issues of medium or format reception with respect to live performance and related effects in liveness per se. Rather, the focus is with those themes listed in the previous chapters in relation to the key questions of this research (work and labour, stillness, failure, falling and the fallen, and minimalism).

with insights from Lepecki on stillness and Read's promises and lies. This evolution of themes suggests Forsythe's call for choreography to be continually morphing, in the sense of the instability of genealogies for Foucault. The artists and choreographers primarily focussed on through these themes are: Acconci, Graham, Nauman, Ader, Pope.L, Rainer, Bausch, Bel, Le Roy and La Ribot. [74]

Labouring

Labouring is my key mode for promising within this practice. The notion of labour has a range of connotations in relation to choreography. It is a significant part of any artist's process, and an especially integral component in viewing "Process Art," which Molesworth (2004: 42) introduces as emerging in the 1960s with post-object critique on the commodity status of art coupled with an emphasis on the modes of production and the autonomy of artistic labour. With artists like Sol LeWitt, this labour took on a mimetic quality of white-collar managerial labour, out-sourcing the physical labour to others. Language art and conceptual art eliminated the physicality of labour, while performance art at times celebrated the brute musculature of an artist, such as Chris Burden's manual labour in ditch digging or him taking a bullet, or his residual scaring of stigmata, in the name of art. A spectrum of modes of artistic labour often applies to choreography in the expanded field.[75] In what follows we will discuss manual labour, particularly the performance of endurance and repetition, in relation to choreography in the expanded field.

Labour is linked to promises of power, processes of production and related knowledge. Labour is also a word we reserve for maternal birthing. A genealogy of its usage could be the core to another thesis. As Foucault emphasises an understanding of labour has been central for modernity's approaches to empirically classify and politically position human agency in the production of wealth, in terms of its positivity, finitude and historicity (1970: 225-329). He marks the epistemic discontinuity between Adam Smith's Classical understanding of

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[74] While this project is being carried out from a different geographic location to these artists, it calls up dialogue with them more so than with others residing in Aotearoa New Zealand. This is not to say that there are no histories of performance art, live art and dance choreography in this country; far from it. Further research could be engaged with in terms of how these histories have been (and can be) negotiated through practice and analysis.

[75] As Molesworth indicates, 'process art' refers to any form of art that foregrounds its processes of production – performance art, live art and only sometimes dance choreography may be thought of, in this sense, as process art (2004: 25-43). In such practices, the processes of the work activate concepts for spectators to reflect on. Examples of dance choreography that activate its processes to its audience on video include sections of Bausch's *Lament of the Empress* / Die Klage der Kaiserin (1989), where a dancer is being corrected in order to dance 'better', and the beginning of Lloyd Newson's *The Cost of Living* (2006), when a dancer complains about his job, dancing as an amusement park dummy.

wealth and Ricardo's nineteenth century explanation in terms of their fundamental difference with respect to the position of labour in wealth creation: "labour as a producing activity is 'the source of all value'" (254). In this respect Ricardo and Marx were never that far apart. For Marx, labour, understood as the production of wealth, points not so much to the relation between scarcity and labour in wealth creation but rather points to the alienation of labour from the wealth it creates, and the perennial state of scarcity that proletariat labour endures. As a 'young Hegelian' Marx recognised in Hegel's dialectic the crucial coincidence of action, negation and labour in what Derrida at times called "the hard working negative" (Derrida, 1989). Made amply clear in Hegel's 'myth' of the Master/Slave struggle, history, change, the becoming of what is not-yet happens in the negation of what is (Hegel, 1977). Action is negation and in this sense only human beings act in the world. In the struggle for survival, in the master/slave struggle, the slave wins out because it is the slave and not the master who produces, which is to say, dialectically, through labour gives form to unformed matter, puts spirit, mind, into the work. Hence Marx saw the intimate relation between dialecticity, historical struggle and the negation of negation, not in an idealism of absolute spirit but in materialism as truth to labour. Again we emphasise the importance of Kojève's lecture course on Hegel for a generation of French intellectuals we associate with structuralism and post-structuralism (Kojève, 1993). McKenzie locates performance through economics and power, via forms of production that are performatively managed (2001: 4-8; 55-69). His notion of performativity references Butler: normativity and policing are significant for the production of performance (2001: 167-171). In terms of choreography, the role of artist and performer *as labourer* in the process of production is policed into making its economic and political promises via cultural norms and normative power relations of staging productions.[76]

For Susan Melrose, both performers and spectators perform labour (cited by Kelleher and Ridout, 2006: 11-12). She proposes that for spectators it is a "writerly form." Viewed otobiographically and with Butler's performative perspective, it is not simply the audience who writes, but also the interpellating other, as the audience carries out its labour of viewing-as-performing, which the other, in part, writes. The performer, on the other hand, for Melrose, performs a movement-based labour that carries out what viewers write (ibid), which runs the risk of being caught in what Lepecki terms a modernist being-towards-movement

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[76] A 'ruling class' in such contexts include patrons whose wealth is derived from managerial capital, and Governments legislators. Each has influence on public performance, on its possibility, direction, content, core-activity and margins. In respect of dance choreography's role within capitalist modes of production, Lepecki outlines how its labour in creating its sense of live disappearance is played out economically and via market-driven processes (2006: 125-126). He does this particularly in relation to large modernist dance company structures and modes of training and in response to comments by Marcia Siegel.

framework. This research takes the position that a performer's labour, (my) choreographic acts, signed by the other, is not singularly reducible to 'audience'. When choreographer, spectator and the other countersign, call in one another's promissory notes, they do no work. Rather, they bring to exposition what Maurice Blanchot understands as the workliness of work and the worklessness of a radical passivity with respect to labour such that exposition is disclosed.[77] We may relate this to how both Lepecki and Claid encounter an understanding of the "still act." This is a comportment that presents new horizons as to one's relations with one's world and with others. We will discuss this further in this chapter. The worklessness at the heart of the countersigning of the otobiographical complicates Melrose's proposition, perhaps in the sense that we would need to engage 'writing' in the sense of *différance*. If labour in performance and choreographic contexts is productive, then *writing* is not. Rather, it is, as Blanchot's notion of worklessness, an absence of work, what, in modernity, is named 'madness' or what we understand, after Deleuze, as an idiocy in the expanded field. Art, performance and choreography are mad(ness)—normatively speaking—Nietzschean calls to play the fool as test-subject.

Figure 17. *Where Some Good Labour Has Taken Place*, Mark Harvey (2007/2011; Photograph).

Much live choreographic performance relies on *manual* labour for its production, as is the case for this practice. Manual labour is performed by the mortal somatic body and requires

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[77] Blanchot suggests: "The writer belongs to the work, but what belongs to him is only a book, a mute accumulation of sterile words, the most meaningless thing in the world. … And in the end, the work ignores him, it closes on his absence, in the impersonal, anonymous statement that it is—and nothing more" (Blanchot, 1999: 403). For a detailed discussion on Blanchot and the radical passivity of 'work' see *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben* (Wall, 1999). See also Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier (1996, 138).

physical effort that often causes it kinaesthetic stress, fatigue and strain. Manual labour is often considered 'mindless', i.e., non-conceptual, though in somatic choreographic contexts this is not the case.[78] As Fortin (2009) and Dee Reynolds (2007: 2-14) emphasize, the somatic performing body itself is intricately complex in its sense of cognitive, emotional and reflective processes.[79] The performance of manual labour in choreography in the expanded field concerns what Read calls for in live art—the production of promises—of conceptual reflection. It performatively activates concepts. Manual labour in choreographic performance is, in Ronell's words, a test-writing, or somatic-testing for Heathfield, that produces an ETA whose possibility is that it may never arrive, never reach its addressee. Manual labour, with its somatic activations in choreography, can uncover what is 'conceptually' concealed. This is not only a reference to Read, but also to Martin Heidegger, whose ontology is very much based on a notion of truth, not as correctness, ratio, calculation or verification, based on a projective knowing of the beings that are but as un-concealing (*Aletheia*), as the disclosure or unconcealing of the Being of those beings. He suggests that the work of art is a mode of disclosing truth as unconcealing Being (Heidegger, 1993: 139-212).[80] Manual labour in choreography traces on the bodies of performers and choreographers their histories through somatic actions and training. What Nietzsche alludes to as the 'uses' and 'abuses' of history are not simply moral ideals but rather the ER lab reports on charges of assault and battery. The reports always arrive after the fact, after the violence, and where was the policing when you needed it? As Quick reminds us of live performance in general, it is only after choreographic manual labour has been performed that it can reveal its possibilities, only after it has been performed can it be analysed (2004: 93). This is not to say that there is no potential discovery to be made during a live performance.

Dunja Njaradi suggests that choreographic performance involves "immaterial labour," or "labour that produces immaterial goods, such as a service, a cultural product or communication" (2009). Choreography produces intangible outcomes such as concepts and emotions that are live and never completely repeatable. Choreographic immaterial labour implies the manual labour of physical bodies in an empirical as well as politico-ethical sense. It is perhaps the case that while we demarcate certain things as "immaterial," they are so only somewhat 'ideally'. A genealogist would always look for the traced structures of their

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[78] This refers to the field of dance practice that is often currently explicitly called 'somatic', where somatic releasing techniques and related approaches have precedence, such as Skinner Releasing Technique and contact improvisation.

[79] Fortin does not fully engage a mind/body division we associate with a Cartesian legacy, as her application of Foucault on techniques of power significantly complicates it.

[80] Sally Banes cites Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" in a discussion of Rainer's *Trio A*. She productively attempts to read this work in its ontological disclosure of the primordial structures of dance-being, much as Heidegger attempts to read a Greek temple as disclosive of the Greek understanding of Being (1987: 45-54).

'immateriality' on the somatic carcasses of living beings, correlative with relations of productive force. Immaterial labour is dominant in current post-industrial economies, where flexibility of skill is required in producing information, knowledge, communication and affect (ibid).[81] The terrain of choreography in the expanded field is exemplary of this, where immaterial labour is crucial in terms of the production of conceptual discovery. Through their labour, artists and choreographers activate contexts of normative genealogies, or in Nietzsche's sense the 'dead father and living mother', that Derrida emphasises in "Otobiographies." Artistic and choreographic labour calls up, via questioning, negating and affirming, its embodied genealogies and its moments of arising, as noted in the writing of the artist Liam Gillick who cites his cultural political genealogies as an artist: "artists working in research are assumed to be 'good' workers" (2010: 27). As institutionally normalized subjects they produce labour that "accounts for all the other work made" (ibid), both art and non-art. Gillick implies the 'dead father' in reflecting on his genealogy as an artist and on how art is normatively considered productive in certain contexts. He cites the 'living mother' in his questioning of this role of 'good art.' Gillick further invokes the 'dead father' and 'living mother' when he suggests: "art is in a permanent battle with what came just before. That is the good of work. Replacing the models of the recent past with better ones" (2010: 28). The norm that art and choreography are productive at the same moment underwrites the culture industry and dictates its promissory note that it will faithlessly avoid delivering its future except on the basis of never using the same name twice. The dissimulation of identities becomes its fabricating constancy. In this it not so much undermines commodity culture's expansionist zeal but rather can only find its place in the world by the GPS of the former's GDP.

Before labouring: Conceptual performance art and dance choreography

With the advent of conceptual practices in the arts, manual labour has not taken precedence in many immaterial approaches to performance practice.[82] In the discipline of performance art, Dan Graham exemplifies a conceptual approach with his video performance *Performer/audience/mirror* (1975/2006), as does Vito Acconci with *Theme Song* (1973/2006). These and other works by these artists will be discussed later on in this chapter. Each artist activates *ideas* as their primary locus of practice and immaterial labour. Secondary to this is

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[81] She also cites Arif Dirlik's observation that the post-industrial worker is often modelled into a "symbolic-analyst" and has much more control over what is produced than pre-capitalist artisans (ibid).

[82] As Molesworth suggests (2003: 32-40), in the visual arts this has been the case since the 1960s, where artists have often taken on board notions of managerial "professionalism", where they have employed others to make their work for them.

their use of manual labour via somatically choreographed actions, albeit through the projection of voice, eye contact and sense of 'performance presence', that function to construe the delivery. Their implicit aim is to perform immaterial labour that appears 'workless'. This is typical of much conceptual art, and conceptual performance art in foregrounding relationships with viewers and reflecting on this through delivery of text, so as to promise the activation of conceptual insights.

In the discipline of dance choreography, this sense of foregrounding of concepts is something that Cvejic (2008) and Njaradi (2009) have noted about European 'conceptual dance' choreographers since the 1990s, with the work of Bel, Burrows, Charmatz, La Ribot[83], Mantero and Stuart. Cvejic and Njaradi each suggest, in differing ways, that these choreographers have generally situated the manual labour and work produced by their dancers' bodies as secondary to the construction of their choreography.[84] Bel states this when discussing his choreographic processes in *Parallel Voices* (2007). Bel's *The Last Performance* (1999/2007) alludes to this, where his concepts, such as playing on performer representation, take precedence over his choreographed somatic actions. Lepecki echoes this in his call for the 'stilling' of choreography, for choreographers to create 'conceptual choreography'. Lepecki implies that dance choreography halts its desire to move 'for the sake of itself', and engage with somatic physicality and manual labour only once it has been conceptualised by the choreographer.[85] In response to these perspectives, Njaradi (2009) argues for an analysis of labour in such recent conceptual dance choreography, through a Marxist-influenced perspective. For her, there is currently no significant analysis of labour in this field of practice. This is not unrelated to Reynolds who calls for an analysis of work through energy expended by dancers in dance choreography, as well as the conscious practice of energy expenditure (2007: 2-14). Reynolds's position recognises Laban's Modern and Expressionist dance analysis, Laban Movement Analysis, which, in turn, was developed for the analysis of industrial ergonomics. However, Reynolds does not examine dance after Modernism. *A*

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[83] Depending on the context, the work of the live artist La Ribot aligns with either dance choreography or performance art choreography or a moment of undoing the boundary. Her work is framed as dance choreography because of how she is often framed within discussions of dance, and has brought new considerations to it, such as in writing by Heathfield (2006: 194-197) and Lepecki (2006: 65-86). She provides a context for this research as her work traverses performance art and dance. Trained as a dancer, she applies the timing and somatic disciplining of a dancer in her solos, while attempting to engage with conceptual concerns and cultural and political questioning in art gallery contexts, which is more typical of performance art.

[84] Both Cvejic and Njaradi question the direction of this dance choreography. Cvejic suggests that it is no longer valid enough in the international field of dance to place the dancer's body and actions as necessarily secondary to the process of choreographing.

[85] This differs to other dance writers, who have usually called for choreography to be viewed and approached through movement. Sally Gardner (2008: 55-60) for example particularly emphasizes kinesthesis as a primary mode of choreographic operations.

consideration of labour in choreography is something that this practice has activated as one of its key themes, responding to Njaradi's 'call to labour.'

Lasting longer: Labouring stronger: Physical endurance

Choreographic work ethic and labour have been implicit promises in much performance art, with its emphasis on process, particularly in terms of physical endurance, where many have tested the physical limits of their bodies, to the extent of causing somatic stress and pain.[86] The performance of physical endurance has been a common thread in much performance art, and often synonymous with it, because it has been used to test out concepts in practice. It often tests concepts through playing the fool, via idiocy and somatic failure, or choreographic failure. The physicality of performance promises through its somatic testing the name of the artist through his or her flesh and blood. Spectators are invited to witness and sometimes empathize with the artist's endurance as that which legitimises, that which can be countersigned. Those who identify as performance artists have often engaged with physical endurance through different variations of the normative conventions of 'durational performance' and 'body performance'.[87] Durational performance that is activated by my practice generally refers to the performing of actions that promise and appear to exhaust a viewer as spectator as much as me as performer. More specifically, depending on its actions and contexts, durational performance emphasizes a 'drawn-out' sense of perceived temporality that might not otherwise be associated with its tasks and contingencies.[88] As Molesworth implies, much of Acconci's performance work applies this notion (2004: 40). In *Step Piece* and *Digging Piece*, discussed later in this chapter, Acconci takes 'as long as it takes' to complete physical tasks with his body that would otherwise be seen in the 'everyday' as banal and idiotic. The length of time he performs these tasks is a significant part of these pieces, activating reflections on his labour in terms of his own personal cathartic sense of self-sacrifice, as he becomes physically fatigued in gasping for air and so forth. Through Acconci appearing tired in these works, the viewer is invited to believe the ruse that it is purely him

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[86] Four performance artists who emphasise their labour within their working process are: Kazuao Shigara (1955, cited by Osaki, 1998: 126), Chris Burden (1979, cited by Molesworth, 2004: 40), Mike Parr, (2002, cited by Geczy, 2003: 1), and Marina Abramovic (2006, cited by Princenthal, 2006: 90-93).

[87] These are normative conventions constructed through the repetitions of writers and artists as iterations of normalising techniques.

[88] The notion of duration is, as Simon Ellis cites of Henri Bergson, "the inner experience of 'real time'," or one's individual and bodily perception of "temporal change" within an environment (2005: 54-58; quoted in 58). Specific to performance art and live art contexts is the notion of 'duration' *stretched* to the viewer in durational performance.

(in his name) who actually performs, as he literally puts his body on the line through exhausting it.

In physical endurance, body performance—which is not always itself physical endurance—generally refers to the terrain of performance that foregrounds and promises artists' bodily flesh in relation to their labour. It differs to dance performance, as it does not foreground the labour of the dancing body. Classical and Romantic ballet and much modernist dance often seek to make themselves look effortless. An example of this terrain of body performance can be seen with the Australian performance artist, Mike Parr. In *Malevich*, he sits with his arm nailed to a wall for two days (2002, cited by Geczy, 2003: 1). Often, as *Malevich* testifies, body performance is blurred with durational performance. This is particularly the case where the artist is exhausted, as with Acconci's *Step Piece*. As Lea Vergine notes, body performance artists often intentionally experience pain while performing (1976/2000: 8).

Figure 18. *Malevich*, Mike Parr 2002; Photograph of Live Performance: Geczy, 2011).

This can be said of Parr's *Malevitsch*. This *pain* is the palpable and distressing aspect of the work: why does he do this, why inflict this senseless pain for so long in the name of 'art'? We countersign the bloody promissory note, with heads only half turned to a pathetic body and a suspension of a suspended sense of disbelief—this is *not* theatre. For Vergine, "those who are in pain will tell you that they have the right to be taken seriously" (ibid).[89] However, for

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[89] As is the case for artists who activate somatic trauma. Vergine also draws attention to post-Freudian psychoanalytic readings of the performance of pain. Other potential Lacanian readings applicable to performance art that induces pain and injury include the notions of *jouissance*, the 'pleasure' and also 'death' drives, neuroses, and fantasies. See Howell (2000), for introductory reflections on these and other Lacanian concepts in performance art, in *The Analysis of Performance Art*.

artists like Acconci, somatic pain experienced during and after a body performance is secondary. This practice-as-research engages with Vergine's and Acconci's positions. Such somatic trauma often serves to as testimony to manual labour that artists have performed, while activating conceptual concerns. In Acconci's case, this is found through his exhaustion in *Digging Piece*, revealing his intended sense of personal catharsis in the work.

Doing it again

The labouring involved in repetitions, rehearsals and the re-staging of performance is common to dance and performance art choreography and live art, and important to my practice.[90] The repetition or iteration of manual labour in choreography of the expanded field serves to build up its sense of conceptual promise. Through the accumulation of actions, concepts have the potential to also develop, as with Acconci's *Step Piece* and *Digging Piece*. Acconci consistently repeating tasks with his body activates manual labour in these works. As his somatic repetitions continue, the audience is invited to build up reflections on *their* experiences and sense of expectation of his conceptual concerns, for example, by asking more and more if he is going to 'last the leg'. In terms of the performativity of the iteration of identity, performance artists like Acconci structure their performances so that the strategy of repetition reaffirms their identification and naming as performance artists. Without this iteration, they cease to exist as performance artists and as their named selves. In Contemporary and Modernist dance, the repetition of movement motifs often serves to emphasize an expressionist sense and promise of emotion and feeling or, possibly, a sense of conformity to formal aesthetic principals. Its spectacle often entertains audiences with displays of dancerly skill and athleticism. The sense of manual labour that contributes to such iterative work is also, at times, concealed within its themes and movement styles, as it also helps to promise to 'make itself look effortless', not entirely unrelated to Classical and Romantic ballet. With many of the works by Erik Hawkins, Paul Taylor and Martha Graham, dancers do not show signs of physical strain or fatigue, 'being puffed' or

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[90] Repetition in performance is readable in terms of minimalism and post-minimalism. Repetition also has connotations with commodification, where constant repetitions are mimetic not only of assembly lines but mass consumption in general, and even mass-marketing cultural practices. Pop art is often synonymous with this, such as the work of Andy Warhol. At times when dance choreographers and performance artists restage their work, it operates to commodify their practice. Abramovic's restaging of a number of seminal works from the 1960s and 1970s recently at the Guggenheim in New York (Princenthal, 2006: 90-93) is an example of this. Having said this, when performance practices are connected with commodification this does not guarantee that they lose their critical rigor or sense of agency. At times commodification has the potential to provide new opportunities for critical discovery for artists as well. Repetition is also the founding act for psychoanalysis, in a repetition compulsion whose recognition establishes the trace structures for the deciphering of symptoms.

otherwise.[91] Their stylistic movement vocabularies engage with iterations of flow, contraction, balance, coordination and musicality. They foreground a sense of 'unity of form' among dancers, and thematic feelings that, in turn, conceals their kinaesthetic workload. Performatively speaking, for many, without the repetition of codified bodily movements in these approaches to choreography, they would not be able to sustain their normative identity-descriptions as dancers.

Figure 19. *Promise Me Effortlessness, Fulfil My Desires*, Mark Harvey (2007/2011; Photograph).

The labour of reworking, restaging and rehearsing pieces for choreography in these genres and in the expanded field serves to interpellate performers into performing acceptably. This performance of 'acceptability' in these genres is activated by the refinement of performances and invites performers to develop a sense of consciousness of the labour of crafting their choreographic actions and disciplined bodies. Rehearsing is particularly embedded within dance culture. However, it is not as common with performance art. For example, La Ribot's re-working and re-staging of her past performances into the three-hour piece, *Panoramix* (2004), emphasizes how artists are interpellated through their re-staging of performances. Three hours to discipline one's body with performing a work is an extended duration in normative theatre terms. The sheer scale of *Panoramix* requires a significant amount of physical energy from La Ribot. It emphasizes her workload as a performer and processes of choreographic labour. Moreover, her emphasis on duration performance in re-staging her

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[91] This is not to say that their choreographic approaches are not relevant here and have not had any influence on this genealogy of practice. I have been trained by dance movement technique teachers who have been members of Paul Taylor's and Martha Graham's companies. They serve as a point of reference here.

earlier works highlights how she is interpellated as a choreographic artist, bound to normative frameworks of 'acceptability'.

Stilling: Failing: Falling and being fallen

Stilling, Failing, Falling and Being Fallen – this line of descent was never destined or fated to take this form. Rigorous chance played a role; meticulous attention to accidents of encounter and incongruous couplings of texts and practices gave it its formality, though these notions are commonplace topics within the discourses of dance, dance choreography and performance art. Stilling, the 'still-act' inaugurates the line, opens the horizon of disclosure that turns failing, falling and being fallen not simply into tactical ammunition on the battlefields of 'kinesthetics' but, more so, equi-primordial modalities of an ontology of the 'still-act', ways of becoming other than as one is as choreographic-becoming.

Stilling

Stilling (or performing stillness) in choreography refers to promises of what Claid (2010: 133-138) and Lepecki emphasise as anything but a cessation of movement, pausing of motion, and a sense of inertia in the physical somatic body. Claid suggests: "The practice of stillness reaches inwards towards a somatic being and outwards into the world. Stillness is being here in this moment now as a perpetual point of tension within movement, not something that happens when movement stills" (Claid, 1998: 133). Lepecki uses the notion of "still-act" emphasising that stilling is not the absence of action but a modality of action in a political ontology of movement. Where labour involves actions and action potential (with the promise of labour), the latter is stillness and, in essence, a form of manual labour, a labour in the impotentiality to be, as Agamben might put it (Agamben, 1999: 183). In stilling, performers promise they will not be still and that they will get moving or perform somatic actions. Yet, as many somatic approaches like Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais and Osteopathy show, and as Claid suggests (2010: 133-138), stilling the body is actually impossible at a deep tissue level. It can only be a promise. Stilling the body reveals what is not present at a surface level: endless activity that partially includes somatic relationships with the other and related bio-politics. Its engagement opens a space of the workless where the choreographer may *listen* to this (ibid). Choreographing 'still acts' activates conceptual reflections, in Claid's terms, opens what is closed off in kinetic movements, the disclosure in

full measure of the I-You relation, the fundamental relation of being with others. Stilling has taken root in dance choreography, particularly since the 1960s and 70s practices of Rainer and the UK collective X6 (Claid, 2006: 53-79). More recent examples can be found in the practices of Rosemary Butcher (2005), and Burrows (Burrows and Fargion, 2008). In performance art, a wide range of artists have engaged with it consistently, including Nauman, Graham and Acconci of the 1960s and 70s. Lepecki suggests:

> The still-act shows the dust of history, in modernity, may be agitated in order to blur artificial divisions between the sensorial and the social, the somatic and the mnemonic, the linguistic and corporeal, the mobile and immobile. Historical dust is not simple metaphor. When taken literally, it reveals how historical forces penetrate deep into the inner layers of the body: dust sedimenting the body, operating to rigidify the smooth rotation of joints and articulations, fixing the subject within overly prescribed pathways and steps, fixating movement within a certain politics of time and of place. It is experimental choreography, through the paradoxical still-act, that charts the tensions in the subject, the tensions in subjectivity under the force of history's dusty sedimentation of the body. (Lepecki 2006: 15)

'Still acts', as Lepecki suggests, suspend the flow of discourses, through interrogating "economies of time," considering that they reveal "the possibility of one's agency within controlling regimes of capital, subjectivity, labor, and mobility" (2006: 15). For Nadia Seremetakis, acts of stillness interrupt "historical flow" and practice "historical interrogation" (ibid). Stillness allows for a consideration of what has been concealed and buried within a particular discourse to come to the surface, out of "historical dust" (ibid). One thinks as well of Read's understanding of the exceptional and its exposure to what is concealed. 'Historical dust', for Lepecki, is the cultural, political, psycho-social and economic white-washing of Modernism through its positivist doctrines (ibid). It is through the physical body, experimental dance and choreography that stillness can take stock of Modernism, providing close examinations of "certain politics of time and place" that modernism has pressed on to the flesh and cells of the dancer (ibid).[92]

'Choreographic stillness' for Lepecki (2006: 23-38; 46-47) is exemplified by Nauman's video series of the late 1960s and recent European conceptual dance where concepts first and foremost drive choreographic labours, exemplified by the work of Bel.[93] Bel, like many choreographers before him from dance and 'visual' artists such as Nauman and Acconci, strips away the potential of form from distracting his works' conceptual concerns. Bel's choreographic actions as manual labour on stage are a performative testing and questioning

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[92] 'Pressing' references the normative training and conditioning of the Contemporary dancer's body by the other.
[93] Other current European choreographers who, for Lepecki, are part of this conceptual movement in dance that also activate his notion of 'still acts' include Jonathon Burrows, Boris Charmatz, La Ribot, Xavier Le Roy, Vera Mantero and also Meg Stuart (2006: 1-18).

of Contemporary and Modernist dance theatre contexts. His pieces activate the stilling and exposing of 'Modernism's being-towards-movement', via what appear to be simple minimal choreographic interventions. Bel's live group performance *The Last Performance* (1999/2007) is a slow series of unfolding propositions. The piece centres around four characters, Shakespear's Hamlet, the former world tennis champion Andre Agassi, the German expressionist modernist choreographer Sussane Linke, as well as Bel himself. At first, the characters appear on stage one-by-one, stating who they are in their own languages, apart from Agassi. They each pause after this, especially Bel (as himself), who leaves the stage after his wristwatch alarm chimes. The other three characters each perform an action: Agassi hits a tennis ball with his racket; Hamlet says: "To be or not to be, that is the question" (but pauses delivering 'not to be' for a momentary duck into the stage-left wing), while Linke performs a solo from her piece *Wandlung* to Franz Schubert's music *Death and the Maiden* (ibid). The same solos are then repeated, with the performers swapped. They are repeated again in variations, with characters saying that they are *not* who they are, for example, "I am not Hamlet" (ibid). Linke's section is repeated five times more within a range of other variations of the other characters, including behind a portable black curtain that follows her around, and another where she simply stands and hums to her soundtrack. Bel later appears as himself again and instead of repeating his solo, he strips to his underwear and states what appears to be slogans from a Calvin Klein underwear television commercial, where his lines unfold as he moves off stage and then on again.

Figure 20. *The Last Performance*, Jerome Bel (1998; Photograph of Live Performance; Willes, 2011: name of performer not known).

The 'still act' (manual labour) of *The Last Performance* is significant for this research as it performatively tests the modernist normativity of theatrical spectacle in dance, for viewers in

particular. This is done through what at first appears to be a random sequence of simplistically structured choreographic events. These sections *still* the norms of modernist dance choreographic structuring temporal layering of bodily movement phrases, patterns and dynamics to accompanying music, in order to draw attention to dance modernism's core concern with the moving body as spectacle. This is done by iteratively reappropriating Linke's choreography in juxtaposition with metaphors of popular Western cultural clichés, Hamlet and his 'to be or not to be' and Agassi 'the great tennis player and heroic athlete', who performs his heroic manual labour.

These popular culture motifs serve to frame the Linke sections by foregrounding normative modernist fantasies of what dance should deliver to its audience: entertaining physical spectacle with Agassi; 'high art' and 'high culture' with Hamlet; that it is sensational and universally appealing, through Bel playing himself, pretending to be on a Calvin Klein TV commercial.[94] The test-questioning of dance modernist normativity is also carried out here by viewers being invited to become aware of how they scrutinize performers, through presenting different 'Agassis', where one hits the tennis ball more like a 'pro' than the others. This test-questions the audience through how they are interpellated through dance modernism into scrutinizing each dancer's physicality in performing Linke's solo, one after the other, just as they would be called up to do in many other dance performances. Viewers may decide that one performer performs with more 'feeling for the choreographic intention', more physical subtly, more 'grace' and 'beauty', than another dancer. This test-strategy is furthered by the different iterations of Linke's solo, where in a more overt sense viewers are invited to become conscious of their interpellation to comparatively evaluate each dancer according to dance modernist norms of 'acceptability'. At first this repetition of Linke's solo might indicate Bel is showing 'just another modernist dance piece' with its promises of movement, virtuosity and so forth. This ruse potentially 'tricks' the viewer into seeing past this, into the normativity of his or her own identity as a viewer, activating Read's sense of engaging with lies in live art. Bel uses his promises of lies as a strategy to uncover insights for the viewers. Bel's lying is, in one sense, revealed by the slow plodding of the piece, with energetic and dynamic moments of physicality being broken up by pregnant pauses, in dance normative terms, pedestrian walking and the delivery of spoken introductions. These introductions reveal such lying by their ironical play on dance competitions where comperes

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[94] While Lepecki argues that Bel presents a more general political critique of "Western representation" (2006: 45-47), this analysis specifically focuses on Bel's critique of representation in modernist dance theatre. This dance-modernist focus engages Bel's emphasis on dance theatre conventions, such as Linke's expressionist approach, the use of trained Contemporary dancers, the work being made by a dance choreographer (Bel), and showing the work in a proscenium-arch dance theatre with its dance flooring, wings, lighting and so forth.

and dancers introduce the next performance. The simple labour of walking in, playing tennis and speaking in this piece tests the aesthetic and political values of the Linke solos with the possibility of engaging dance choreography in the expanded field with everyday labour, as a means to surpass Modernist fixations on moving and motility. As Lepecki (2006: 47) states:

> By exchanging names in a permutational game of ontologics, *The Last Performance* makes explicit that the fundamental question set forth by Heidegger and Hamlet – the question of ontology – is one that haunts any critical reflection on performance – as Richard Schechner indicated in his famous theorizations on the notions of twice-behaved behavior as predicted on a paradoxical ontology always oscillating between "not me – not not me" or as articulated by Peggy Phelan's proposition of the ontology of performance as being also an "ontology of subjectivity."

The Last Performance's 'stilled labour', as Lepecki notes, plays with the ontology of choreography and not through dancers being presented as others-to-themselves. In this way Bel tests theatrical mimesis with its shifting performance personae.[95] Through its overt unfixed assignment of character identities, the viewer is invited to reflect on the normative role that mimesis has for theatre, as a form of ruse or promise of lying and the promised impossibility of true copying of another's name. This is particularly the case when Bel's own character is manipulated and dissimulated in this way. Bel *himself* is never on stage, just his representative name that the other has co-written. We say, unconditionally, that Bel *himself* will never be fully present to us or to himself. Indeed, self-presence-to-oneself would also be the possibility of the unconditional as such.

Failing

When performance practice promises failing, it promises the unacceptable and the unsuccessful, not passing 'the test', any test. Failed actions and acts of labour are often expressed as forms of stupidity that, for Ronell, society cannot account for or ever fully

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[95] 'Stilled labour' refers to how stillness is activated via the immaterial labour of choreography, which is in the case of this piece in the form of 'manual' labour, particularly in the Linke and Agassi solos. It is equally 'manual' labour when Bel stands still on stage: somatic and kinaesthetic energy are yet expelled through this performance of not moving. The conceptual schemata of 'Conceptual Dance' are not transcendent to the empirical and fleshy stuff of a dancer's body. We will develop, in Chapter 5, an understanding of this 'conceiving flesh' as a libidinal band, möbius-like formation, a continuous folding of body as surface, folding an exterior on itself to construe interiority as affect, folding the outside of thinking in inventing concepts. Tim Dean sees mimesis as the copying of another's persona or identity (2000: 71-72; and 259-263). Mimesis has dominated Western theatre performance, including dance theatre. Claid (2006: 182) implies that to "play" or engage with constructing a performed role is the work of mimesis. Butler argues mimesis is essential for the performative iteration of one's identity. In relation to Butler's perspective on mimesis, Dean equally calls for a consideration of fantasy, from a Lacanian perspective (2000: 259-263). Mimesis is emphasized here because of its almost universal application in choreographic test writing and as a strategy for performative lying and promising in choreography.

comprehend (2002: 3; 177-180). That which is seen as failure and stupid is normalised into a notion of un-acceptablility, implicitly transgresses norms, though not necessarily intentionally. Failings and their various manifestations, like stupidity, are always context-specific. Failure in one context is not necessarily failure in another. Yet, failing has its returns: Heathfield suggests that failure always refers to success; it cannot be called upon without a measure of success (2007: *Parallel Voices*). Transgressions of norms, as failures, are never final in their becoming. Their true potential is to become norms. Burrows points this out with his own dance choreography, whereby he often sets out to challenge disciplinary norms through failing, but these interventions end up creating new norms (2007: *Parallel Voices*). The intent to create choreographic failure itself often fails to manifest due to artists conforming with institutional norms in terms of fantasies of acceptable practice associated with dominant art and theatrical institutions: conforming with dance Modernism's moving 'for the sake of itself' and performing with the proscenium arch of orthodox theatre or within the white cube gallery. A version of Tim Etchell's and Forced Entertainment's Live Art or experimental theatre work *Spectacular* (2008/2009) that I saw live provides a reflection on this. Its 'dramatic' actors appeared to be choreographed into *feigning* through structured improvisation that their show has failed as a parody of failing at making failure. On the surface, they successfully conformed to dramatic theatre conventions in their delivery of text, body language, staging and so forth.[96]

Not unlike Forsythe on choreographic failure, Heathfield proposes that much discovery can be made in live art and other performance through the investigation of failure (2007: *Parallel Voices*). Failure is essential for leading to new experimental insights as Ronell never tires of reminding us in *Test Drive*. These new 'mortal souls' will otherwise remain concealed in our petty conforming to norms of 'acceptability.' "Stupidity" is the tattoo moniker we have the other incise on our bodies, the more-or-less scarification of tissue with a writing machine that

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[96] Etchells notes that his work generally explores failure (2007: *Parallel Voices*). The loose script, requiring a significant degree of structured improvisation, appears to play with the notion that the actors, particularly Arthur, have failed to deliver what their director wants. What becomes apparent as *Spectacular* unfolds is that its actors are acting at being failed actors. This is revealed through their use of dramatic theatre skills such as voice projection, diction and a sense of careful pace to their delivery of text to 'appear' casual, though not actually casual in their mannerisms. This is the case even when they appear to be speaking 'out of character', such as when Marshall says that she's trying to perform 'dying' well. *Spectacular* therefore unravels how the theme of failure can be explored in performance in a theatrically normative way. Where a sense of failure is explicitly confessed by the actors, it appears to be done as an intentional parody of this admission, through what appear to be 'tried and true' theatrical methods by which the audience is entertained, amounting to a sense of theatrical success. In Butler's terms, when one attempts to performatively enact transgressions, one ends up doing so only in a normative way. One thinks of Lacan lamenting on how difficult it is to invent new perversions while Pierre Klossowski's writings on Sade pay particular attention to what he terms "integral monstrosity," the near impossible task of enacting permanent transgression. Unlike many of the other works mentioned in this literature review, I saw this work live in Zagreb, Croatia, in 2009.

abjures erasures, an unforgiving machine that can make the debt permanent and indelible. Ronell again.[97] Besides Bel, Acconci, Nauman and Graham who attempt to fail and therefore test Western social norms through presenting what to some may be stupid actions in certain aspects of their practice, the dance choreography *Self Unfinished* by Le Roy has significance here through its performative engagement with notions of failure (1998/2009). *Self Unfinished* approaches failure in relation to somatic illusion and spectacle, directly through the terrain of choreography in the expanded field. In one sense, the piece is exemplary of Forsythe's call for choreography to be concerned with questioning and failure.

Self Unfinished is an approximately hour-long solo by Le Roy, who performs walking-tempo movements and still poses in a contorted manner. He wears a black costume that conceals his head and at times his gender. He performs what may be to some comical idiotic contortions, which makes him appear as though he has no head and hands. Lepecki (2006: 44) suggests:

> Without individuation, there is no possibility of assigning subjectivity within the economies of law, naming, and signification. Through the particular kind of intensely formless solipsism performed by Le Roy the dismantling of modernity's idiotic body and its replacement by a relational body renews choreography as practice for political potentiality.

As Lepecki describes, Le Roy arrests the normative dancing body that, for Lepecki, is idiotic precisely in its etymological sense of *solipsism*, with a body that appears to be without a personality. He questions Modernist and Classical dance choreographic norms, and locates choreography as political agency. Le Roy also uses his choreographed manual labour to somatically test dance Modernist and Classical perspectives, where he appears workless in failing at delivering a 'serious' virtuosic dance, that moves its body through normative dance modernist vocabularies, with recognizable movement phrases to music. Where Forced Entertainment's *Spectacular* primarily relies on spoken text to do this in playing with theatre norms, Le Roy does this silently through choreographed somatic body movement and costuming. As Le Roy himself states, he intends the work to break from conventions such as these, in order to activate new conceptual dialogue and discoveries related to dance, beyond Classical and Modernist perspectives (2007: *Parallel Voices*). Le Roy's choreographic actions

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[97] This is despite how failure is not always coincident with or the underwriting of stupidity, even though stupidity is a kind of failure. We can fail with honour, gracefully, heroically, staunchly, turning defeat into a kind of victory for the battler, a 'gutsy' try. Then we can fail because we are too dim to realise just how impossible it was in the first place. Stupidity robs failure of its dignity, demeans our expenditure, our labour, the work done, not so much because it was just not good enough but rather because it was misplaced, too dumb to consider in the first place. The body trainers, the great normalisers, will take on the former any day; the latter more generally have to fend for themselves or go to the kind of schooling that even they feel is too demeaning. Hence feigns, and feigns of feigns, of stupidity and aplomb, switching mask after mask in an experimental procedure without end.

activate the test strategy of 'playing the fool', engaging with normative notions of failure and idiocy in order to activate his conceptual dance concern for 'rhizomes' of bodily possibilities.[98] In this way, while he appears to fail at conforming with dance modernist norms of movement, he conforms with norms of conceptual dance choreography, where concepts drive labour. In this sense, his work fails at failing.

Figure 21. *Self Unfinished*, Xavier Le Roy (1998/2009; Photograph of Live Performance; Photograph Katrin Schoof; *Sculpture Centre: Curator's Notebook 2010*; 2011).

An insight activated by *Self Unfinished*'s attempt to fail stupidly is the blurring of the Western convention for a male performer's gaze. As Claid discusses, male dancers have often been expected to hold a sense of 'active and assertive gaze' on their audience (2006: 164). Le Roy's gaze conceals itself in this work: his eyes are deep within his costume and actions. Through this failure to conform to what the audience may normatively fantasize and expect of the gazing male performer, he invites them to be written by the other into reflecting on their normative expectations and fantasies of this gaze. The *uncanny* appears in the place of the man: without the appearance of his gaze, it is as though an invisible force drives the movements. The work shows the uncanny of physical possibilities and readings that idiosyncratic contorting of one's body on stage can bring, a calling up of the somatic and bio-political blurring of presence and absence, in revealing and concealing Le Roy's body. *Self Unfinished* asks: is this a gendered body? Is it male or a female, and hence what is the stake in asking or knowing. Posturing and costume present him as androgynous, and in a sense failing and transgressing to conform to Western dominant stage norms of the decisiveness of

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[98] In term of his focus on 'rhizomatics', Le Roy emphasises the importance for him of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of rhizome in his choreographic practice. D & G contrast two fundamental structuring devices: the arboreal with the logical order of hierarchical branching, and the rhizomatic, a relational structure that is non-hierarchical and multiply open in its pathways of connection (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 3-28).

sexual difference.

Falling and being fallen

When performers try to fall, they promise to surrender their bodies to the force of gravity, to drop, or release from holding a vertically inclined posture or direction of activity, such as jumping, standing or sitting up. Falling, for performers, is also often a sense of release and letting-go, as something intended, empowering, unintended or ambivalent. Helpless falling implies a sense of failure at times, where one 'gives up' and has no bodily control on the labour of resisting gravity. In most contexts this is normatively depicted as unacceptable, as with a dancer falling in Classical ballet. When one *intends* to *helplessly* fall in dance and performance art choreography, this is not possible. If authentically *helpless* and sometimes failed, the performer is not intentional and has absolutely no control over such a fall. The intentional choreography of helpless falling can only be promised. It can be metaphoric, where one can 'fall from grace' and lose socio-normative acceptance in the eyes of the underwriting other. Falling is an essential part of being human. For Heidegger, "falling prey" is a fundamental structure for inauthentic *da-sein*, which, in our 'average everydayness' we all are. On a daily basis we are guided in our world by "idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity" which together opens our world to "entanglement" (Heidegger, 1996: 164). For Lacan, the subject's deepest desire is never attainable as its object of desire continually falls from the possibility of becoming obtainable (Howell, 2000; 121-122). In stitching together Heidegger and Lacan on the fall, Derrida engages in an extended *tour de force* on a reading of falling, "To Usher in the Fall," in *Taking Chances: Psychoanalysis and Literature* (Derrida, 1984: 4-10): "The first and preliminary question, as if thrown on the threshold, raises the issue of the downward movement. When chance or luck are under consideration, why do the words and concepts in the first place impose the particular signification, sense, and direction of a downward movement regardless of whether we are dealing with a throw or a fall? (Derrida, 1984: 4-5). Through etymological and philosophical encounters with 'falling', Derrida arrives at a discussion on Heidegger's understanding of falling and thrownness: "*Dasein* is *itself thrown*, originally abandoned to fall and decline, or we could say, to chance (*Verfallen*)" (Derrida, 1984: 9).[99] For Derrida '*verfallen*', 'chance' of falling is that ceded locus.

Laurie Anderson states, "when you are walking you are always falling" (1986), which is both literal in terms of kinaesthetic forces on the body and metaphoric in terms of living. Falling

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[99] Though Derrida arrives at Heidegger here, his destination is Lacan, "the place that has to be ceded to Heidegger in Lacanian theory" (Derrida, 1984: 10).

implies the promise of landing possibilities that may come. It flags an ETA of the horizontal, the results of gravity, of injury, of safe landings, of freedom from being pressured into conforming as an 'up-standing good citizen', and of being situated within the normative 'colonized flat plain'. The promise of falling in choreography of the expanded field often operates to test out norms of practice and also expose what they conceal, particularly norms that underwrite or support (which is to say inflate or conflate with respect to the fall) the irreality or metaphoricity of performance, its 'naturalised' verticality, its somatic perfections, or conformity with fantasized rules and 'the law', common to Classical and Modernist choreographic perspectives. Three artists are discussed here who engage with somatic test strategies of falling: La Ribot, Bausch to whom Heathfield draws attention, and Ader.[100] Additionally, Pope.L (Lepecki, 2006: 87-105) is discussed in relation to the choreographic testing of 'being fallen.'

As Heathfield emphasises, La Ribot represents the generation of European choreographers (or conceptual dance choreographers, since the 1990s) who show openness to an endless range of conceptual possibilities, including disciplines outside of dance, such as the visual arts (2006: 197-198). La Ribot is most often recognised as a Live Artist or performance artist, despite her dance training. She often combines the manual labour of body performance, durational strategies, the performance of 'found actions' with a range of objects normatively associated with performance art, with choreographed gestural actions that might otherwise be associated with Contemporary dance theatre. Heathfield notes that she is influenced by aspects of minimalism, apparent in her stripping away of phrases of multiple movements normatively associated with Contemporary dance. Potentially traceable in her responses to minimal choreography are the signifiers of New York's experimental Judson Theatre of the 1960s. La Ribot exemplifies what Lepecki defines as 'still' movement in choreography through kinaesthetic promises of falling. Her series of solos, *Panoramix* (cited by La Ribot, 2004), is a three and a half hour endurance performance (edited down for video) consisting of a selection of short performances involving a range of propositions that present different kinds of 'slow falls' (Heathfield, 2006: 193). By 'slow fall', Heathfield literally refers to the performer's body falling as though time is slowed down. La Ribot's slow fall is an intended action, that is not actually helpless, but partially promises this by calling her up to mimetically appear as if she is slowly surrendering to gravity. In a white cube gallery with

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[100] There is a significant body of writing on Bausch and to a lesser extent on La Ribot that focuses on political, cultural and psychic subjectivities, as well as embodiment and other contexts. Examples of authors that have recently written on Bausch include Ciane Fernandes, Royd Climenhaga and Norbert Servos. Some other authors that have written on La Ribot recently include Alexandra Demidoff and Cecillia Cozzarin. My discussion of Bausch and La Ribot is primarily in dialogue with Heathfield's essay *After the Fall: Dance Theatre and Dance Performance* and his focus on 'falling' as relevant to my own focus on falling.

cardboard flooring, with her objects and costumes laid about, giving the appearance of a forensics laboratory, La Ribot often performs naked, with objects, locating her performing body as an object. In *Zurrutada, No. 32* (La Ribot 2000/2004), a short segment of *Panoramix*, she takes approximately five minutes to fall to the floor while drinking a litre and a half of water from a glass bottle.

Figure 22. *Panoramix*, La Ribot (2004: Photograph of Live Performance; Michailov, 2011).

Zurrutada somatically tests its promise of helpless falling in a range of ways. In one sense, its slow falling accompanied by drinking serves to test out the modernist theatre norm that the performer's manual labour should be concealed in an entertaining or virtuosic manner. La Ribot does this by revealing her kinaesthetic effort: her muscles shake while contracting to hold off from falling quickly; her face goes pink as she holds her breath while drinking. She invites her audience to work, patiently and contemplatively waiting for her to finish her slow endurance actions. As Heathfield notes, La Ribot slows time down for the viewer (2006: 188-198). Her audience stands or sits around her and gazes at her in varying modes of attention. By not conforming to theatrical norms, she is open to a (normative) reading as performing idiocy. As *Zurrutada* takes place at a conceptual gallery site, this norm is not guaranteed. Many viewers in such sites are interpellated into expecting such durational and endurance strategies. Such an audience may equally be interpellated into an 'official' sanctioning of terms like 'idiocy' as authentic markers of transformative practices with respect to normalisation. This thesis project plays such a liminal game. La Ribot promises to her audience that she will deliver an end-point—landing with a full stomach—and, perhaps, even her vomiting back up the water. She tests out what it means to delay the ETA of this moment of completion and becoming, so that by the time she delivers it, its sense of release

becomes larger than it might otherwise be. This is particularly so if viewers feel a sense of empathy for her somatic workload. Many in the audience sigh with relief as she reaches her 'landing' and blows out her air to breath again, perhaps knowing that she will no longer attempt to over-strain herself. Her delivery of a safe landing in this sense also plays with the theatre norm where a character or narrative is resolved. Consuming spectators are invited to walk away with a sense of closure and resultant inner-calm, so that they might return to the theatre again to purchase another normative fantasy experience of theatrical emotional roller-coaster rides that deliver a sense of 'all's-well-that-ends-well'.

Spectators who surround La Ribot can literally see the water filling up her stomach, due to her exposed flesh, calling up reflections on not only her mortality and her body as an object that becomes the container of another object—water—but also cultural and political notions of gender constructions of a female body image. The consumption of this large volume of water in conjunction with her 'slipping away' with gravity is a metaphoric test-play with normative Western stereotypes of the female body. By stilling her naked dance into the simple actions of falling and drinking, La Ribot, in one sense, questions what is often concealed within normative Western portrayals of the female body: stereotyped as a passive object of spectacle, to be gazed at and so forth. She test-ruptures such norms of passivity by actively resisting her landing with her straining, drinking body, and her persona that appears to look out at her audience, instead of portraying the passivity of being looked at by them. Often in mass media or Modern and Classical dance contexts, when a female body is shown consuming food and drink, it is depicted as failing by 'travelling along the road to oblivion' of mental well-being and having a desired slim female body, towards obesity, aging or other forms of ill health, mental or otherwise. La Ribot, whose body is long and slender and not unlike a 'catwalk' model's, becomes full and helpless as though she is a normatively 'failed body' as she lies on the floor after her 'falling consumption'. In feigning this normative fantasy of bodily and societal failure, where there is no sense of repair apart from the audience sharing her experience, she invites her viewers to question such norms.[101] Failure can lead to discoveries within the processes of testing: no test is without its productivity; failure teaches as much as success when hypotheses and experimentation are our guiding and grounding methods. To emphasize a sense of helplessness, La Ribot repeats this promising of traumatic falling again and again in her different sections throughout *Panoramix*. In doing so she uses durational performance tasks to accumulate a sense of cultural and political despair.

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[101] This is foregrounded by La Ribot not appearing young enough to conform with Western normative stereotypes of the ideal catwalk model, not to mention the ideal Modern dancer.

Figure 23. *Café Müller*, Pina Bausch. (1978/2003; Photograph of Live Performance Rehearsal; Dancer: Pina Bausch; *One Germany in Europe (1989-2009)*; 2011).

Turning to Bausch's *Café Muller* (1978), for Heathfield (2006: 190):

> Bausch's deployment of simple physical action alongside choreographic fragments, the reiteration of driven gestural phrases, her attention to the materiality of scenic elements, enables her to conjure a set of relations where the psychological, emotional and phenomenological qualities of relationship are privileged as content. She replaces the cultural logics of relation with experiential soundings of subjection; an alterior, emotive and sensual logic is asserted. One might then see Bausch's reiterations of the violence of the inter-subjective, as a means to unlearn the political, emotional and psychological blueprint of gendered identity upon which relation is founded.

Café Muller has been a seminal piece in European dance theatre, as Heathfield (2006: 188-189) implies, as its falling motifs test levels of socio-political, gendered identity, relational and psychological reflection that were not otherwise found in dance before its conception. It epitomises expressionist dance theatre of the 1970s and 1980s.[102] *Café Muller* presents promises of helpless falling via repeated theatrical somatic movement motifs, through

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[102] In relation to Bausch, Heathfield also draws attention to 'falling' in the dance theatre work of DV8 from the 1980s to the present. In many respects the motif of falling situates both Modernist and post-Modernist or conceptual approaches to practice. On the one hand, as Modernist, it works with a code of somatic vocabulary; on the other, it calls up a range of poststructuralist readings by contemporary theorists and critics referencing the work of Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze or Lacan.

dancers, particularly Bausch herself, labouriously falling to the floor. They appear on the surface to be helpless, suddenly releasing their upper torsos into curled up contractions, often to the point of physical exhaustion. As Burt notes regarding *Café Muller*: "[It] is a dark piece full of missed encounters and failed acts of communication among a small ensemble of dancers including Bausch herself" (2004: 38). For Burt, *Café Muller* at the time of its conception was transformative in how it arrested theatre dance's normativities by showing the limits and destruction of the dancing body with repetitive 'pedestrian' choreographic actions, while revealing new "presences to emerge" (2004: 32-44; quoted in 32-33).

These embodied mimetic promises of falling express ecstasy, agony, anguish, loss and fatigue (Heathfield, 2006: 189). The dancers repair themselves, and are sometimes repaired by others by being caught and re-positioned into verticality after each fall, only to appear to hopelessly fall again and again (ibid). The dance pervades a sense of dark Romanticism when these somatically-iterated feelings are combined with sad love tunes, drawn from the early twentieth century and earlier. The influence of the German expressionist choreographer Mary Wigman on Bausch is evident (1975: 71-131). Yet this legacy is transcended through her performative activation of questions to do with '*why* people move' (Bausch, 1996: 57-64; Heathfield, 2006: 189-197). This is particularly so in terms of her dancers' somatic engagements with theatrical characterisation, emotions and relationships with others.

The audience, who sit within either a conventional theatre or in front of a screen (as in my case), is promised by Bausch to see and empathize with her dancer-characters as people who really do feel things like despair when they repetitively perform gestures of falling on their own and in relation to others, along with their other choreographic actions. This emotional expression is assisted by her foregrounding her dancers' manual labour in falling while appearing exhausted, with puffing and so forth. Such revealing of emotions and manual labour exemplify Heathfield's observation that *Café Muller*'s focus on people's lives has been a reaction against the formalist aesthetics of Western Modern dance, dominant at the time of its inception (ibid). By *Café Muller* promising to show *people* who fall, and not just bodies *that* fall, it somatically tests the human condition in terms of questioning: norms and techniques of normalisation of gender politics, desire, intimate love and, in relation to this, notions of temporality, as Heathfield notes (2006: 190). It reflects on the stereotype of women as hopeless with their emotions when it comes to love and its related grief. This is contrasted with male dancers, shown often by a male dancer picking up Bausch from her 'thea-matrical' falls. Heathfield also suggests that the *repetition* of falling in *Café Muller* "creates suspensions and returns in our experience" and "problematises our tendency to rationalise time" (2006:192). Combined with its emotional activations this tests out normative

conventions of temporality in modernist dance theatre. With most dance theatre prior to this, dancers were not depicted as endlessly falling to the point of exhaustion. When this is combined with the actions of its dancers and their dramatically depicted expressions of despair and hopelessness, the viewer is invited, called or interpellated into emotionally empathizing with *Café Muller*'s activation of dark romantic feelings and questions to do with these.

Figure 24. *Broken Fall (Organic)*, Bas Jan Ader (1971/1994; Photograph of Live Performance; Artnet, 2011)

Unlike La Ribot and Bausch, the early 1970s Dutch performance artist Ader performs 'real time' falling in his videos, a falling that at first appears as though it is literally an accident (2007). He promises the im/possibility of *intended* helpless falling. While interpellated through the performance art norms of endurance, Ader tests out the manual labour involved in contriving the 'pedestrian' fall. His falls are test-promises, where he holds himself in a precarious position until his body can no longer sustain its labour to prevent it from falling. In *Broken Fall (Organic)* he hangs from a tree for seconds until he cannot hold on any longer and falls approximately 5-6 meters into a stream (ibid). In *Broken Fall (Geometric)* he attempts to lean on his right-hand side while standing at the threshold of just about falling, until he can hold no longer, and so he falls onto a trestle that is positioned beside him (ibid). In *Nightfall* he attempts to hold up large and heavy rocks in each hand, one at a time. They *appear* too heavy for him and they each fall to the floor close to him, smashing illuminating light bulbs resulting in him (and us) being left in the dark (ibid). In these performances, he tests out his body's kinaesthetic limits in seeing how long it takes to precariously 'hold out' until it 'gives up' and fails against gravity with falling. His falls fail at being accidents because

he choreographs their ETA in inviting viewers of his videos to expect that he will fall. In doing so, keeping his promise, he reaffirms the im/possible economy of the intended accident as a form of failure, a failure differing from and endlessly deferring itself.

Figure 25. *Broken Fall (Geometric)*, Bas Jan Ader (1971; Photograph of Live Performance; Somethinghomesomething.com, 2011).

Figure 26. *Nightfall*, Bas Jan Ader (1971; Video Still; Canadianart, 2011).

Ader's manual labour, test failing of failures, is a choreographic 'discovery' in Forsythe's understanding of failure. Significant for this research is how his falls generate reflection on

the mortal risks he puts his body through, performances that promise physical risk and danger in falling. The viewer is left to contemplate his experience of pain and injury, particularly as each clip lingers on him in his landing positions. One thinks here of *Jack Ass*, the popular culture television that grew from the MTV programme, now cable channel. In relation to Ader's promises of bodily trauma, the other potentially underwrites viewers' experiences of Ader's falls in terms of being interpellated by institutional norms of health and safety. After all, whenever most people observe others voluntarily putting themselves through dangerous physical risks, they contemplate and fantasize over the individual's potential trauma, often in relation to moral issues and with somatic empathy. Of course there are many activities where such risk is valued, where failure may yet be recouped as valour, bravery or heroism: losing your life scaling Everest, breaking your neck packing down in an All Blacks scrum, even the stunt motorcyclist matching skill with ambition. But the artists? And, especially, the idiocy of performance art? Normatively speaking, this ground is swampy underfoot. Though performance art also has its purple hearts and bruised prose: having fallen in one's works potentially presents a 'badge of honour' to one's spectators, where Ader shows them he has achieved that which most people would not dare. In this way the other underwrites his falls to interpellate him as a brave and heroic performance artist, potentially very appealing to the collective fantasies of his viewers, if they are themselves called up into valuing feats of physical bravura, as is so often normalized throughout Western society. Pope.L, on the other, hand has significance for this research through how he choreographically tests promises of being 'fallen', both in the physical and metaphoric sense. For Lepecki (2006: 90) Pope.L's work:

> …can be seen as an esthetic and a political statement about the impossibility for contemporary art to sustain the very notion of artistic genre. Rather, the question of discipline is dropped altogether from the equation, to be replaced by an emphasis on the ethics of the artist as laborer.

As Lepecki notes, Pope.L's crawling works question the notion of disciplinary genre but, more particularly, test the role of 'the artist as labourer' in term of ethics. Lepecki's description of Pope.L's crawling works suggests a performance art that choreographically tests and questions the processes of colonization and marginalisation of African Americans in the USA (2006: 90-101). Pope.L accentuates or emphasises his African American legacies by performing what may appear to be a subservient task: the manual labour of crawling on the ground. By doing this, Pope.L intentionally plays on the fantasy of humiliating himself, as Sally O'Reilly implies (2009: 210). This activity is normatively associated with societal stereotypes of 'the fallen', or 'society's failures', 'the down and out', drunkards, vagabonds, beggars, lower-class workers and other demeaning common stereotypes particularly

associated with cultural and ethnic minorities.[103] In Pope.L's *The Great White Way* (2002-2007, cited by Lepecki, 2006: 100-101), he crawls on the streets for twenty-two miles, from New York's Statue of Liberty to Broadway in yearly instalments. He dresses as Superman with no cape, and a skateboard attached to his back. The skateboard, for pragmatic reasons, negotiates difficult physical terrain, which pays reference to the tools of the archetypal tradesman who labours at the hard and dirty task of 'getting close to the ground and drains', a common stereotype for African Americans, despite the current President of the United States of America being African American. Pope.L, from Lepecki's description, appears heroic: a superman mechanic or sewer cleaner whose labours will 'save the day for America'. In one performed segment of the crawl, Lepecki, who was an audience member, particularly noted the frozen icy ground that Pope.L crawled on. This heightens Pope.L's critique of colonialism by an additional somatic stress incurred through this endurance and durational choreography (ibid). As with Ader, the potential physical risks and strains to Pope.L's body engage the viewer to normatively read and underwrite the somatic performance as 'unsafe', too crippling to a body and potentially an obstacle to be trampled on by public passers-by, putting the artist in harm's way. This reading of being physically 'unsafe' serves to metaphorically activate the sense of political vulnerability and marginalisation that African Americans have in US society, of being 'at risk' and fallen. The flat plain, which Lepecki describes as the surface that bears Pope.L's crawls, is a framing and test-space that has been colonised and in turn calls up a subservience of the colonised.

Figure 27. *The Great White Way, 22 Miles, 9 Years, 1 Street*, William Pope.L (2005; Video Still; *Uferhallen Berlin*, 2011).

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[103] Pope.L promises 'being fallen' by calling up cultural and political associations with African American stereotypes. Here is a mimetic economy that undoes what it does, that feigns what it feigns, whose economy is that of *différance*. His privileged position as a conceptual artist empowers his cultural and political locale at the very moment he feigns, mimetically, a 'slave-mentality.' As well, Lepecki's text, with its positioning of authorship and dissemination provides Pope.L with an additional *windfall* when it comes to cultural legitimisation.

In Read's words, the crawls serve to uncover the concealment of this process: the Statue of Liberty to Broadway serves as an ironic register concerning freedom and bondage, colonisers and the colonised.[104] Pope.L's testing of being fallen in these ways promises to be a form of cultural and political catharsis and contemplation for the marginalisation of African Americans. As Lepecki *personally* testifies, this experience is enhanced when some of Pope.L's viewers participate in 'group crawls' with him (2006: 98-99). Otherwise, they stand and watch and follow.

Minimising

Further down this genealogical descent of choreography in the expanded field are promises of 'minimising', or different notions of minimalism. Before providing a definition of minimalism, post-minimalist choreographic practices, as another kind of minimising, will be discussed in relation to the artists Acconci, Nauman and Graham. Minimalism will then be discussed with reference to the choreographer Rainer. I am following this strategy as post-minimalist choreographic practices (as a visual art classification) have more recently and more closely influenced this research than have minimalist somatic and dance practices. Each of these artists provides reference points to choreographic labour in its testing and relation to conceptualisation.

Performative postminimalising

'Postminimalising' or postminimalism generally refers to performance and visual art practices that, as Robert Pincus-Witten suggests, promise to 'personalise' the artwork, as opposed to the minimalist formalist approach of depersonalising the art object or performance (1977: 14).[105] Pincus-Witten refers to art and performance that actively engage with surrounding social and personal contexts, unlike minimalism, despite postminimalism

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[104] This is a process common to many former European, particularly British, colonies like America. Just as in the US, in Aotearoa New Zealand land became not a site for productive freedom but an intense locus of contestation in colonisation. The will of minority groups and indigenous people has often constituted the visibility of resistance. This charged and political reading of land has often been applied to readings of nineteenth century colonial landscape paintings of both Australia and New Zealand, painting that depicted an empty and untouched topography, waiting for heroic colonial progress.

[105] As Pincus-Witten states, postminimalism appeared in the late 1960s as a result of certain American artists reacting to minimalist norms and its impersonality (1977: 14-15). Visual artists Pincus-Witten cites as postminimalist include Eva Hesse and Richard Serra, and he also includes Acconci's and Nauman's performance practices within this category.

inheriting minimalism's sense of 'stripping down' materiality. Unlike minimalism, postminimalising promises conceptual malleability, where practice endlessly questions via a range of perspectives: cultural, political, philosophical and psychoanalytical. Postminimalism promises the stilling of somatic labour in terms of Lepecki's understanding of stilling modernism's 'being towards movement.' Many of the choreographers so far focussed on in this chapter activate stilling as postminimalism through their choreographic conceptual layering while reducing formal elements: Bel, Le Roy, La Ribot, Pope.L and Ader. Postminimalism is explored here for its influence on my research through the solo performance art choreographic practices of Acconci (2002: 14-127; Pincus-Witten, 1977: 143-147)[106], Nauman (Lepecki, 2006: 23; Pincus-Witten, 1977: 70-78), and Graham (1975/2006). Each of these artists at times performatively tests his minimalist-influenced solo choreographic labour. While these artists are not normally known as 'choreographers', each performs choreographic actions with his body; hence their pertinence for this research. In their choreographies discussed here they each attempt to draw the viewer's attention to their own practices through the use of text, and thereby encourage reflections on the role of the other in their interpellation as performance artists. In their different approaches to testing their minimal somatic actions we recognise key aspects of the theoretical trajectories of Ronell, Butler, Read, at times Heathfield and Forsythe, via, promising and playing with potential normative fantasies of failure, stupidity, and test-habits, via minimalist strategies that reveal insights that might otherwise be concealed by their actions.

Acconci's performance works from between 1970 and 1973 are an eclectic mix of approaches, activating choreographed physical tasks, somato-physical endurance, his viewers and the other in relation to himself as artist. His choreographed labour tests the role of the other as reader and writer, fantasies of failure and idiocy, as well as the (modernist) normativity of art and choreographic performance being disciplinary specific. For Frazer Ward, Acconci has had three intertwining concerns throughout his career: "social construction of the self", "relations between the body and space" and the polemic of "public and private realms" (2002: 18). Acconci, for Ward, intentionally fails to "makes sense of all this" in his performances (ibid). Instead, he seeks to activate rupture, uncertainty and a sense of the absurd through these themes. In doing so, he tests out these themes through his minimal somatic actions, playing with normative and fantasized constructions of failure and idiocy that generate questions to do with societal and artistic norms of 'acceptability'.[107] He

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[106] Billy Tran suggests that Acconci's move into performance from writing was influenced by both the choreographers of Judson Church such as Rainer and also the artist Graham, namely in his first performance *Following Piece* (1969, cited by Tran, 2009)

[107] A well-known example of where he attempts this is the performance work from this period, *Seedbed* (1972, cited by Acconci, 2002: 97-99) where he masturbates under a raised gallery floor.

has achieved this by intentionally engaging with therapy in his performance works. As Pincus-Witten notes, Acconci's performance practices have served as forms of therapy for him (1977: 144). Acconci questions and plays with the positivist view that 'serious' 'professional' art and performance 'should not be therapeutic' because it should be concerned only with 'art for art's sake.'[108] He also plays the fool, feigning that he has failed at making successful art by turning it into his personal therapy, which creates a sense of comedy and irony at times, inviting viewers to question this norm. It is not simply Acconci who feigns therapy in his works but in a Derridean sense, his *name* that the other writes and counter-signs. Acconci's juxtaposition of questioning art and societal norms with his attempts to reveal his personal world opens to an exposure closer to the bio-political than to the historical fictions of official biographies. Here he questions art conventions of his own genealogy (such as minimalism), while proposing new insights through his apparent personal revelations. Four Acconci performances that we consider are: *Reception Room* (1973, Acconci, 2002: 25), *Theme Song* (1973/2006; 1973, Acconci, 2002: 114), *Step Piece* (1970b, Acconci, 2002: 37) and *Digging Piece* (1970a, Acconci, 2002: 127).[109]

In *Reception Room* Acconci narcissistically speaks out his apparent feelings while performing a minimally choreographed endurance and durational task[110]. Under a spotlight in a gallery, he lays naked on a bed partially under a sheet, slowly flipping over and over between lying on his stomach and his back, seemingly endlessly. Meanwhile a sound recording of his voice confesses his "fears and shames" and anxieties of fantasized failure (Acconci, 2002: 25). He states that the piece had been intended to activate the concept of him sharing his own personal anxieties in public, in order to cope with them better. The fears he lists are to do with normalised collective fantasies of failing in relationships, as an acceptable citizen and artist. He engages with them in what would generally be normalised as idiotic actions. His

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[108] This is a norm that I have experienced on several occasions from other artists and choreographers. It conforms to the commonly held modernist notion that professional art and choreography should not be mixed with other disciplines, such as therapy. It does not account for the field of art therapy. While Acconci during this period may have transgressed such norms with his work, he has (perhaps unintentionally) served to normalise the integration of art with therapy within public conceptual art contexts. This has been achieved through him being widely written about and studied by academics and students, as well as through market-driven processes of power and performativity in galleries and other art-related publications. Auslander helps to consolidate this norm with his discussion of Spalding Gray's theatre performance work. Performing before an audience is therapeutic for Gray; he can control his actions more than he otherwise would, with his psychological disabilities (2008: 171-172).

[109] Four Acconci's works are described here, significantly more than for other artists in this literature review and indicative of the extent to which this artist's works have influenced this research. Acconci, as with the other Post-minimalist artists Graham and Nauman, are mentioned further down this genealogy of descent, even though they are in some ways the most influential to this research, more so than some introduced earlier in this discussion. Of course there is no chronology, logic or consistency to the tangled play of archives that constitute one's genealogy, those lines of descent and places of emergence.

[110] Unlike most of the other works cited in this chapter, which have been viewed on video, I have only read about this piece.

public performance of these fears and shames within the site of the art gallery serves to highlight how the other interpellates him as named artist, who, in part, feigns undergoing therapy while performing the manual labour of 'minimalistically' flipping his body. This therapy test-lies when it is not just Acconci writing his work, as he suggests, but his named persona who is written by the other, who only promises his therapy. He test-plays with this promise of the truth in his theatrical confessions-as-therapy. Acconci also invites the viewer and the other (both in the audience and himself) to scrutinize his body while performing these test-lies. His actions emphasize how, as Foucault shows, the confessor invites a listener to witness embodiment and somatic experience.[111] Acconci's play on confessing may also be understood in terms of how, for Foucault, the confession is "a form of truth production" that feigns producing the truth (Taylor, 2009: 79). His confessions appear convincing because they appear personal and private and are delivered almost as though he 'speaks his own mind' through free association in a Freudian psychoanalysis session (Macmillan 2001: 167-175). Foucault observes that confession involves imbricated power relations (Taylor, 2009: 66-86). For Acconci, with his pre-recorded piped confessions, he asks if it is he who has power over his viewers and not the other way round. The piped-sound operates like a third person, metaphoric of the force of the other who participates in writing Acconci's and his viewers' performances.

Figure 28. *Reception Room*, Vito Acconci (1973/2004; Video Still; *Electronic Arts Intermix*, 2011).

In Acconci's video performance *Theme Song* he test-plays with therapy in relation to the other's calling him up as the artist, through feigning normative fantasies of social self-ridicule in appearing sexually sleazy, playing normative fantasies of being foolish. While lying on the floor he talks seductively through the camera/monitor screen directly to his viewers. He attempts to convince them to enter into his world, by saying for example "go on, what are

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[111] Foucault engages with this in relation to the confession of the murderer, Pierre Riviere (1975: 202-205).

you afraid of? ...I won't hurt you", as well as captions like, "it's nice in here... go on, come and join me" (1973/2006). By appearing to directly speak to his viewers in this manner, in 'playing the sleaze' with an undercurrent of sexual innuendos he draws attention to the relationships between not only the performer and viewer, but him with his name as the artist and the other, and the degree of power that the other has over his named persona and audience perception. His 'spoof' promises real engagement with the viewer, but stalls on this offer through his impossibility of truly engaging beyond the video monitor. His attempt to play the fool with the form of the video monitor highlights how the other interpellates Acconci, his *named self* on the video, and with his audience. His characterization serves to also test-play with mixing art and therapy through being a role-play of his self-demeaning, as a play on a client who undergoes therapy or counselling who reveals his or her desires, fantasies and fears. Whilst doing this, his sense of choreographed somatic performance serves as a secondary framing device for his conceptual focus, where he casually and simply shifts posture, drinks from his glass and smokes. His drinking and smoking are metaphors for the question of who consumes who—is it him, the live artist, who drinks and smokes in his viewer's presence, or the other who gives his named-artist persona sustenance and its sense of intoxication and/or revulsion and normative fantasies of failure and idiocy of him *for* viewers?

Figure 29. *Theme Song*, Vito Acconci (1973; Video Still; Ditzler, 2011).

In the videos *Digging Piece* (1970) and *Step Piece* (1970), Acconci's minimally-choreographed manual labour takes more precedence in his somatic testing of art-as-therapy in relation to the other.[112] This comes about through him performing the following physical endurance

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[112] This piece has been viewed through a series of slide-projections with descriptions by Acconci (2004 in a live presentation).

actions to bodily exhaustion in order to achieve 'that which is named' and promised by the works' titles: in trying to literally 'dig himself into a hole' by kicking up sand on a beach for 15 minutes in *Digging Piece*, and training himself up daily to do step-ups on a chair to perform "30 steps a minute" for as long as he can for four months in *Step Piece* (Acconci, 2002: 37). As with his other performances, within non-conceptual art and choreographic contexts these actions would be normatively seen as idiotic, itself a test-strategy in Ronell's terms.

Figure 30. *Digging Piece*, Vito Acconci (1970; Video Still; *Electronic Arts Intermix*, 2011).

Figure 31. *Step Piece*, Vito Acconci (1970; Photographs of Live Performance; Mansour, 2011).

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Art-as therapy is tested in *Digging Piece* through his named-self's portrayal of a sense of catharsis and venting of pent-up emotions at doing something that, for many outside this art context, would be apparently pointless and therefore stupid, emphasized by the metaphor of digging himself into a hole. In *Step Piece* he and his named-self test-lies his therapy via personal training and development that is feigned and not feigned, through conditioning himself into becoming both physically fitter but also more psychologically disciplined to perform longer. Testing in these works is reinforced by the way they call up his actions through their titles, which incites the other to employ the institutional mode of titling to performatively interpellate him and partially write his performances. The other is a silent witness and writer of his somatic tasks that disciplines his body into its exhaustion and spent labour, performing normative idiocy and tiring choreographed rituals of testing norms in public performance.

Nauman's performance art video/film works *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* (1967-1968, cited by Lepecki, 2006: 23; Leaver-Yap, 2010) and *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* (1968; cited by Tuyl, 1998:68-69) are also significant for this research in how they test out the role of the other in relation to the artist's choreographic somatic and manual labour. As Janet Kraynak (cited by Lepecki 2006: 23) states:

> all of Nauman's studio films, with their focused execution of the tasks outlined in their titles, *essentially constitute the display of a set of instructions*. In other words, they depict not simply the body but the choreographic score as well: what might be understood as the language of movement.

In all the works in this series of Nauman's videos, their titles each literally call up choreographic actions that they name. In *Walking in*' Nauman walks along the line of a square marked on his studio floor in an exaggerated manner, by placing extra emphasis on lateral forces to his hip joints while walking. In *Slow Angle*' he films himself sideways while walking in a pendulum-like manner along a line on his studio floor, with his legs lifting approximately two to three feet higher than needed before hitting the ground. Pincus-Witten locates Nauman's key conceptual concern in many of his works as narcissistic, because he focuses on reconstructing his sense of self before his spectators situated on the other side of the video monitor (1977: 71). In both of these works, Nauman reshapes his body theatrically in order to appear as another body. Via what appears to be idiosyncratic and futile 'pedestrian' actions, that appear normatively idiotic, in contexts outside conceptual art and choreography, he appears not only as a 'body in character' but as a character portrayal of himself as *an artist*. As with Acconci's *Digging Piece* and *Step Piece*, Nauman, in these performances, draws attention to the role of the other as that which interpellates the

performance of him and his named artist persona who performs these minimally choreographed actions. This attempt to draw attention to and test-out the role of the other in Nauman's pieces is more explicit and direct than with Acconci's *Digging Piece* and *Step Piece*.

Figure 32. *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square*, Bruce Nauman (1967/1968; Video Still; MoMA, 2011).

By drawing attention to the role of the other's writing of his performances, Nauman makes promises to do with art's normativity. As with Acconci, Bel and Le Roy, Nauman's engagement with simplistic, seemingly 'pedestrian' manual labour tasks in *Walking in*' and *Slow Angle*' promise to conform with art norms in that they are conceptually driven, and not somatically driven. *Slow Angle*', as Gijs van Tuyl notes, was intended by Nauman to theatrically explore notions of futile walking found in Samuel Beckett's writing (1998: 68-69). In both these pieces, as with much of his work from the same period, he intended to play with a mathematical notion: to find the conclusion of endless tasks that, of course, is impossible and futile (ibid). Nauman also frames these videos, as Lepecki suggests, by paying reference to his identity as 'the artist', via performing in his studio (2006: 29). Through such visual-spatial referencing, he draws attention to how his named-artist-persona is called up through the normativity of 'being an artist', by the other and, in this way, promises that these works will be art, even if viewers might look at these choreographies and not see them as art. Through this studio framing, in juxtaposition to his futile walks, Nauman test-plays on and questions the status of 'master' and 'original authority' of art that often is given to artists by modernist critics such as Clement Greenberg, whose writing will be discussed briefly in the

final section of this chapter. This is suggested by Lepecki's observation (ibid) that his chair shown in the background is a metaphor for 'the dance master's chair' – that is stereotypical of Modernist and pre-Modernist Western dance studios.
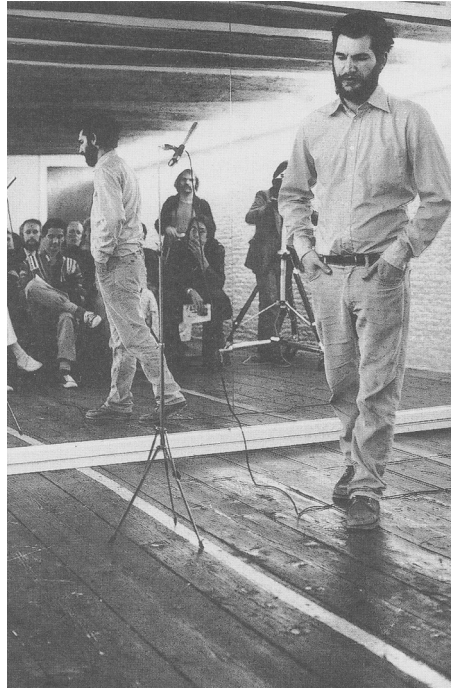

Figure 33. *Performer/audience/mirror*, Dan Graham (1977; Photograph of Live Performance; Cologni 2007).

Turning to Graham, the video recording of his performance art work *Performer/audience/mirror* (1975/2006) intentionally includes a live audience, as significant to it. In *Performer/audience/mirror* Graham describes his appearance and stance and how he perceives his feelings of performing to his audience, and he also attempts the reverse, by describing the same *of* his audience (Huddleston, 2006). More specifically, in four sections of five minutes each, he faces his audience (who are with him in front of the camera, sitting and standing, while transfixed on him) and describes his behaviour; then he describes his audience's behaviours. Next he faces his mirror and describes and interprets his body language (so the audience cannot see his eyes) and finally, while remaining faced towards the mirror, he describes and interprets his audience's body language (Graham, 1998: 98). To some this piece may not be seen to be choreographic but, as with Acconci's *Theme Song* video, Graham engages with a very subtle sense of choreographic somatic labour, with his standing and slight shifts of weight and turning to change his positioning to his audience. And, as with Acconci's *Theme Song* and *Reception Room*, his somatic actions are secondary to his spoken text and concept, which function to draw his viewers' attention to his embodied presence. The significance of *Performer/audience/mirror* for this research lies in how Graham applies a strategy of testing out his sense of embodied artist's-performance-persona in relation to viewers and the interpellating other. It is indicative of Thomas McEvilley's observation on the minimalist

tendency for artists to focus inwardly on their art materials "as themselves and as systems of presenting and thinking about them" (2008: 86).

As Huddleston (2006) and Graham (1998: 98-100) note, Graham's intended conceptual focus in *Performer/audience/mirror* is to play on the way perceptions of subjectivity and objectivity can be experienced while performing. This has been attempted, Huddleston suggests, through the work's reliance on "phenomenological inquiry," that is, a sense of lived experience into performer-audience connections (ibid). However, in contrast to this, *Performer/audience/mirror* negotiates how notions of objectivity, subjectivity and reflexivity cannot be manifested, despite promising this via phenomenological strategies. Viewers who are both within and outside of Graham's video documentation are invited by him to consider a simultaneous range of reflections on his and their own embodied named-performance-personas, beyond constructions of objectivity and subjectivity, and never from the same exact perspective, across the political, cultural, philosophical and psychoanalytical.[113] The audience is resultantly invited by *Performer/audience/mirror* to agree and disagree with what Graham says about his named self, and their named selves, in addition to questioning the role of the truths and non-truths in the piece. Viewers in his video are also invited to identify with Graham's performance with their own potential anxieties of themselves as audience members and their fantasies of their (potential) failures, in relation to how they feel being scrutinized by Graham. *Performer/audience/mirror* in this way draws attention to how the other calls up not only the artist's name but also the audience on the video. This is not unlike Acconci's *Theme Song* in as much as viewers are invited to reflect on their own interpellation. However, Acconci plays on the live context of viewing his video, not on the inside of the monitor as in Graham's case. The foregrounding of Graham's and his audience's interpellation is also encouraged by *Performer/audience/mirror* being set in a gallery that is framed by a full-wall mirror that makes the gallery site of his performance physically appear not unlike that of a dance studio. This reference to a dance studio serves as a conceptual metaphor for the work in terms of its role as a test-measuring device.[114] Graham invites an interpellation of his and his audience's identities through his mirror being a metaphor for measuring his and his audience's bodies by the authoritative choreographing other.

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[113] Anthony Howell reads a reference to Lacan's mirror stage of the subject's development into Graham's mirror performances such as this one whereby audience members are evoked into considering their own sense of 'becoming' as spectators and subjects (2000: 203).

[114] As Shona Inness argues, the dance studio mirror is a device that functions to measure dancers, to police them into conformity with respect to bodily and somatic norms of Western stereotypes of the body beautiful, particularly associated with Classical ballet (1988: 46-47).

Another significant aspect of Graham's, Acconci's and Nauman's pieces, as well as Bel and La Ribot, is how they employ solo choreographic performances to test out their specific post-minimalist concepts in relation to their interpellation and the naming of their named-artist-personas. Solo performance for Graham, Acconci and Nauman emphasizes the autobiographic, drawing attention to their own roles as performing choreographic artists. With this solipsistic self-reference, the solo activates a sense of test-discovery with their named-artist-personas, and how the other reads, writes and interpellates with normativity these named-personas.[115] Lepecki (2006: 38) suggests Nauman, as a solo male performer, questions the hegemonic processes of modernist perspectives of choreography, which also applies to the performance art of Acconci and Graham. Their choreographic performances test their named-personas as failing to conform to modernist norms of appearing to be successful as 'master-artists' in working within their disciplines through calling up being towards movement and so forth. Not only do they feign failure to serve the gods of modernism through performing normative idiotic actions, they explicitly reflect on how the other 'has a say' in their work.[116]

Minimising: testing with Rainer

Further down this genealogy is the promise of 'minimalising', or minimalism itself. In general, minimalism is locatable within conceptual borders demarcating Modernism and Postmodernism (McEvilley, 2008: 259). For Renate Wiehager, minimalism was formed initially in painting and sculpture but later in dance and music as a rebuttal to, among other things, the 1950s "subjective painting gestures" (2007: 3). Minimalism promises to strip away everything that appears to the artist to be 'unnecessary' and 'non-essential' for the artwork and its conceptual focus (McEvilley, 2008: 113). This is also an influence on choreographic stilling. In a minimalist perspective on choreography, a modernist approach to 'movement for its self' can be dominant, as long as, normatively speaking, the work shows its intentions without extraneous actions that distract from the conceptual focus of the choreography. Through simple lines, rhythms and geometry, choreographed movements and somatic actions, minimalism has been intended to present a *neutral* or objective perspective of form in

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[115] A dominant norm for Graham, Acconci and Nuaman's named-artist-personas, as white men, is the myth of the so-called heroic and 'original great white male solo performance artist' that Schneider problematises as patriarchal and culturally colonising. Yet they too question this myth through their interrogations of modernist art and choreographic value systems. While it is, of course, possible and not uncommon for choreographers and artists to choreograph others, Acconci, Nuaman and Graham play directly on their own image as the artist-choreographer as performer and as tester of their otobiographic named-artist-persona. This is key to my research and my own performance practices.
[116] My *use* of 'idiocy' here references the Nietzschean one I discuss earlier, differing from Lepecki.

artwork (Craig-Martin, 1988:7).[117] In this way it projects an essentialist modernist perspective. This conforms to what Greenberg, a champion of modernist art, states. The modernist artwork should be generated from the artist's *objective* reasoning and have its own system of presenting and thinking about its materials, not reliant on any other objects, artworks, subjectivities or experiences for its readings or production (1960/1993: 85-91; 1999: 47-50; McEvilley, 2008: 71 and 86).[118] This perspective is akin to Lepecki's description of dance modernism's fixation on moving dancers, whereby the choreographer is called upon to only look inward to the somatic labour of his or her moving dancers' bodies. Such an essentialist perspective of art calls for conceptual concealment, rather than an un-concealing in Heidegger's sense or, as Read understands, as an exposure to the exceptional or the open, in Agamben's sense. This is not to say that all dance modernist choreography is minimalist, and all minimalist choreography is simply modernist.

An aspect of minimalism that potentially shifts it beyond modernist essentialist notions is its calls for 'non-hierarchical' and apparently 'ordinary' and 'everyday' forms of art.[119] Craig-Martin qualifies this by noting that minimalism has drawn from Duchamp's concept that art objects are not necessarily unique and can consist of any form of materiality, from any walk of life (1988: 7). This aspect of minimalism gives it, as Wiehager calls it, a "non-hierarchical" nature where there is no sense of 'superior' form or crafting (2007: 3). In relation to this anti-hierarchical nature of minimalism, Craig-Martin argues it "seeks the meaning of art in the immediate and personal experience of the viewer in the presence of the specific work" (1988: 7).[120] An approach to minimalist choreography that engages with such shifting out of modernism into the 'everyday' is the 1960s dance choreographic practice of Rainer with the Judson Church collective, in particular, her *Trio A* (Brockway, 1966/1980; Banes, 1987: 44-55).[121]

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[117] Craig-Martin does not mention choreographed movements and somatic actions, as his perspective is confined to the visual arts.

[118] Greenberg is noted here because of his adherence to modernist notions of art, not because of his relationship to minimalism. Of note here, Donald Kuspit points out that despite Greenberg's focus on formalism and abstract expressionism, he had suggested that minimalist art is not 'good art' because it does not transcend and transform its sources (1979: 155-166). Examples of minimalist visual artists include Donald Judd, Frank Stella and Agnes Martin.

[119] This is not entirely reducible to the notion of the 'Duchampian ready-made', which calls for conception in art, or 'conceptual art' that has endless multiple readings of art (McEvilley, 2008: 25 and 31).

[120] While this aligns somewhat with Adshead-Lansdale, on viewers defining dance 'lived experience' as having differing interpretations of 'duration', in Bergson's terms (Ellis, 2005: 54-58), this research takes the position that the interpellating other also writes. Our thinking of the agency of "the other" confounds a naturalised ego-driven understanding of experience as subjective and personal.

[121] *Trio A* was initially part of a larger work called *The Mind Is a Muscle* (Banes, 1987: 44-48). As with the earlier discussion of Bausch and La Ribot, there is a sizable extant body of writing on *Trio A* that is not activated here. My focus, in this instance, is on the promise of minimizing. I therefore attempt to draw from Burt and Sally Banes to provide points of reference for this. This is not to say that the

Trio A is a four and a half minute solo dance that explicitly avoids certain Expressionist, Modern, Classical and Romantic dance conventions. Rainer's "No Manifesto" outlines her intentions in the piece as follows:

> No to spectacle. No to virtuosity. No to transformations and magic and make-believe. No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image. No to the heroic. No to the anti-heroic. No to trash imagery. No to involvement of performer or spectator. No to style. No to camp. No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer. No to eccentricity. No to moving or being moved (1965, cited in Banes, 1987: 43).

Essentially, Rainer proclaims here a reductionism, in conformity with other minimalists outside of dance disciplines, to *not* choreograph with many of the norms of Western dance theatre that were dominant when she first made *Trio A*, that are still current now to a lesser degree. With her list she aims to avoid creating stylised virtuosity, spectacle, expression and 'grand gestures' common to ballet, commercial Broadway musical dance, and Modern dance such as the work of Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and, even, Merce Cunningham. This has manifested in her stripping away thematic content and stylisation common to much Western theatre dance (Banes, 1987: 44). Resultantly, Rainer has used what to many dancers is normative 'pedestrian' styled 'task-based' movement that for Sally Banes appears anti-theatrical and 'ordinary' (ibid). *Trio A* is a continuous series of linked movements that have not been constructed with dance phrasing unlike much Western dance choreography in the 1960s and to the present day.

As Burt notes, for many dance practitioners and other artists such as myself, since the time of its conception, *Trio A* has been influential because of its manifested resistance, with its 'pedestrian' actions and questioning of dominant dance norms, in how it encourages audiences to form their own readings of it and calls about other possibilities, or subjective, conceptual, somatic, and political insights (2004: 29-44).[122]

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many other discourses and reflections on *Trio A* are not valid. Examples of other authors who have recently written on *Trio A* and provide other reflections include Carrie Lambert-Beatly and Catherine Wood.

[122] As Banes (1987: 44; and 1993: 173) suggests, Rainer, along with other Judson choreographers, encouraged other dancers across the globe to experiment with testing dance choreography that is not bound to modern vocabularies, and choreography that has conceptual concerns. Additionally, Rainer herself states that her practice has also influenced the minmalist-influenced performance art of Acconci, Nauman and related practice in the "performative questioning of body ideals" (Ploebst, 2007/2009**)**, where each of these artists questions societal norms of how the body should move in public. And, in his discussion on *Trio A,* alongside Bausch's *Café Muller* and de Keersmaeker's *Rosas Danst Rosas*, Burt notes that they each run the risk of being reified into "the cannon of late twentieth-century postmodern dance" (2004: 30). This is the potential case for all of the art and performance works and their respective disciplinary and inter/transdisciplinary fields of discourse discussed so far in this exegesis. While *Trio A* has been and still is in many respects avant-garde, transformative and even transgressive to many in its questioning of disciplinary norms, through it being reflected on and

Figure 34. *Trio A*, by Yvonner Rainer (1966; Video Stills; *Degrees of Freedom*, 2011).

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influencing many authors, choreographers and artists, it operates through what Foster terms the historical avant-garde (1996: 15-17), and at times itself has the potential to be normative in international choreographic discourses.

Of particular significance for this research is how Rainer, through *Trio A*, has in one sense promised to test out a conceptual focus through the choreographic manual labour of dancing bodies. Her somatic testing engages with conceptual processes of normativity in choreography, as a kind of 'negative theology', by rupturing Modern dance norms and collective fantasies of 'acceptability' with her minimalist somatic strategies. As Rainer herself has stated, in addition to the reduction of movement, she has attempted other minimalist strategies in *Trio A*, namely, a sense of the objective, anti-hierarchy and anti-composition, that were current in minimalist schools of thought at that time making it (Banes, 1987: 44). This includes her attempt to choreograph from a stance of 'objectivity': for the work to be 'neutral' in relation to subjective and hierarchical dance conventions. Rainer's intention of being 'objective' in *Trio A* aims to avert the seduction of eye-contact with spectators, and focus on the kinaesthetic processes of the choreographed body, by inscribing through movement and testing such concepts as energy distribution, repetition and phrasing, in isolation from other perspectives of choreography, what she termed 'dancerly excesses' (Banes, 1987: 43-44; Banes, 1993: 242; Burt, 2004: 36). Through Rainer choreographing task-based 'pedestrian' movements in *Trio A*, she aimed to make anti-hierarchical 'dance for the people' where 'anyone' can perform *Trio A*. In this way, it is a dance that celebrates the labour of 'the people', not 'the elite', reflecting the anti-establishment political environment that was prominent at the time of its conception, that Burt notes Rainer consciously acknowledged in the dance (37). For her it was not difficult to learn even for 'non-technically-trained' dancers (Banes, 1987: 44-55).[123] In relation to these aims, she also intended the piece to be an 'anti-composition', particularly by avoiding the choreographic norms of separate movement phrases and sections and associated labour. Wiehager stresses that minimalists have endeavoured to be "anti-compositional" in this sense (2007: 3). This notion of 'anti-composition' is one that influences this project's approach to stilling, in the pausing of moving 'for the sake of itself' as an alternative to modernist dance and related theatre choreographic strategies.

If *Trio A* promises objective and neutral outcomes as a minimalist somatic test, it fails at this, because of their impossibility. To attempt to engage with objectivity, in terms of her kinaesthetic focus and endeavour to negate dance theatre codes of practice, is to attempt to

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[123] This was typical to the collective ethos of the Judson Church collective context with which she was a part. While for some *Trio A* is easy to learn and do, for others it is not, as Banes suggests (1987: 45). I have attempted to learn a section of the dance, finding it difficult to remember due to it having no pauses. Banes and Burt emphasise *Trio A* was not at the time of Judson an easy piece for many to follow, with its continuous series of movements. Audience dissatisfaction was shown in a range of ways, including one member holding up what could have appeared to be a white flag of surrender (Burt, 2004: 29-38). Less does not mean simple, and for the people does not always mean *for the people*.

prevent a consideration of what Read emphasises in the exceptional as un-concealing. By having faith in the 'objective' Rainer cannot escape the subjectivity of her position. What Read recognises in Agamben and others is a qualified dismantling of a thinking of the human in terms of subjectivity, with its implied 'objectivity' and the necessity to move beyond this binary. In contrast to Rainer's intention, *Trio A* does not present a sense of somatic or kinaesthetic truth. Rather, it presents a vocabulary that its performers and viewers can interpret according to their own differing perspectival norms, interpellated and underwritten by the other, and not by one single universal standpoint. In this sense, *Trio A* promises the conceptual failure in its promise of objectivity. Burt notes that Rainer herself has subsequently admitted enjoying the feeling she had in seducing her audience and being seduced by them (2004: 36), thus breaking her intended sense of performance neutrality and objectivity.

However, this reading of 'objectivity' differs to Burt's analysis of *Trio A*. He places the work as 'revolutionary' in its time, as Rainer choreographed it in a phenomenological sense so as to allow for movements and transitions between movements based on the time it takes "the actual weight of the body" to be moved, unlike classical ballet (2004: 35). In doing so, *Trio A* promises a sense of minimizing that emphasizes the role of the performer's manual labour. Burt adds that besides minimizing time, space and the dynamics of movement, Rainer set out to "deconstruct modes of performance and presence by disrupting the way the performer conventionally presented her- or himself to the audience" (36).

This chapter has aimed at a sustained and immersive discussion on the complex web of influences and precursors for my practice. It is not that we can plot a systematic and logical relation of inheritance. I am perhaps the bastard child of some, the legitimate heir of others, though my papers are not entirely in order and the death certificates are tatty and hard to decipher. There is no destiny to the collecting of this archive. It is as much accidental as rigorously researched. Research is more chance, passion, dissent and blinkered vision than it is the tranquil solitude of the one in search of knowing. I have attempted to keep my perspectives on these various practices corralled in the sense that they keep having boundary fences put up that signal the critical terrain of my research, Nietzschean in its 'grand style' and poststructuralist in its tiny tactics.

In what follows, Chapter 5, I will be setting out my methodology and my methods, how I have approached the task of researching and the tools that I use and abuse in keeping on track and finding my way.

Other Left
Foot

Ways of Researching

5

Provocations and Alibis

What do we call a provocation? Before all other senses of the word, a pro*vocation* proffers; it is the act of speaking. A speech act, so to speak. Perhaps every speech act acts like a provocation. Is to provoke not … to turn the initiative over to the word, which, like a foreword and in a thousand ways, *goes out ahead, to the front of the stage*: to expose itself or to dare, to face up to, here and now, right away, without delay and *without alibi*? (Derrida, 2002: *xv*)

[Oleg] Kulik would not appear to be interested in the dramatic 'as if', an alleged elsewhere in space extending beyond topology or geography that makes for so much drama, memorable nights in the theatre, good nights out. He is 'without alibi', to borrow a phrase from Jacques Derrida. (Read, 2004: 244)

The essence of what we today call science is research. In what does the essence of research consist? In the fact that knowing establishes itself as a procedure within some realm of what is, in nature or in history. Procedure does not mean here merely method or methodology. For every procedure already requires an open sphere in which it moves. And it is precisely the opening up of such a sphere that is the fundamental event in research. (Heidegger, 1977: 120)

Anyone familiar with research in the human sciences knows that, contrary to common opinion, a reflection on method usually follows practical application, rather than preceding it. It is a matter, then, of ultimate or penultimate thoughts, to be discussed among friends and colleagues, which can legitimately be articulated only after extensive research. (Agamben, 2009: 7)

It wasn't me

The philosopher Heidegger did not particularly like what "we" call science, what he called "science." His text, "Age of the World Picture," from which the above quote is taken presents a fairly unrelenting assault on the Cartesian tradition that turned us all into weapons of mass destruction, into an instrumental challenging forth of what is, via the rigour of a method that understands truth solely as verification, calculation and ratio (Heidegger, 1977: 115-154). Human being becomes part of the standing reserve for a productionist metaphysics that challenges forth. But already we have drifted into his question concerning technology. I am starting a "methods" chapter at this point for a few good reasons. I expect Nietzsche would have agreed. His gay science, as with Heidegger's *poesis*, aimed at radically rethinking the tasks of thinking that science needed to begin, notwithstanding Heidegger's summation that Nietzsche was the last of the metaphysicians and not the one to kick-start science thinking. I am corralled in this research with an institutional imprimatur that asks for my research methods. Heidegger's prognosis, I think, works both ways: science, instrumentally, is research whose rigour is based on experimental procedures holding to an open region grounded in hypotheses that confirm or deny a law. Equally, the moment we mention "research" regardless of its disciplinary drive or a-disciplinary *topos*, we find the whole chemistry set comes with it. The work of art or Live Art has to give up its truths, as critically post-structuralist as we want to be when it comes to "truth" as much as titanium alloys. We cannot let the work be. We entangle it in our will-to-knowledge, our will-to-power. So be it.

It is for this reason that I see, with the peculiar scope or open region of my research into choreographic idiocy (*myself*), that its methodology and methods stretch out a way, a path of thinking, as Heidegger liked to put it, somewhere between provocations and alibis, which is to say, somewhere between being without an alibi, without someone or something to secure my story, to verify it, and being able to call on all of my friends and acquaintances, even a few strangers whose numbers I got, to corroborate my story. First witness on the alibi: calling Jacques Derrida:

> To provoke, we were saying, is to go out ahead, put oneself forward: to expose oneself or to defy/dare/challenge, to face up to or confront, here and now, *without delay* and *without alibi*. Let us be attentive to this: although "alibi" means literally an *alleged* "elsewhere" in space, it extends beyond either topology or geography. "Without alibi" can mean *without delay*, without waiting. As an *allegation*, an alibi can

defer/differ in time. Referring back in this way, which an allegation always does, it can save itself by invoking another time ("I wasn't *there at the moment* of the crime" or "I was *already no longer there*" or "I was intending to go *there at another moment, later*," "I wasn't thinking of it *at that moment*").

We don't always need alibis, or indeed, find ourselves wanting for lack of an alibi. Nor do we need to be provocateurs, not all the time. Alibis and provocations are performatives in the context-bound sense of an 'event' where one's word is on trial, tested for veracity, measured with respect to the evidence at hand. This is such an event, this here and now. On the one hand, I have and will endlessly defer my word to the corroborative word of the other. Already my methods have been elucidated. They are Nietzschean, supported by Lepecki, sanctioned by Ronell, given the lie-detector test by Acconci or Nauman. I can endlessly differ and defer on myself: generally speaking during this test drive I was under the influence of "X." And it won't stop here. I will keep calling on those who can bring to accountability what are supposedly my practices, my thinking, my agency. In the face of this resolute *mineness*, everything that has been elaborated on, explained, referenced and discussed points to this selfhood shot through with, by and for the other. Interpellated, called up and shot down, this fragile I, the topic of our discussion, promising, failing and fallen, thrown into its being in a world, is, in Heidegger's language, a "they-self."

But I think Derrida is saying something else as well, with respect to the exposing of a provocation, a "without alibi." Agamben says something that resonates:

> Moreover, every inquiry in the human sciences—including the present reflection on method—should entail an archaeological vigilance. In other words, it must retrace its own trajectory back to the point where something remains obscure and unthematized. Only a thought that does not conceal its own unsaid—but constantly takes it up and elaborates it—may eventually lay claim to originality. (Agamben, 2009: 8)

While we are not human scientists, there is something to hold on to here in relation to the particularity of this research project, the contours and folds of its strategies and the entangled paths of its tactics. The archaeology of its knowledge is neither necessarily nor sufficiently accounted for in an exegetical document that reflects on the strata of knowing, the sediment and dust of its archives as well as on the turbulence of eruptive and settling forces that folded and refolded its tectonic plates. The 'research' does not even lie *in* this reflective documentation. It is elsewhere and without alibi. It is my 'front of stage' performative being-in performance, *avant la letter (l'etre)*, before a capacity to anticipate and recapitulate, before being itself, before the law, before hypotheses, what is "without delay," without waiting. This is my provocation, my call to research that leads no way back to, my originality. If, at the heart of things, we have recognised in 'choreography' a movement-writing that all-too-

quickly, without waiting, recalls *différance*, we need to ask what is yet unsaid in that call, that vocalisation. Derrida already warns in "Provocations," that too many have had what he (a)cutely names "premature conclusion," that too many have seen, politically-speaking, that *différance* is an alibi, a way of escaping or avoiding what exactly you are up to: what I am up to is not found here but there, not at this time but another, influences, networks, endless chains of deferrals and referrals (Derrida, 2002: xvi). He establishes a new test-bed: "What remains no doubt to be thought without alibi is precisely a differance without alibi; right there where, it's true, the same difference goes on endlessly producing irreducible effects of alibi through traces that refer to some other …" (xvi-xvii). This, I think, goes as well to the heart of the project for Lepecki and for Read, what they see in Live Art that most palpably exposes a simultaneity of the *originary* structuring of différance as well as an acute impossible in the without alibi of a différance, what Agamben, humbly, calls *originality*, the Agamben of the bio-politics of bare life. I glimpse it too but more so in what I do than what I think or write, in my "research practice," my studio musculature, my sweaty training, my senseless rehearsals and my performances.

My research is what is in current parlance termed "practice-led." Methodologically, this can be a hot topic in the combat zone of university doctoral degree committees that wonder, at times, how we let dancers and painters into the academy. Heidegger scoffs somewhere and sometime in the 1930s concerning the German university that they are now having degrees in packaging. What next? Rest his soul. Given what I have said above, particularly that I have already in every respect acknowledged my sources, copied their moves and adopted their thinking, there is not that much left to say, except to approach the unsaid concealed in this archaeology, in terms of what this body does to me. Though, initially, I want to defer to some of the current literature on practice-led research, as a way to navigate customs and immigration on this border crossing to academic adulthood. Hence, as a "bridge" between the practice-related literature and conceptual tools in the last section and the following chapters that discuss my choreographic practice, this chapter outlines the methodological approach of this practice-based research. Providing a methodology chapter at this point is intended to offer a sense of clarity over how I convey this research in the subsequent chapters. It provides contexts and points of departure for this methodology with current literature pertaining to practice-related performance research, particularly in relation to Robin Nelson (2006: 105-116) and Brad Haseman (2007: 147-152). This chapter discusses and contextualizes this methodology in general terms, while the following chapter, Chapter 6, *Without Delay*, outlines the test methodology frameworks of my choreographic practice. This methodology, as with what follows, defines 'testing' via Ronell: endless questioning, negating and affirming.

Practicing: researching: contexts: points of departure

Generally speaking, this project is *practice-as-research*, which is where, as Nelson states, creative arts performance practice is the focus of research (2006: 105-106). In this case, it is choreography in the expanded field. Moreover, it is *practice-led* research, where choreographic practice is carried out and critical reflections and insights, such as those of this exegesis, are formed in *response* to it. This methodology applies, among other things, performativity in its testing of my choreographic actions, in terms what Butler describes as 'authoritative acts', norms, normativity and normalisation as well as policing and interpellation. Haseman provides such a context when he situates practice-led research in performance as performative (2007: 147-152). Haseman (2007: 150) draws from Austin's definition of performativity as directive language, though he does not reference Butler. For Haseman, performativity is a useful methodological framework. When activated, it locates practice as the primary mode of research, where actions produced by performance practice direct conceptual insights and reflections into an un-concealing (ibid). This makes it *Practice-led* research, and not simply the *practice-as-research* that Nelson focuses on. The exegesis as document follows Estelle Barrett's proposition that the function of an exegesis in creative practice-led research is to be a "differential replication," interpretation, or "transduced" contextualization through writing of the "processes of enquiry" in practice and its innovation, *that is not of the same form as the practice-led research* (2007: 162). Despite the final performance for this research being 'submitted' *after* this exegesis, this text engages with practice-based processes that contribute to my final live performance, in addition to individual works that have contributed to its development. [124]

Nelson (2006: 105-106) provides a rationale for engaging with practice-as-research that serves as a point of departure for this project. For him, practice-as-research potentially challenges what he sees as more conventional modes of research that privilege the mind (ibid). He reinforces this proposition by stressing that practice involves discriminatory responses, which occur before codified symbols are used, and practice-based research engages with knowledge and questioning that is often not accounted for by rational argumentation and the expression of written words. This practice-led research, on the other hand, attempts to avoid a residual sense of Cartesian mind-body dualism embedded in Nelson's work. The research eschews an approach that maintains a duality of mind and

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[124] From a Heideggerian perspective, when it comes to the distance that separates the studio and performance space, we should be wary of a too categorical difference. Ontologically, when on stage, a performer may be closer to studio-practiced and inscribed traces than to an audience in front. Equally, when in a studio, the performer may be closer to a just-completed performance event than to an adjacent studio practitioner (Heidegger, 1996: 97-105)

body, *psyche* and *soma*. Though we have often discussed the 'somatic,' as a body's movement or have emphasised a Nietzschean and Foucauldian thinking of the body as traced surface of historical inscription, this *soma* is not a distilled and essential being in an economy of *psyche* and *soma*, as if choreography, history or knowing were reducible to psychosomatically relational questions. This practice-led research attempts to simultaneously integrate and interrogate practice with language and theory, where practice cannot be separated from language and theory, generating analysis and reflection, while being influenced by them. The test framework that this methodology uses, confounds, folds, mixes and at times confuses embodiment with analysis and reflection. The rationale for this entanglement is as follows: the primordial choreographic promises this choreographic practice makes (labouring, stilling and falling) essentially fold embodiment with language and theory. Foucault emphasises that genealogies are inscribed on the body and through language. Butler's performativity of identity happens through embodiment, a subjectification she infers as the "psychic life of power," the reading and writing by the other, as Derrida implies in "Otobiographies" is an embodied process for this project, and test-writing, for Ronell, is approached by this project through choreographing my live and fleshy body in what Heathfield terms "somatic-testing."

Quick's 'without alibi' on liveness, what is performed cannot be fully discussed, analysed, known while in process (2004: 93) provides an understanding for linking practice-led research with theoretical reflection with this project.[125] Reflection, via theory, in Nelson's words, often provides structured and sustained interpretations of the artist's "tacit knowledge" within practice, so that it is explicit and, therefore, accessible for 'research auditors' (2006: 112), no doubt, an aim of this exegesis. This bridge between practice-as-research and reflection is abetted by the inclusion of video documentation with the exegesis. Nelson quotes from Bernard Stiegler and Derrida, suggesting that there is no guarantee under law that the AV device is an official archive or form of evidence, despite how some maintain that it is. For Derrida, technics can never be testimony (112-113). However, Nelson goes on to suggest that AV documentation may be effective in practice-as-research when combined with auxiliary outputs. He adds that, 'triangulation', a methodological approach used in the social sciences, somewhat metaphorically, contributes to research that does not necessarily aim to produce a single reality. While it does not *accurately* capture the 'live' of performances for this research, and creates a new live, yet mediated, experience through the video monitor, video documentation that is included with this exegesis is intended to provide examples of the practice-led research development I have carried out and that has lead to

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[125] Note David Pears's observation, cited by Nelson, that in knowledge production, "practice nearly always comes first, and it is only later that people theorize about practice" (Nelson, 2006: 105-106).

my final performance. These are discussed in the following chapter. The videos give me an alibi, no doubt. I actually did do those things at such and such a time. But, crucially, we are wanting-to-come-to some recognition of the uncanny space of a without alibi of this alibi, where we palpably expose, unconceal, the unsaid in the archaically sedimented strata, what yet remains alive here, buried. My research is there, not here, not *simply* intended to support the testimony of my practice for readers of an exegesis to witness and reflect on in relation to this writing. Nelson's definition of 'testing' adds contextualization to this practice-led research's references to Ronell. For him, the 'testing' of 'human experience' and the "embodied knowledge" of time and space with the aim of new insights is done through "praxis" or "critical spatial practice" (Pearson cited in Nelson, 2006: 108).[126] In poststructural performance research, the term 'experience' refers to "knowing through doing" and "'experience' derives etymologically from the French 'to put to the test'" (George cited in Nelson, 2006: 111). Experiencing is thus experimenting, practice-leading research testing that this methodology performs.[127] 'Testing' for this research is multi-dimensional: sure there is paperwork beginning and end but also some bodywork sandwiched somewhere between. The bodywork is mine; the stop-watchers and being-counters fill out the scorecards and sign off on things. Hence the shuttle between the Nietzschean perspectives of Foucault's genealogies and Derrida's otobiographies in addition to Butler's performativity of identity. Of course *I am all of these*, many mortal souls, but discursively and non-discursively staked out like Foucault's proverbial line drawn in the sand, always threatened with erasure with every shore-line roll-in of a breaker. Indeed, the rationale for applying Ronell's perspective as the key to this methodological formulation or fabulation is because, at base, even a gay science is activated through testing and somatic testing of my choreographic practice drives me entirely.

This practice-led research's methodology is intended to be post-structural which Nelson sees, when it comes to practice-as-research, as aligning itself with methods of "creative play" (2006: 109). He presents 'play' here in terms of Derrida's *différance*: as "the sense of scope for movement" where "the possibility of infinite deferral suggests a free play beyond rule-

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[126] For Nelson (2006: 108) Lone Twin's *Streets of London* (2001) and *walk with me walk with me will somebody please walk with me* (2002) are examples of where this is done effectively. These performances, for Nelson, activate the liminal spaces between rational discourse and "embodied knowledge," providing new insights into time and space.

[127] Nelson also links experience as experimenting with phenomological practice-as-research. We have not discussed phenomenology as yet. Perhaps a footnote is where we should do it. Perhaps not. Suffice to say for the moment that this, methodologically speaking, is not a small issue. Whose phenomenology, for a start, whose intentionality will we make consciousness for: Hegel, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger? Then we need to account for the fact that there are only bad words Heidegger had to say about those who uttered the phrase "lived experience," and Derrida's never-ending undecidability on just what exactly is living, anyhow. For the moment, we are pleading mute on the defence of or deference to phenomenology.

governed activity" and a sense of simultaneous conceptual presence, absence and deferral (ibid). We have emphasised that *différance* is an essential conceptual hinge for this methodology, a test writing, a choreography. Concepts generated are not set in concrete as absolute, but undergo deferral, such as the promises of labouring, stilling and falling. From an otobiographic perspective, it is ultimately the deferral of 'me' or the other or both and neither that writes this practice. But we, as well, recognised the alibis that *différance* leaves in its wake: me, you, the other … who can say? What Nelson says and does, our very citing of Nelson on this score, cements or secretes, immures or conceals what precisely we need to be exposing: the without alibi of *différance*. This is not going to happen, not here at least. Nelson locates contemporary performance that activates "poststructural" reflections while engaging with play, via "a culture of scepticism about representation, relativism and multiple perspectives" (2006:109-110). He suggests that the scepticism of postmodernity and poststructuralism, in their debunking of modernist hierarchies and the privileging of mind and text lays open the legitimation of embodied experience as a terrain to be reflected on in performance practice-as-research (2006: 109). The methodological frameworks of poststructural performance practice, Nelson adds, produce outcomes that are "an indication that we know that we don't know and that you know that we don't know, and that you know we're not purporting to know absolutely" (2006:109-110). Hence poststructural performance research, as the test writing in this project, avoids answering its research questions in any definite or absolute manner. This testing calls for endless questioning, negating and affirming. Nelson adds contextualization to this: "contemporary creative artists are well-placed to illustrate the tensions between a lack of resolution and transparent representation and a need nevertheless for rigor in principles of composition beyond any inherited rules of the game" (2006:111). Yet these creatives are not a cop-out when it comes to the histories of their errors: they are not *unserious* in their potential to provide significant "new insights" into their contingent disciplines and inter-disciplinary practices (ibid.). Performativity, for Nelson, is a poststructural performance-as-research strategy, which "rejects grand narratives" like other poststructural models, while activating findings that endlessly defer, and link concepts with practice (2006:109-111).[128] We have lift-off. Our test-vehicle has just passed its warrant of fitness. Nelson equally stresses that poststructural research methods, such as performativity-based methods, have a conceptual structure that is rigorous, despite common misconceptions that they do not.

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[128] Nelson does not explain 'performativity' apart from stating that it has been used for the research of 'everyday life', conceptually restricted to being a normatively bound definition. We defer to Butler on this and 'performativity' is interpreted here, and in the rest of this chapter in reference to her writings.

Testing: processing

In due course, towards the end of this chapter, we will be presenting the diagram developed by Nelson in developing what he terms his "Dynamic Model" for practice-as-research. His model "dynamically" links up three key components or elements in the process or becoming actual of research: "Practitioner Knowledge, Conceptual Framework, Critical Reflection. While we see Nelson's model to have good explanatory effect, we recognise some problems with the ontologies of its categories. Our initial aim is to present another conception of a "dynamic" methodological model that aims to take on board what we see, methodologically speaking, as the difference between force and form such that the 'formalism' of a model, depicting forms of knowing will always already leave concealed the diagram of power productive of those forms. This understanding of "diagram" is particularly Deleuzian, which is to say, genealogically, Nietzschean (Deleuze, 1986: 70-93). From the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of structures, Nelson develops a methodology that is aborescent, tree-like. We aim rhizomatically, for the complicating of folds and the intersections of many lines (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 3-25).
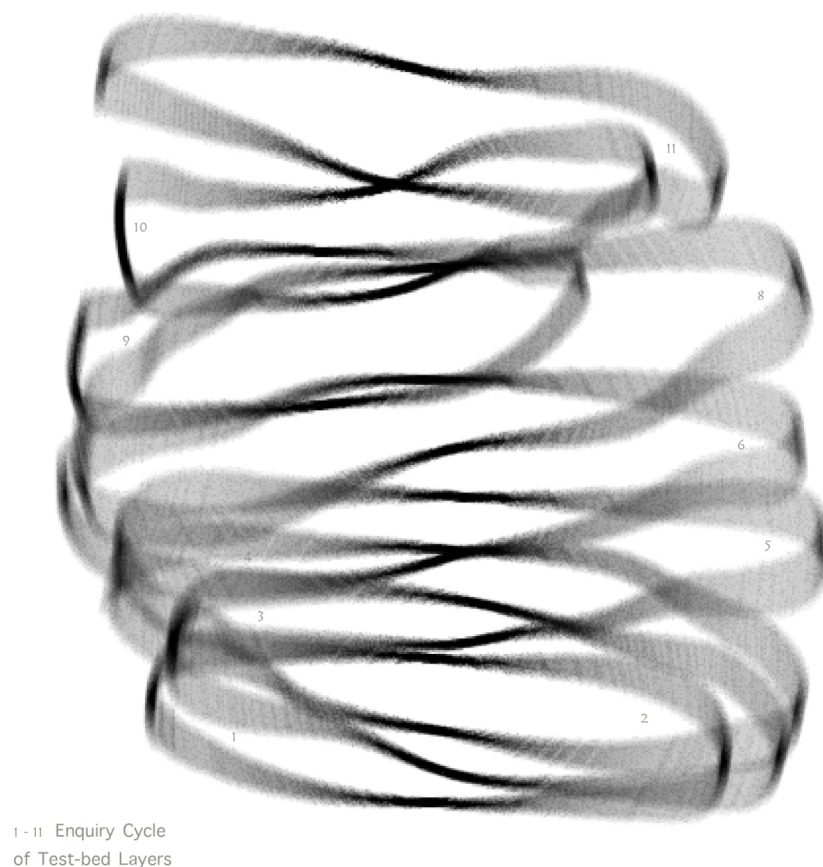

Figure 35. *Attempting the Acceptable: The test methodology framework For This Practice-Led Research*, Mark Harvey (2010).

1 - 11 Enquiry Cycle of Test-bed Layers

The above diagram (figure 35) of this practice-led methodology shows a series of its test-stages, where my practice is tested in relation to its key question. To recap, the key question for this research: *What can be discovered through a negotiation between performance art choreography and dance choreography within this choreographic practice – and how can testing as a method of interrogation be applied to this?* Returning to this methodological framework, we recognise a band or continuous surface that folds on itself, möibus-like, leaving somewhat undecidable a surface that would constitute an inner lining and one constituting an exteriority. We may take this "twisting" of the decidability of binaries, the making-undecidable, in terms of any number of key pairs of terms that circumscribe this project's open space of questioning, starting perhaps with what might seem like an historically derived or disciplinary-derived difference of 'dance choreography' and 'performance art'. Equally, this could be referring to *soma* and *psyche*, manual labour and conceptual labour, the material and the immaterial, the formalism and solipsism of Modernist choreography and a politico-ethical opening to 'conceptual dance'. Methodologically, we at once maintain these differences, recognise their contextual hierarchies, their 'naturalised' rationalisations, their prosthetic and technical artifices. We maintain all of these in order to confound a self's interiority and exteriority when it comes to how all of these couple with the human. The 'figure' is not, as with Nelson's diagram, the depicting of forms of knowing, forms of enquiry. Rather it is a 'diagram of power' that inscribes what cannot be inscripted, the becoming hollowed-out of the human in the capture of the unthought as conceiving, the unfelt as affecting and the invisible as perceiving. It looks more like a 'swarm,' more like a 'whirlwind', perhaps, than it does something that structurally says what is actually going on. It is allusive resonance, not being, libidinal band becoming folded self, not psychosomatic complementarities.

The con*figuration* itself shows how all of these 'components' in their anonymity are processed through 'reflection'. Within each test-stage my choreographic practice stands out as the key aspect, which influences and is influenced by these conceptual tools, such that otobiographies, genealogies and performativity are each emphasized within this test framework, contingent on the reflections that this choreographic practice calls up. The thickening depth of this diagram suggests how each test-stage leads to the next and the ones at the top and bottom refer to earlier and subsequent test-stages. These test-stages are one part of an iterative process of testing out this key question, involving making public performances and reflecting on what they performatively call up as 'discoveries and insights'. Butler's notion of iteration and repetition, borrowed, in part, from Derrida is activated in terms of my test-stages as test-writings repeated as a requirement for this project in order to convince the addressee (me, you) that my practice tests the key question, and without this repetition, it does not. It also promises that this project is developing according to normative

frameworks of 'acceptability.' The 'return' never quite returns. If it did, there would be no difference, no iteration, indeed no history, action or change: the end of history in Hegel's sense, the absolute negation of negation in a pure affirmation that absolutely returns to itself. Nietzsche's "twilight of the idols" throws the annular circuits of return as the ideality of the certainty of truth into erratic trajectories. The eternal return is not that kind of guarantee. Hence, the repetitions of this cycle of test-runs are neither a circle, nor the quaint geometry of the spiral, as if we do have lift-off while turning constantly on ourselves. Think Riemann rather than Newton, event horizons rather than a clockwork universe.[129] "Enquiry cycle" is a euphemism for something a little erratic rather than a stable mode of transport.

Of significance here is how this framework has been conceived in response to what this practice-led research has so far undertaken. In order to address this key question, I have produced a *string* of live performances involving choreographic manual labour, one after the other, that have built on what I have discovered in each performance before hand, as previous test-stages, in turn clarifying this methodology in subsequent moves. The test methodology framework has been developed in later stages of this project's 'enquiry cycle', in reflection on my public performances of *In the Round* (Harvey, 2005) and the *Wrap Me Up* series (Harvey, 2004-2008).[130] These are discussed in the next chapter. In their testing of the key question, my public performances consist of: physically strenuous postminimal choreographic actions (my body and voice) that appear normatively 'banal', performed by me, activating promises of my somatic labouring via repetition and endurance, in relation to promising the primordial notions of stilling, failing, falling and being fallen. The iterations of these test-stages are also a form of the "enquiry cycle" that Haseman discusses (2007: 151-152). Haseman's 'enquiry cycle' model contextualizes this methodology although it is significantly more *general* than Derrida's notion of iteration or Butler's perspective on repetition. Haseman infers that enquiry cycles involve performative practice-led research, having a sequential series of stages of making and performing (2007: 151-152). While the notion of an 'enquiry cycle' is more commonly associated with statistical and social science research that engages with positivist perspectives of objectivity and subjectivity, it need not be limited to this. It is useful for poststructural performative (performance) research like this because it implies processing and developing practice through stages of making, choreographing, performing, reviewing, and applying reflections into remaking, as many times as is required for the research project. The concept of 'enquiry cycle' at times is related to 'practitioner action research', though this refers to research development undergoing

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[129] It was Bernhard Riemann who pioneered non-Euclidean geometries in the nineteenth century, leading to an understanding of mathematical physics that opened the possibility of Einstein's theory of general relativity and the disciplinary field of mathematical topology.
[130] See the DVD accompanying this exegesis for excerpts of these performances.

particular stages in a cyclic manner and is thus more explicit about its sense of temporal development with practice-based research than is necessarily the case for 'practitioner action research'. Furthermore, the enquiry cycle of this research has allowed for *refining* in relation to theoretical reflection (via processing and reflection) and the resultant development of public performances, at later stages, with appropriate temporal delays, not just immediately. This is supported by Melrose's observation that while "theoretical production is usually a once-only affair for the spectator [of course, not for all] it might be the experience of months, if not years, of work [in preparation, rehearsal and performance] for those who make the theatre" (cited in Kelleher and Ridout, 2006: 3).

Through iteration and repetition, this enquiry cycle and these test-stages develop my testing of the key question, and in so doing performatively manoeuvre this choreographic practice into a sense of normative 'idiocy' or 'stupidity', through the repeating of what appears normatively 'pointless', and the continuous attempts at clarifying this 'idiotic' negotiation of dance and performance art choreography, through the disruptive yet productive primordial promises of labouring, including stilling, failing, falling and being fallen. This engagement with idiocy and stupidity ironically proves Nelson's point that poststructural practice-as research embraces a sense of not knowing what it will produce and never producing absolute and final answers. One is here reminded of Dany Nobus's book on Lacanian epistemology: *Knowing Nothing, Staying Stupid* (Quinn and Nobus, 2005). Nobus mentions Ronell but, like all good Lacanians, disagrees with her understanding of stupidity. Without this iteration of 'idiocy' this project's testing of its key question ceases to exist. There is no more choreographic idiocy, no more identity in Butler's sense of the performativity of identity. Other aspects of Ronell's test-plan apply here in relation to the test writing of stupidity and idiocy: promising an ETA; failure-at-normalisation, which ties up idiocy every time; a sense of 'habit', of aiming to be open to discovery, with rigor, and an intended sense of 'balance' between extremes of consistency and inconsistency with methodological strategies; relation to the experimenter's passions and personality, calling up Foucault's genealogies and Derrida's autos/otobiographies that each emphasise the personal histories of *me*, the author and researcher, in relation to my practice.

These materials—genealogies, autobiography/otobiographies and Butler's perspective of performativity—are called up by my attempt to activate iterative choreographic idiocy. By attempting to create idiotic actions that call to question and disrupt themselves, these concept-tools engage the questions my practice generates, including: 'why engage with this sense of self-questioning?'; 'what has led to this?' and 'what can be discovered by this?' These methods or 'ways' enable my practice to address these questions in negotiating dance and

performance art choreography, in tactically developing promising labouring, stilling, failing and falling and being fallen. These tactics call up a sense of inward examination of my practice, leading to my practice engaging and playing with the *disciplinary* notions of dance and performance art choreography. This includes practice-related genealogies and their impact on my *autobiography* as a practitioner, norms, normativity and normalisations associated with these genealogies in the sense of performing an identity as artist and choreographer. Derrida's 'otobiographies' provide this test framework with ways in which to approach and reflect on the 'authorship' and 'authority' of me, the tester, in relation to ways in which the other constitutes the locus of identity. I put to the foreground, to front of stage, provoke, even, my use of spoken text in this regard. We have sustained what seems as if a metaphoric closed circuit in the emphasis given so far, on the one hand to the 'call' and on the other hand to the 'ear,' as if we should have been looping them up in iterative repetitions. Of course, in our economy it is the ear that calls and we 'silently' respond in subject formations. I see my vocalisations, my voice commenting on my manual labour in 'real time' at once confirming the alibi of the elsewhere-confirmation of my identity formation as provocatively selling out this same self with a "without alibi" of parodic self-effacement as unconcealed exposure of this bare life, where my *authorship* is not absolute and there are no universalities, recognition of the force of the other. Nietzsche's 'I am my dead father and my living mother' is a grounding motif for a practice that draws from its / my histories that the other under*writes*. In the sense of a fall, '*verfallenheit*', 'thrownness' as Heidegger would say, or a *chance* throw of the falling dice, as Derrida interprets it, there is a sense of throwing them (i.e., my patrilineal name and my matrilineal living) up in the air, in terms of questioning and reprocessing what they mean, throwing dance and performance art choreographic perspectives into the air, leaving them to fall and disperse into primordial promises as labouring and stilling.

Foucault's approach to genealogy offers my practice ways to consider and approach the role of practice-related and personal genealogies within my practices in the testing of their key question. These genealogies locate and make legible my body, all the while themselves being traced and read through my body in its choreographic and somatic actions, my performance contexts, as well as my audience's somatic knowledge. There is no absolute sense of origin in this project's genealogical 'descent' and its moments of emergence or discovery. It calls for an examination of my own genealogies in their role of contaminating these practice related genealogies in dance, performance art, live art and so on. Butler's approach to performativity also provides this test framework ways to examine the negotiation of dance and performance art in my choreographic practice in relation to me the artist through norms and the formation of identity – through how this practice and I the artist are called up,

policed or interpellated by the other, through normalization and norms of 'acceptability'. Her notion of *fantasy* is understood here in terms of how my personality and passions influence and contaminate my choreographic testing. My own projections of what might and might not eventuate, in relation to viewers' experiences has a significant influence on how I design and analyse my solo performances as performances of solipsism. Put another way, I go solo because I am interested in exploring how dance and performance art is negotiated in *my* practice, with my body in front of an audience, not through with or along side another's performing body.[131] Butler's performativity of identity, Derrida's otobiographies, Foucault's genealogies and Ronell's emphasis on the personality and passions of the tester each provide conceptual frameworks that read, contextualize and respond to my performance of solipsism.[132] They provide the alibi. My performing, in itself, is without alibi.

Within this test framework my insights and discoveries at each test-stage are produced by me attempting to consider as many details as possible, in relation to how my practice engages with the key question: Derrida's (1985b: 50-52) call for "sensitivity" and "keenness" of the writer to listen, Foucault's call for the genealogist to meticulously examine and reflect on what is uncovered and Ronell's call for balance in experimental habit. This includes my recorded experiences and observations of my choreographic practice, reflections on video recordings of my performances, and informal responses from viewers. It is processed and reflected on in relation to practice-related literature, other's practices, related theory and also other practice related research frameworks, such as Haseman and Nelson.

The test-sites or locations for my public performances are not considered in this research as simply 'site-specific' but, rather, something more sensitive. As Miwon Kwon might suggest,

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[131] A Heideggerian would say that, primordially, I am being-with in the sense that to say I am alone, solo or individuated itself means I am essentially not-with. This somewhat inverts our usual reckoning, whereby we start with an individuated self and ask how is this self with others. A Heideggerian recognises that we are always already being-with and hence need to ask how we existentially go solo (Heidegger, 1996: 110-122)

[132] Initially this project veered towards the solitary for a pragmatic, though important, reason. In 2005 I was required to wait for ethics approval in order to have other bodies perform for me (understood at the time as 'research participants'), and I had to wait approximately a year for my application to be approved. In the mean time I started to make solo works to get around this hurdle. I ran with it. From these early enquiry cycles, I became focussed on performing solo for its critical implications, and this has continued in my project. It is important to note this for the clarification just made but also to emphasise the difficulty university ethics committees initially had with creative works ethics approvals. The delays had much to do with an ethics committee being pushed out of a research comfort zone and initially asking for extraordinarily complex procedural checks for quite commonplace activities in dance and performance art contexts. I am able to say that ethical approval would now be far swifter. These 'other bodies' would now normally not be considered 'research participants' and in most instances I would not require ethics approval. My primary supervisor was on the University Ethics Committee at that time and worked in a consolidated way to introduce creative works ethics protocols for a broad range of creative works research practices.

they are contaminated contexts and situations, differing and deferring grounds or perspective views (2004: 30-39). For Kwon, seeing public performance that engages a notion of 'site-specificity' is limited to seeing things as 'right' or 'wrong', as positivist and normative. Most public performance sites used for my performances in this project have so far been art galleries. The art gallery operates as a normalising context for performance art, and my focus on performance art has emerged through the visual arts. In recent years it has become a norm for dance choreography of the expanded field to be performed in art galleries.[133] But my research is not limited to these contexts. Theatres and experimental performance and live art performance spaces have also at times been used in this project, such as in my work *Check List* (2008) and different versions of my *Wrap Me Up* series (2004-2008).[134] These other sites allow for open-ended conceptual and experimental choreography, with their own performance genealogies and norms that are now often shared between one another and with art galleries, as many live artists like Goat Island and Forced Entertainment have shown. The exact site for the final submission of this project is not closed off or decided, in terms of it being in an art gallery, theatre, experimental or Live Art performance venue. Each of these possible locations holds currency for my practice, with its related norms and genealogies. What a 'gallery' or 'theatre' *is* resides within an open range of possibilities in the realms of choreography in the expanded field, its specific political, cultural and genealogical contexts as they relate to my project's contingencies.

As mentioned at the opening of this chapter, my perspective of testing *departs* from Nelson's practice-as-research 'Dynamic Model' (2006: 113-114):
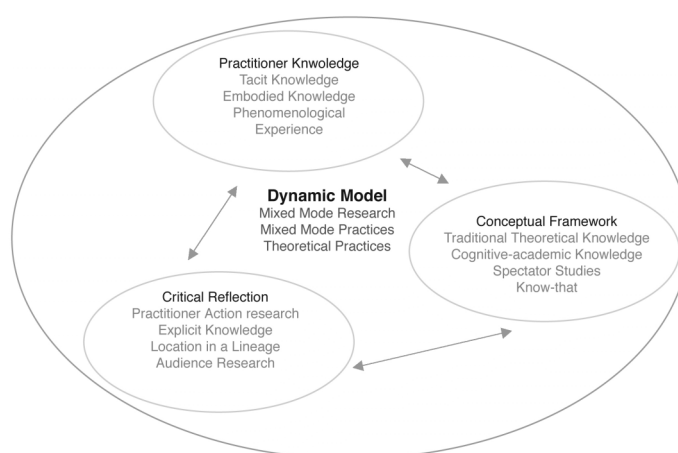
Figure 36. *An Acceptable Diagram: Nelson's 'Dynamic Model' for Practice-as-research* (2006: 114).

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[133] Examples are: La Ribot's *Panoramix* (2004) and also Sighal's *Instead Of Allowing Some Things To Rise Up To Your Face, Dancing Bruce And Dan And Other Things* (2000/2010).
[134] See the DVD accompanying this exegesis for excerpts of *Check List* and *Wrap Me Up, Make Me Happy: Infectious Optimism Remix*, which is a version of my *Wrap Me Up* series.

Nelson's model for practice-as-research (or 'Dynamic Model', figure 2) in general terms calls for performance practice that links each of the following knowledge producing areas: *Practitioner Knowledge*, *Critical Reflection* and *Conceptual Frameworks*.[135] For him, this approach provides the artist with the potential to shift the locating of knowledge from written and linguistic codes, across into embodied actions, through its activation of 'know-how', experience and relational approaches to knowledge acquisition (2006: 115). His model presents discrete formations of knowledge acquisition requiring a circuit of interstitial linkages that this project has tended to avoid. While not coming out and saying it, Nelson, if tested, would ultimately fall back on a Cartesian legacy for a subject-agent who acts in and with a world of things. So why mention it? Why present it here? Within the emerging doxa or lodged within the grab-bag panoply of research approaches in the creative sectors of university higher education, Nelson's "practice-as-research" has "*legs*" as they say in French, "legacy" something behind it and a future. We do not think it is stupid. Far from it: it is explanatory, logical and concise. But, generally speaking, our test methodology (figure 1) blurs Nelson's "headings" into a kind of superimposition of choreographic practice and conceptual tools, a kind of "without waiting" that Derrida was getting at when he provokes us with a "without alibi." We don't practice and then wait for the hammer to come down. And why wouldn't a "reflection" quicken the heart a little? We emphasize that Nelson's notions of 'Practitioner Knowledge', 'Critical Reflection' and a 'Conceptual Framework' are not separate in a way that they need to be linked, but simultaneously merge and shuttle between one another, emphasising this test framework's sense of intended methodological *idiocy* in its lack of accountability for any one of its components.

In reference to Nelson's 'Practitioner Knowledge', my sense of 'lived experience' while choreographing, performing and recalling my public performances is significant in calling up my processing and reflection in each of my test-stages.[136] In terms of this enquiry cycle encompassing Nelson's 'embodied knowledge' and making 'tacit knowledge' explicit in my

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[135] Nelson's "Practitioner Knowledge" involves 'tacit knowledge' of the artist and his or her processes, 'embodied knowledge' of the performance practice, 'phenomenological experience', and 'know-how' or technical skills to do with forms used in the practice, so that artists 'know how to make things' but not what they are as facts; 2006: 107-114). Critical Reflection includes 'practitioner action research' where the practice is refined and developed towards a research goal; 'explicit knowledge' or explicit articulation of knowledge generated by practice and conceptually informed reflections; 'location in a lineage' of practices, research approaches and conceptual perspectives; and 'audience research' in considering audience contexts and so forth. The third component of Nelson's model, Conceptual Frameworks refers to 'traditional theoretical knowledge' such as theoretical frameworks; 'cognitive-academic knowledge' or theory to do with the understanding and processing of information for the practice-as-research topic and field; 'spectator studies', and 'know-that' or ontological knowledge.

[136] While Nelson engages us in a methodology that he broadly understands as phenomenological, we are still deliberating on how we reconcile phenomenology with our star witnesses who all lived through its waxing in one form or another. Our aim is to tackle this head on at the opening to Chapter 6, the chapter that discusses why I perform so well.

choreographic practice, two strategies of activating this include, firstly my use of choreographic scripts or the performative instructions I give to myself to perform actions that set specific goals in Nelson's terms (2006: 113-114). Secondly, there is the contextualising of my choreographic practice through the ongoing research, writing and re-writing of this exegesis. 'Audience Research' is combined with 'Spectator Studies' and consists of my observations on my viewers, in addition to being integrated with 'lineages' through the genealogical, performativitive and otobiographic components of this methodology. This project draws from reflections on how spectators are portrayed in the performance practices of others, such as in galleries in Graham's *Performer/audience/mirror* (1976/2006) and La Ribot's *Panoramix* (2004), where they sit and stand around these performances and are thus implicated within them. It also includes considering how audiences are present in different ways in dance theatre works like Bausch's *Café Muller* (1978), in their omnipresent role of sitting and watching what lies within the proscenium arch. In this way, differences and similarities of how dance and performance art choreography are responded to by audiences are considered, and this further informs my choreographic decisions for negotiating between dance and performance art choreographic strategies in my test-performances. 'Cognitive-academic knowledge' in this research draws from perspectives of somatics and choreographic crafting, particularly from my own practice genealogies in dance technique, dance choreography and performance art making, training and conditioning, as well as, to a lesser degree, with Fortin's (2009) perspective on somatic knowledge. In terms of 'know-that', this research progresses through the many insights that I have developed from engaging with it. My negotiation of dance and performance art choreography has resulted in foregrounding processes of choreographic manual labour in terms of workload, effort and repetition. 'Know that' includes knowledge I have brought to this research beforehand, from my previous choreographic training and performance related experiences but also from my previous university degrees, my teaching and other research endeavours and the milieu of colleagues, friends, detractors and admirers, local and international, who give me more than, at times, I need to know.

This chapter has dealt with one half of the things I need to say about my 'way,' my '*methodos*,' ways of research, ways that it happens. If this chapter has particularly focused on the alibi, on calling key witnesses to support my story, my claims and supposed insights (and I have, you might say, mentioned them by name often enough), Chapter 6 takes us elsewhere, to the 'there' of provocations, to an exposition without alibi, exposition of being alive, front of stage, showing all.

6

Without Delay

The word "phenomenon" has its origin in the Greek terms *phainomenon* which derives from *phainesthai*, showing itself. A phenomenon is thus that which shows itself as something showing itself. This means that it is itself there and is not merely represented in some manner, examined indirectly, or somehow reconstructed. "Phenomenon" is a mode of being-an-object and indeed a distinctive one: being-present as an object from out of itself. This initially says nothing at all about the content of the subject matter, it gives no directive to a definitive domain of subject matter. "Phenomenon" means a distinctive mode of being-an-object. (Heidegger, 1999: 53)

Here is a question that will stay with us from now on out and that later we will have to evaluate for its properly political sense: Is it possible to lie to oneself, and does every kind of self-deception, every ruse with oneself, deserve to be called a lie? (Derrida, 2002: 31)

Turning to phenomenology, a now century-old philosophical tradition, (established by Husserl in *Logische Untersuchungen*, 1900-1901), it is equally unsurprising that dancers and physical theatre practitioners have sought to align their practice-as-research projects with key aspects of its approaches. (Nelson, 2007: 110)

There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience. (Kant, 1985: 41)

I must try harder …

The opening sentence to Alan Read's contribution to the *Live: Art and Performance* anthology, "Say Performance" keeps intriguing me, has intrigued me from the moment I read it: "Live Art is barely live and barely art. In this exposed state it is absolutely exceptional." The title itself, "Say Performance," is pro-vocative, a call to speak out, provocatively provocative, performatively so. Then it counter-plays or counter poises Read's name, what you precisely do not "say," folding something barely intended (or not) as text performing itself. Read plays homophonically with the barely bare, a doubling, at once! Live is barely alive in the sense of the alibis that conceal its happening "now," the machinery of institutionally mediated representational and instrumental ploys that deliver a 'product' or 'package' so many units of consumption, what Read calls a "continuous state of manufacture" (Read, 2004: 243). Live is bare, exceptionally, in a way that Read, rubbing shoulders with Agamben, suggests we recognise the bio-political substance of modernity as bare life.[137] This is not *rare* life, exceptional in that sense. It is everywhere but we have to ourselves be without alibi to encounter it. It seems to me that there is an understanding of 'phenomenology' a *doxa* of phenomenology, an 'off-the-shelf' phenomenology that does the job, that keeps the live barely there in the ways it keeps the alibis coming, a "turning" to phenomenology that is "unsurprising" in the fields of dance choreography and performance. There is a popularity with a phenomenology particularly derived from the work of Merleau-Ponty, the "flesh-of-the-world" *chiasmatic* phenomenology that manages to keep subjects and objects installed, keeps "intentional consciousness for" installed, keeps the egoistic Cartesian subject installed. After all, it was not for nothing that Husserl wrote a book *Cartesian Meditations*, nor for nothing that Heidegger got a little angry with those French phenomenologists and existentialists who read his work with Descartes marking their test-papers. Barely live, barely art are things to think about, but how? This chapter aims to explore these in what I want to call a phenomenology of practice, but not, strictly speaking, a phenomenology with alibis, or not quite. This 'phenomenology of practice' is an encounter with its modes of being such that my practice happens in the ways it does, the modalities of its existence, the structures by which it is in its world.

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[137] See Read's *Theatre, Intimacy and Engagement* (2008) for his more recent reflections in relation to this topic. This text opens to a broader series of concerns than those specifically germane to this thesis. I aim to engage more fully with these in the future. The notions of plasma and "plasma performance" as a means of surpassing phenomenology, anthropology, sociology, "Political Theatre" and "Social Theatre" are particularly of interest (2008: 45-46).

Derrida "invented" deconstruction, all of those early stunning moves in philosophy, researching and 'deconstructing' Husserl, in particular time consciousness and an understanding of immediacy in Husserlian intentional consciousness. *Différance*, no doubt, is hugely indebted to the thinking of Husserl's student, Heidegger, though it radically deconstructs the spatio-temporality of pro- and retention in Husserl's understanding of time-consciousness.[138] Derrida deconstructs the immediacy of an originary origin, the without delay of origin as such. What, then, is he doing with the "without alibi," the "without delay" of *Différance*? The question of temporality is important. Lepecki has emphasised temporality as crucial for understanding not simply the emergence of dance as a time-based art. Less superficially, he emphasises Modernity's profound understanding of temporality in the fleeting moment that vanishes and the melancholy for a fundamental loss. Walter Benjamin summed it up in a short aphoristic equation: "fashion and death" (Benjamin, 1999: 62-81). Dance emerges as a redemptive encounter with melancholic time. It, literally, *keeps* time. The price paid here is not temporal but spatial. Keeping time is an immuring and solipsistic project. It breeds individuals as well as the uncanny: a haunting return, what indeed founds psychoanalysis with compulsive *repetition* disorders. Lepecki suggests there is something horizonally disclosed that disturbs that haunt of choreography's vanishing point. We note also, and elsewhere, Derrida's "I mourn, therefore I am," but understood in what he sees as a "new" work of mourning, one that radically deconstructs the certainty we have between the living and the dead, such that the "lost object" no longer becomes the oscillating locus that shores up each time what is real and what is not (Derrida, 1995:30-77). This would be a "without alibi" of mourning, the bare and exceptional life of mourning. But in this time, temporality would not be in question, or the question. The "without delay" is not "immediacy," the immediacy of perceptions in lived experience or the "now" time of one's existence. Then what is it? In a sense, I don't know and this is what I want to explore in a phenomenology of practice that attempts to write the provocation of a "without delay" in its testimony and evidence, such that the in-itself of what it is shows itself.

Initially this task seems like a strange one, a peculiar one. After all, it is my work, solely my work. I worked it up from nothing, developed it and performed it. There should be no obstacle to my exposition on it. I am closest to it and it closest to me. As my work, it "belongs" to me and there is nothing that I do not know, or should not know about it. So, should not this exposition be the simplest task? But, is this actually the case? Can it not often be that it is precisely what is supposedly closest to me that is most distant, least

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[138] Husserl's text was *The Origin of Geometry* (Derrida, 1989).

understandable, most closed off? So, without delay, I should begin. Yet, it is precisely this immediacy of an auto-perception that is most question-worthy, that requires a way or method of enquiry that asks not what is this work that I have done, but how am I as the one who supposedly does this work. How am I? This means how do "I" get carried along in the awhile of what "I" am doing. How goes it with me? We again engage a temporality, but one that shows itself neither strictly speaking as clock time nor as subjective duration of lived experience but as modalities of "passing time," not as time-passed but as ways this "I" gets carried along. We engage with four works that have been undertaken during my candidature, which is to say four ways by which "I" have been carried along for something that, institutionally speaking, is finite and measurable time. Though "I" am in both of these "worlds," they cannot be easily collapsed to the same. The four works will be discussed as they unfolded in my enquiry cycles—in the order in which they were developed and performed during candidature, though there are instances of repetitions of performances that do not make this a strictly linear temporal unfolding. While discrete in terms of concerns and name, we will recognise that there are aspects of earlier works that are carried over into later ones, just as there are certain fundamental structures to all of the works that are, perhaps, primordial to what I consider to be the very possibility of performance. This discussion also carries along with it aspects of what has already been read in terms of concerns and thematics, the questioning of idiocy in choreography, the structuring role of promising, stilling, failing, falling, being fallen, minimising, and repairing as the potentiality for return.

We have already recognised some important ways by which these works work. They are "in time" in a way that many things are not, though all things are "in time" in particular ways of time's disclosure. Certainly a book is in time, in the sense that it "took" time to write and "takes" time to read. Equally, the thing 'book' is for a while in the world. But it is not in the world in the sense that a performance is. I cannot *have* the performance on my bookshelf except as a book. I cannot pick up and put down the performance if I am a little sleepy or bored. I can sleep through the performance, think about what I should otherwise be doing, and thereby *miss* it. I do not miss the book in the same way when I put it to one side. I am carried along with the performance differently. When "making" a performance, I don't have maquettes or models or drafts in the sense that I have when making an object. I can have these, and theatre often employs them in the setting-up of a work, though in being carried along in the performance these things are left behind. Certainly a performance is a thing or an object, a phenomenon that shows itself, but the manner by which "I" am able to go along with it fundamentally differs to that of an artwork as object. Equally, I am able to not go along with a performance, to be closed-off to it and, indeed, encounter it as I would an

object such as a book, table or painting. Yet the performance as work lets me "carry over" something from one work to another. That something can be "carried over" suggests that a performance work is made up of things that can equally be left behind. In what manner are things left behind or brought along that is peculiar for performance? Or is performance, like everything else, something that we can simply take or leave? But again how so? And I have suggested fundamental structures for performance. Would these structures close off performance to other practices or rather be the opening horizon for what earlier we termed an expanded field? We have suggested two here: performance carries us along in particular ways and carries over in particular ways. Crucially, what carries us along is as well what may be carried over or left behind. Would these structures, in fact, be closer to what Derrida calls "undecidables," than they would be to boundary markers?

I began dance at nineteen, so as to attempt to disrupt my identity and surrounding cultural environment as a Kiwi/Anglo-Saxon heterosexual male and its associated norms to do with somatophobia and gender roles, with the aim of finding alternative ways of identifying as being male.[139] I later began performance art in order to primarily disrupt many of the codified norms of modernist dance, such as the need to perform with motility and conforming to specific movement vocabularies, in order to discover new ways of performing somatically. I have now 'come full circle'. I am now attempting to activate *idiocy* in relation to dance and performance art simultaneously. The *desire* to disrupt cultural norms is something I have had as part of my sense of identity since being a young child who has 'normal' hearing, with profoundly deaf parents. I therefore in part identified as 'deaf' at times, and have been cultured into questioning, negating and affirming surrounding 'hearing' society precisely in terms of power-relationships that have everything to do with social inclusion and exclusion, figures of authority, who I often experienced as misunderstanding deaf social codes, and associated perceptions of 'seriousness'.[140] This 'call to stupidity' in my being in the world has never been simply concerned with undermining societal and artistic norms; rather, it has always been in the spirit of learning.[141] While, in part I draw from informal audience feedback in relation to this analysis of my practice, I process it through my perceptions of it,

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[139] When my father found out that I was a dancer he said he was very disappointed in me and said it was 'poofie'. I was delighted with his reaction.

[140] While the term 'desire' (as with 'drive') has a psychoanalytic register, we relate it more generally in terms of 'passion' and 'personality'. We all know that 'secretly' Freud borrowed the word from Nietzsche. I *identify* as being deaf due to my upbringing, despite not being physiologically deaf. I am deaf and I am not. I have embodied and internalised many codes of behaviour common to deaf people in my surroundings, through my parents, other deaf family members and family friends. No wonder *The Ear of the Other*. Maybe Freud was right after all!

[141] This is the same reason I choose to make experimental performance—in order to stimulate learning for me and for others.

via test reflections.[142] Yet, what I recall in this chapter is not the absolute truth of what has occurred in my practice but the work of a faulty witness, human, all too human. These traces of contingent histories (of this practice and me), and the role of the other in writing and calling it up are a function of my personality, passions, ideals and fantasies. In places, this chapter aims to investigate these in listening to my practice-led research, so as to consider how they influence my engagement with the key question of this research. As a form of practice-as-identity, this chapter (and the next) remind us that identities can never be fully remembered and therefore accurately iterated as this project's ontology is in a constant state of displacement.

This chapter also presents a narration of how these traces are left on my body (as the artist) through my choreographic actions. I do this by describing my body while performing and, in one case, choreographing, as testing recalls. This is done in relation to my reflections on the writing and practices of others, my recollections of viewers' informal verbal responses that I receive during and after my performances, in addition to my responses to viewing video footage of my performances. Yet, the project continually reveals the unintended, as with the legacies of performance artists like Graham. These discoveries and insights are often unintended as I cannot see clearly in advance or anticipate what my practice will call up. Each time I make and perform a test-choreography, I attempt to 'toss' my previous discoveries, potential choreographic possibilities, my body and its conditioning, and related contexts and contingencies 'in the air' through idiotic and endless questioning, negating and affirming, without knowing how they will land, and only once they have landed in each test-stage of this enquiry cycle have I attempted to read them as 'embodied knowledge' that informs my subsequent choreographic decisions. Each time I make my performances I set a choreographic script that is an informal list of tasks that serve as a set of rules by which I perform, and hopefully discover what I do not intend. When I have reflected back on my performances I have 'dug up what I have tried to hide', as this chapter aims to show in places. In my reflections on my practice in each of my test-stages, I observe the haunting of concepts, theories, and personal and practice-related genealogies, such as other artist's practices and related norms. By haunting, I refer to a form of pervasive influence that comes when I have not intended it.

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[142] While considering my 'lived experiences' in this research (including my observations of audience responses) may be considered phenomenological, this project complicates things through a Nietzschean test framework embracing endless questioning, negating and affirming, with emphasis on stupidity. I am trying to listen more closely here to the readouts from the test procedures, listening to myself for a change. Kelleher and Ridout cite Mike Pearson that in contrast to most performance writing which is approached from the spectator's perspective, there should be more "closer listening to – what practitioners themselves perceive that they are doing" (2006: 112).

This chapter is structured as follows: *Test-working* describes the phenomenon 'idiotic choreographing of somatic labour', in discussion of my performance *In the Round* (Harvey, 31st August, 2005). This work's *process* is described in discussion on my test methodology. The second section, *Stilling*, discusses the performance work *Check List* (Harvey, 15th March, 2008), in describing the phenomenon 'stilling'. We have previously discussed the significance of 'stilling' for a fundamental dis- and relocation of the phenomenal understanding of 'movement' for choreography. Lastly, in *Falling: Being Fallen*, the phenomenal occurrences of 'falling and being fallen' are described in discussion of my public performance *Wrap Me Up, Make Me Happy: Infectious Optimism Remix* (Harvey, 2nd September, 2006), from my *Wrap Me Up* series (Harvey, Auckland, Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, New Plymouth, Copenhagen, Kuala Lumpur, 2004-2008). *Performance: Arrival: Bullshit* (Harvey, 28th November, 2009) from my *Bullshitter* series (Harvey, Auckland, Croatia, 2008-2009) is also discussed in relation to this. The phenomenon of minimizing is folded through these sections, because of how these other phenomenon's draw from it. Documentation of these performances is also provided on the DVD that accompanies the exegesis.

Test-working

Test Working discusses my idiotic promises of labouring and working in my live solo performance *In the Round*, performed at St Paul Street gallery, AUT, 31st August, 2005, in the group experimental performance event, *Lazy Susan and Smelly John* (Harvey, 2005).[143] *In the Round* was choreographed and performed at an early stage of this enquiry cycle. This discussion of its studio development and some aspects of its public showing describes how the choreographic labour in this practice leads to the generation of concepts. We recognise this as a departure from the norm of conceptual dance choreography that foregrounds concept formations of a work, a political efficacy of performance and a critical engagement with its forms and institutional formations.[144] Labour is disclosed not as that which goes into producing, that someone sells like so much raw material, nor as a measure of energy expended in a task, which does not necessarily aim to produce something tangible. Rather it is disclosed as a promise, a potentiality but, equally, as *promise*, an impotentiality, a potentiality to not-be, as waiting for something that will not arise, or a suspension of

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[143] I also curated this event.
[144] We should be clear that this project's concerns embrace all of these and attempt to engage with them fully. However, this project aims at a general economy of work such that the difference of 'manual' and the 'conceptual' is always already in play. In truth they are undecidable. Where would one actually draw a demarcating line? This project's performatives attempt to enact the ongoing erasing of that line that forever constitutes the broader context and possibility for performance.

something that refuses to be activated. In this sense 'labour' is a not-yet rather than a doing now or a having done. Labour, as a not-yet promising, is, in this sense, primordial. It is what this practice calls up and was always already, as a not-yet, my sense of identity growing up among tradesmen and sports fanatics, being policed into 'their ways' of valuing a sense of 'work ethic'. My obsession to engage with manual labour is another reason I took up dance, and why I promise labouring here.

In the Round: In the studio

As with my more recent works, I began this test-stage by choreographing *In the Round* in response to previous works of mine, aiming to activate 'idiocy'. I only recognize this long afterwards, by disrupting my choreographic labour and its contingencies. At the time of making *In the Round*, my key question was concerned with what it means to 'perform acceptability', and the concepts of testing, idiocy and my activation of a Nietzschean framework were not yet recognized in this work. This comes later, in response to my performance *Check List* (Harvey, 2008), though is visible in looking back at *In the Round*. I began *In the Round* as an attempt to leave behind an earlier key question that focused on what it means to 'perform the notion of the white man'. My performances at the time, as I was informed, did not adequately address this notion but rather questioned norms of 'acceptability' to do with my and others' performances. This had become apparent in my earlier test-stages, such as with *Spleen Dream Digger* (Harvey, 5th March, Corban Estate, Auckland, 2005), where I dug a trench in the dark in order to find my way to stage light at an outside public art and performance festival, titled *Gleem* (Turner, 2005). I was here attempting to question the values of overt theatrical spectacle. There was also *Calling the Guise* (2nd August, 2005), where I attempted to perform a séance in order to investigate how I engage with notions of white masculinity. Resultantly, I aimed to play with a power dynamic of authority and control in order to more explicitly activate questions concerning the normative field of 'acceptability' for both the audience and me the choreographic performer.[145] This is where spectators are invited to assume the role of judge over my choreographic labour, with the power to evaluate my practice in terms of 'acceptability'. I intended to perform with my body on the floor, with strenuous labour that is repetitive, in order to explicitly play with positioning myself as subordinate to my audience, where I am the servant of their gaze with repetitive minimal labour that emphasizes that I do it only for

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[145] I was thinking particularly of Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic, the 'centre-piece' of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, though more general formulations of power and authority from Butler or Foucault would be equally appropriate.

evaluation. In looking back at this goal, it became clear that I had intended to test with *idiocy* by simultaneously questioning, negating and affirming norms in how the audience *and* I judge my work efforts, in order to encourage them to gain more insight into both my practice and this field of practice: the *idiot savant*, the mad professor, teaching by doing. I took this 'idiocy' into 'the studio' as I began to choreograph, and I did it at the site where my performance took place, St Paul St Gallery.

As with how I began the test-stages of all of my later live performances, with *In the Round* I improvised with the aim of performing strenuous and repetitive 'banal' actions, that in normative terms are not themselves taken 'seriously' as modes of 'productive labour', particularly in terms of the norms by which I am policed with my embodied knowledge via Modern dance training, and being the son of a bricklayer and stonemason. Yet, the performance of the 'banal' is often taken very 'seriously' when it comes to performance art. This improvisation is a 'labour of play' of repetitive somatic actions, reminding me of Kent de Spain's (2003:27-40) notion of improvisation, as "a way of being present in the moment" with actions that are not wholeheartedly planned.[146] Within my framework of test-idiocy I allowed my actions to take on 'banalities' that I had not planned or intended, through a concise and minimal choreographic script:

>   *Climbing, rolling and tumbling.*

This script is intended to situate my labouring body on the horizontal plane of the floor, in a locale of 'servitude' as I project my imagined audience. As response to my choreographic script, I do army rolls, forward roles and attempt to grab at the floor to pull myself forward while lying face down. These actions each appear 'like accidents'. By repeating them I try to work without thinking about these actions, to investigate what might arise from them. This repetition also evokes how endless the process of seeking scrutiny and being scrutinized by spectators can appear when I perform. I am constantly evaluating my different cycles of repeated actions, especially when I watch video recordings of them. I base my judgements and selection of actions via dance and performance art conditioning, with a 'critical eye', searching for whatever might serve my investigation of 'acceptability' and my servitude.[147] In the middle of this process I find a toilet plunger while 'zipping' out of the studio for a

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[146] Tsoutas locates live performance as 'being in the moment' (2006: 3).'Being in the moment' generally in the context of live art and choreography of the expanded field refers to a sense of focussing on the current moment 'in time' for the performer, where he or she attempts to be alert to and conscious of his or her body and surroundings, and responding with his or her body based on this experience.

[147] Gillick's notes, wryly, that artists who research conform to the institutional norm of being 'good workers' (2010: 27).

moment. I try pulling myself along the floor with it. With this 'pointless' and 'foolish' action, I *imagine* that I'm a rock climber or a movie character using sucker-pad devices to climb glass buildings, frequent daydreams and desires from my youth that appear 'idiotic' and pointless in the present context. I have my body pressed facedown on the concrete floor. I grab the plungers on the floor beside my head, which causes my upper body to lift up off the floor, and I pull myself along. I only use my arms and what they connect to in my back and chest to move forward. I look slightly ahead of myself, using my peripheral vision so as to navigate. The rest of my body is limp, and I can feel it pressing into the floor with the force of gravity, especially when I breathe. It is as though my arms need to carry my body through this task. In doing so, my arms and hands *promise* a sense of purpose for me as I watch myself do this. I keep going and going, I get puffed. I feel the effort of doing this, but I keep going, continually promising with it. The more I go, the more I want to keep doing it because I associate the action with a sense of servitude, that potentially opens itself to audience scrutiny, that also feels addictive for me. I get into a rhythm with it. I go quick, then quick, and then slow— again and again—with a grab-grab with my hands on the plungers, then a tense and slow pull of my body to the plungers, again and again. In between each set of plunge-crawls, I rest completely on the floor, apart from keeping my hands on the plungers. I feel the grit on the concrete floor pressing into my forehead and bare forearms. The concrete floor is hard, for some, unwelcoming. For me it enhances my fantasy that I will serve my audience with this action. This is a rehearsal; they are not yet present. I am a cleaner or some kind of tradesman working on the floor of the master.

The following week, while I was attempting to experiment repeating this action, a friend walked into the studio and watched me doing this: an audience. While plunging, I look at her and ask: "what do you think?" "How does this look?' "Is this ok?" These are questions concerning style, concerning technique but also questions concerning how she is "carried along." She is not the one moving; she does not move in fact. The being-carried along is a way of being-in performance that is open. She might equally be not-carried-along. She says: "yeah it's ok." I notice our one-sided conversation. It 'reflects' on my manual labour of plunge-pulling through the ephemeral labour of speaking, another way of being-with than solely through a being carried along with actions. This opened the potentially subservient position of me inviting my audience to reflect on its role as witness to what I am doing. After playing with lines like these, I chose to accompany my plunging labour with text very similar to this. Resultantly, I set *In the Round* with the choreographic script:

Perform by plunge-pulling myself along the floor lying face-down while asking both you (me) and my audience after every two sets of plunging or so… "is this ok(?)", "how about that?", "should I go there(?)", "what about that(?)", going quick-quick-slow.

I set a travelling trajectory to trace the gallery perimeter, so as to be less likely to bump into other performers during this performance event, and to integrate my position as the curator of this performance event.

In the Round: with an audience

I begin performing *In the Round* just after I give a public speech of welcome in my role as the curator of this performance event. I get changed in private into white trousers, shirt and shoes, and then begin my plunge-task, while the ten other artists begin their performances and performance installations. The room is noisy and crowded, more than I expected. At different times while plunging I feel people gathering near me. I cannot see them. I do not look up while I plunge. Some are sporadically answering me back, saying a range of things such as 'that's ok', 'yip, that's good Mark', or humorously with comments like 'no that's not ok Mark' 'no, that's not enough' and 'yip, nearly there Mark'. As I commence it feels easy. After what seems like five minutes, it gets successively harder for me. I feel strain throughout my arms, shoulders and back. After what seems like twenty minutes, the pain subsides to a low-level strain and I find myself relaxing somewhat into the task of plunging. I continue for about two and a half hours without noticing how long it takes, until someone, standing in my way, tells me that I have to stop as nearly everyone else has given up and left.

Figure 35. *In the Round*, Mark Harvey, 2005, Video Stills).

With *In the Round* I am constantly thinking through my body via a range of insights: what does this viewer think of this action in how I somatically coordinate it. Is it a 'good' pull or 'not'? I fantasize those viewing judging certain pulls, just as I do, according to the degree to which I engage with 'deeper muscles' and 'somatic lines of action' or not. I fantasize that my speaking functions to create a shared experience with my viewers in that they and I become more conscious of how we are each engaged with evaluating the kinaesthetic and somatic

processing of my choreographic labour. In doing so, my text plays with seeking audience approval, exposing traces of the role of the other who participates in listening to and writing my performed efforts. My questions refer to the potential for gaining the other's approval or disapproval. This is what viewers do as a norm when they watch choreographed performance.[148] What else are they doing there?

Looking back at this performance, other more pertinent insights to do with labour and idiocy become apparent, things that were not intended when making it. *In the Round* promises labouring, as a primordial way of being in the world. More specifically, it promises labouring that is productive, that is useful, as it will produce something, particularly through how I associate a sense of material productivity in somatically engaging with it. Contributing to this promise of productivity is the context of this performance. It is shown in a University art gallery and as part of a performance event where my performance calls up the norm of spectators expecting the generation of conceptual insights in art, framed by my questions that seek approval with my plunging.[149] Unintended for me at the time, my repetitive plunge-actions call up my somatic conditioning and policing as a son of a bricklayer and stonemason. I would labour often for hours on end for my father from an early age. In addition, I was a North Island Athletics representative in the 400 meters, where I would spend hours upon hours training. Thirdly I am a professionally trained Modern and Contemporary dancer. I am therefore corralled into identifying with endlessly working, necessary for being 'serious' and 'purposeful', in order to have a sense of achievement. The more my plunge-crawls cause strain to my body, make me sweat and give me bruises, the more I associate them with productivity, as with my other performances. As my father,

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[148] This goes for almost any form of publicly performed spectacle, not to mention private ones. In the days that followed the performance, a range of comments from spectators 'trickled' in to me. As with all of my works, and as intended, the audience appears to be mostly comprised of people interested specifically in live art, experimental performance (including dance and theatre) and contemporary visual art. Concerning the feedback I received, some inform me they felt compelled to follow me around, some felt contented to watch so as to contemplate my actions, or because of feeling amused, some watch or followed me to 'make sure I am ok', while some watched me from the distance, and a few say they felt mesmerised by my repetitive actions of plunging. Some could hear me, some could not, but I became louder and clearer as the night progressed, as other performances finished and spectators gradually trickled off. Some say that they did not mind not hearing me at first, but most say they could hear me when they stood close to me. Three tell me they perceived a sense of comic hopelessness by my work efforts, and two of them state the piece plays on the general struggles of making a work as an artist and that spectators play a crucial role in validating it. This latter interpretation comes closest to me exploring the construction of 'acceptability' within the spectacle of this performance. Present here are the norms of 'acceptable' health and safety standards, choreographic modes of labour, and aesthetic value systems associated with bodily spectacle that are particularly influenced by dance and performance art lineages.

[149] As stated earlier on, this does not mean that art galleries are the only locations for critical and experimental performance endeavours. In the case of this work, I am interested in the normative perspective that holds that art galleries *are* the bastion of this. This is not an aspect in all of my work, and not essential to my consideration of the project's key question.

grandfather, athletics coaches and some of my ballet and Modern dance teachers used to instil in me, 'the more I suffer for my work, the better it will be for me, and the more I will achieve.' These personal associations are core auto*bio*graphic aspects of my identity as an artist and choreographer. But this promising of productive labouring is only a promise, in normative terms, 'pointlessness' to me and, of course, to a wider society outside of this art context. This play between promising productivity and being 'pointless' in my plunge-crawling is performatively activated by a sense of test-idiocy in my actions. This idiocy is itself not 'pointless'. It calls up a close examination of labour generated by my negotiation of dance and performance art choreography as a key promise of my practice-led research.

In terms of promising productivity, I associate the hardness of the concrete floor in this performance with this sense of welcome-challenge to be productive. It calls up memories of when I used to work for my father on his construction sites as a boy, where I would also often play and watch him work, from a very early age. Hence there are associations with emotional comfort and reassurance for me. I am being guided and directed by a patrilineal force beyond me while I choreograph and perform *In the Round*. A similar legacy comes about from my wearing of the white shirt that my grandfather gave me when I was young. He was another father figure for me growing up. I wear the white shirt with cricket trousers and white shoes. I associate them with the sense of 'sporting-ness' my grandfather encouraged me to embody. There was also his career in the navy, with its discipline and instrumentality and industriousness that he attempted to gently encourage in me. This outfit frames a middle-class white male (me) with a less and less athletic body who performs somatic labour. It gets dirtier by attracting grit and dust from the floor. Hence, it records my manual workload as traces of what my labours promise for me. It equally traces accumulating sweat while I perform. Sweat becomes visible and adheres the shirt to my body. Stylistically speaking, my white outfit is a kind of 'whiter-than-white-collar' suit, perhaps of managerial labour. It is a metaphorical cricket player working hard to win for his team—in this case the captain, who curates the performance event, 'trying to score points for his team', 'just as my grandfather told me to' by circumnavigating the edge of the gallery space and temporally framing it with the work of other artists in seeking audience approval. Yet, this is also simultaneously productive and pointless, both and neither. I associate this outfit with endless questions, negating and affirming the status quo of the policing of art, performance art and dance norms, the 'stiff upper lip' work ethic and gender norms of my father and grandfather—for whom doing something that involves dance was normatively seen to be 'not real work', 'pointless' and 'poofy'. This outfit reminds me of the psychiatric nurse who works to keep things in order and people healthy as a policing device, in this case

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within the *institution* of an art gallery, that this work is situated in.[150] By its potential pointlessness and stupidity, I associate this outfit with freedom from these constraints. In these white clothes, therefore, 'I am my dead father and my living mother.'

The servitude and self-doubt I promise with *In the Round* through my spoken text in relation to my plunge-work engages with idiocy. I question, downplay yet uphold not just the norms that this performance inherits, as with the Modern dance norm of generally repeating movements but, more particularly, my very own standards of performing and choreographic labour. I call up my training as a Modern dancer in terms of the mastery of 'technique' and how I have been policed to never feel content with how I move, even if this drives me to feel physical pain[151]. No plunge and pull of my body is ever 'perfect' for me. What is made is never 'perfectly finished' or absolutely answers the questions it generates and is never, therefore, 'good enough'.[152] Yet this is also idiotically disrupted because there is no guarantee that viewers will at all scrutinize my choreographic labour. Not all watch my work while focussing on drinking and chatting to their friends. Idiocy pervades with *In the Round*, as there is also no guarantee that I will be perceived as an object of servitude and scrutiny. These are theatrical promises.

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[150] However, some audience members do not share these perceptions with me, and they have told me that *In the Round* and my other performances in this project are, for them, more concerned with sadomasochism and the abject—as two viewers have subsequently implied in conversations with me. This could be due to their different cultural backgrounds, where they do not share the same combination of athletics, patrilineal influences, trades and contact sport conditioning. These two spectators (I know personally) are Contemporary dance practitioners, with extensive conditioning and ongoing interests in somatic body training where it is normative to not cause abrasive physical stress, strain or injury and to prevent this as much as possible. This is not to say that this perspective on bodily technique and disciplining is not relevant here for other contexts of performance. Apparent here is how the pain I put myself through in *In the Round* calls for me as a person-as-artist to be 'taken seriously', just as Vergine notes about pain in body performance (1976/2000: 8) in normative terms, either in the ways suggested by these spectators, or in terms of the 'purposefulness' that my choreographic labour promises. From this latter perspective, the physical trauma I experience both during and after this performance are 'action-tracks' in the words of the gymnastic dance choreographer Elizabeth Streb (2010), as they are evidence of my choreographic actions and the somatic work effort I have invested in them.

[151] This is commensurate with a normative work ethic of physical training that remains dominant in dance education contexts where students are conditioned to experience pain and physical trauma but not complain or 'give up', as Rosemary Martin describes her own and others' dance careers and training (2008: 1-7).

[152] My questioning text for *In the Round* also calls up Graham's *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (1975/2006) where he encourages the audience to scrutinize both his and their embodied images, postures and behaviour. Unlike *In the Round*, Graham gazes directly at his viewers while scrutinizing them, and he invites them to directly do it to themselves, and he only stands and makes subtle bodily gestures. Instead, *In the Round* invites viewers to become aware of their sense of power over their reception of my work that is framed by their verticality while I crawl around them as they either watch me or talk to one another as in a gallery opening, while sometimes taking me in, glancing in their peripheral vision as I literally circumnavigate the gallery space that they inhabit.

Acconci haunts *In the Round*. As a spectator informs me months later, I play with the notion of mastery, via my repetitive rhetorical questions that call for me to improve my labour of crafting and performing.[153] I say Acconci "haunts" because at the time of making and performing *In the Round* I had no intention of referring to his work. Rather, his work appeared, his influence pervaded. My repetitious plunging and voice are like the labour of a factory worker who mass-produces, or a cross between a tradesperson and a craftsperson who iteratively continues to create an object—in this case choreography—while seeking to improve this task, with feedback from the foreman, the manager, the expert. I test by playing with a quest for self-improvement, by attempting on a personal level to prove to myself and my audience, and the underwriting other that operates as a kind of normative force while I make and perform it. I aim to prove that I can last for a long time in doing a task that is physically difficult for me. In doing so, the work operates for me as a 'confidence builder', especially because I was not originally confident I could physically manage performing it for the scheduled duration. Resonant here are my personal dance choreographic and performance lineages, where I have always gained a sense of self-satisfaction for mastering and performing a choreographic script both for others and myself. Unlike Acconci, however, my quest for mastery is idiotic because in my text I never assume in this performance that I have achieved this goal. I only continue to repeat this quest, which sustains my performance persona as being subservient with a 'stamp on my hand' that says 'needs improvement'. Without the idiotic repetition of questioning my plunge-labour, I *cease* to promise labouring and my servitude.

This idiotic repetition of choreographic labour is called up by my activation of the performance art norm of playing with an 'excess' of manual labour by explicitly emphasizing workload through choreographed actions in order to activate conceptual reflection, with body performance, duration and endurance. Unintentionally called up by this is the exposition of labour through the repetitious endurance, durational body performance of

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[153] *In the Round* in its idiocy calls up three other performance art works: Acconci's *Reception Room* (1973, cited by Acconci, 2002: 25) and *Theme Song* (1973/2006; 1973, cited by Acconci, 2002: 114), Nuaman's *Walking in*' 1967-1968, cited by Lepecki, 2006: 23; Leaver-Yap, 2010) and Pope.L's *The Great White Way* (2002-2007, cited by Lepecki, 2006: 100-101). Two dance choreographies also haunt this idiocy; Le Roy's *Self Unfinished* (1998/2009) and Bel's *The Last Performance* (1999/2007). Each of these works involves the artist calling forth in viewers a sense of questioning about their choreographic labour in relation to notions of idiocy, in order to explore concepts. Acconci's flipping on the bed in *Reception Room* stands out here because he feigns a sense of vulnerability with his use of spoken text in relation to his horizontal choreography, just as is done with *In the Round*. His and my horizontal positioning when framed by the spoken text makes both of us appear vulnerable and, in a sense, 'failing to stand up to' normative society and the other's calling us up. Though my use of text and actions while on the horizontal plain differs to his. I feign my persona of vulnerability via 'spoof' conversational-sounding questions while his pseudo-therapy actions have functioned to transgress art norms. Because *he* has done this and I read his work into *In the Round*, it is a norm that calls up my practice.

specific works by Acconci and Ader.[154] This is in contrast to the norm of Modernist and balletic dance choreography, concealing the workload of their dancers. Traces of this excess can be found on my body with its strains and abrasions.[155] This is enhanced by my repetitious actions; by their stilling of a range of movement possibilities, spectators are invited to focus on the physical effort I expend in my plunge actions.[156]

Figure 36. *When You're By My Side: Volume I*, Mark Harvey (2006; Photograph by Ali Bramwell).

[154] Acconci's *Digging Piece* and *Step Piece* (1970, cited by Acconci, 2002: 37 and 127), and the endurance body performance of Ader's (2007) falling pieces.

[155] This includes me puffing, sometimes grunting quietly with strain, sweating profusely, getting slower over time, with my arm muscles subtly shaking with strain when I pull myself forward, not to mention the abrasions to my elbows and, to a lesser extent, to my forehead.

[156] As Heathfield emphasises concerning repetition in Bausch's *Café Muller*: a body is also an agency for unlearning, and the subversive reiteration of the habitual practice within an aesthetic may come to question the inherent values upon which practice is founded. (2006: 190) According to Heathfield, the repetition of choreographic actions has the potential to subversively question the norms in which they are formed and, in this way, the body may 'unlearn' its conditioning. My repetition of plunging and text for *In the Round* also potentially derails my dance and performance art lineages that have conditioned me. My aim for this idiotic intention is to establish what can be discovered by it in this questioning. Discovered from this, more than anything else, is a deep and profound sense of endless questioning that is characteristic of the Nietzschean scientific project.

Stilling

If the promising of labour is in some way essentially a carrying along with and a carrying over, how do we understand the disclosure of carrying itself? What is it to "carry"? In one case it seems to be I who am carried and in another it is I who carry over. In the awhile of performing I am carried along in my being in and with. But performances are phenomena for which things can be carried over, from one to another. Carrying is a supporting transposing. Is suggests a here and a there. I am taken somewhere, or possibly not taken anywhere, and I can take something with me or leave it behind. There is carrying in both. But what is essential in carrying? Perhaps it is that what is being-carried itself is without movement, is itself an essential stilling such that being carried along or carried over can essentially take place. *In the Round* relentlessly explored the labour of carrying and being carried, of an along-with and a taking-with or leaving-behind. With our second work, we move more essentially to *stilling* as what essentially may open 'carrying' to its possibility to be. Promises of stilling in terms of inaction and the potential of action have been performatively produced through choreographic idiocy in a number of ways in this project. Two modes of promising stilling have been discovered through negotiating dance and performance art choreographies in this practice: physical stilling that stills 'modernism's being toward movement' and listening with care in dance choreography. These modes of promising stilling call up performative insights that are physical, temporal, conceptual, somatic, cultural, political and practice-related and connected to the tester's (or my) sense of being, my 'personality'. My solo performance *Check List* (Harvey, 15th March, 2008) performed as part of the group live art and choreographic event *Great White Shark* at the *Mau Forum* (Ponifasio, 2008), Corban Estate Arts Centre, Auckland, is discussed here in relation to this. This work was developed to explicitly test the negotiation of dance and performance art choreography. Only significantly later has its promises of stilling become apparent.

Check List: During and after

In *Check List*, I perform to the following minimal choreographic script:

> *Standing still, looking straight ahead at the audience, lifting frying pans, quick-slow, repeat, saying what I must do as a performer, start logical - end up illogical, keeping going until I can't.*

This script emerges after approximately a year of studio practice experiments, beginning with improvisation and reflecting on previous test-stages of this enquiry cycle. In looking back at this work, in response to *In the Round*, I attempt to idiotically choreograph 'stilling' as a negotiating of dance and performance art choreography. I do this by attempting to 'stand still' and present myself face-on to an audience. I incorporate a theatrically projecting voice, activating my acting skills learnt from performing dance theatre, while carrying out the manual labour of weightlifting with frying pans in my personal gardening clothes. In doing so, I aim to engage with my genealogy more than I did with *In the Round*. The lifting of fry pans in my gardening clothes is intended to (ironically) activate the 'banal' from my own domestic life, shifting my 'serious' clothing used in my previous works (my white outfit) into something less 'serious' and therefore disrupt norms of 'professionalism' associated with galleries and theatres. I also attempt to test the use of theatrical persona in terms of 'portraying myself' through my use of voice, in response to Parr and Abramovic's call for performance art to not be theatrical, and to my *Wrap me Up* series, which up to that point had not attempted to consciously play with theatricality.

Figure 37. *Check List*, Mark Harvey (2008; Video Stills).

I stand in a bright spotlight, aiming to not move from that position, in front of an audience who sit and stand in a semi-circle in front of me some five to eight metres away. I do a checklist of my body by attempting to notice how every cell in my body feels. I feel the floor under my feet. I feel the subtle swaying in my body that is unavoidable, while attempting to be as tall and straight as my Alexander Technique conditioning will allow me to be.[157] I breathe in and out slowly, and after what feels like 100 seconds (time appears to be 'going slow' for me) I commence with repetitively lifting large frying pans, as if they are dumbbells in a gymnasium. The frying pans are heavy and I can feel the many muscles in my torso, back, shoulders, arms, my hands and fingers gripping, contracting as I raise these lumps of metal. I contract these muscles in my starting position with my upper arms being level with my shoulders, as I grip the frypans so that their pans point directly upward. I breathe in and, as I breathe out, lift these frypans as high as I possibly can with my arms straight above my shoulders, using all these muscles. Then, I slowly lower these frypans to my starting position and do this by contracting the same muscles in different directions, as I take a slow breath in again, until I reach my starting position. I do it again and again and again. I 'last' as long as I can (about 25 minutes), despite straining, just as I do with *In the Round*. I imagine myself to be a 'Kiwi backyard *Pumping Iron 2* kind of guy'.[158] The rest of my body works as I stand in one place. I continually direct my head to rise forward and up to lengthen and 'make space' in my spine, so that the rest of my skeleton relaxes as much as possible around this labour of lifting and standing still. I gaze at a fixed point in the audience while doing this. Yet, as I keep going I feel more and more tired, with my breathing becoming heavier, while I get hotter and sweatier.

As my frying panning makes my body feel more and more tired, it promises to me that it will be more 'still', calming it down with fatigue, just as it does with my other performances. It becomes apparent to me a year later (while I work through another test-stage) that I am attempting to test out a training regime on myself in this performance. It is not unlike my experience of Butoh training where I have had many teachers push me into becoming physically tired through performing manual labour, with the normative goal of being able to connect with my sense of 'centre', or internal awareness, where I am able to listen to my

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[157] In hindsight I am reminded by this of Bel's *The Last Performance* (1999/2007), Acconci's *Digging Piece*, and *Step Piece*, and Graham's *Performer/audience/mirror* (1975/2006) where the performer at times appears physically still, but moreover stills a sense of not simply 'moving for the sake of it.'
[158] This is a reference to the popular movie-documentary *Pumping Iron 2* that features a now ex-governor of California (no, not R. Regan … the other one). The style of my lighting is aimed at activating this heroic image with the use of freezing-works (or meat-works) lamps on the floor illuminating me like some kind of contemporary Kiwi version of Michelangelo's *David.*

internal imagery more openly than otherwise in order to perform bodily responses.[159] The goal is moving and performing 'authentically', in normative terms, where many (like me), who are policed through Butoh and related performance techniques, value choreographic action where performers appear to expose their deep emotional and psychic states through their bodies. During the performance, I fantasize I will feel more 'centred' and 'authentic' in my actions due to exhaustion from performing this manual labour. It is, in fact, a 'warm-up' for an intended second performance on the night. But I do not do another performance afterward. My method of performing it—frying pan lifting—comes from what I imagine Acconci would stupidly do to make himself 'centred' like this, should he be in 'my shoes'. My quest for training also calls up testing out a sense of mixing therapy with art and choreography, as informed by Acconci.[160]

It becomes apparent later that this promising of stilling via banal actions calls up minimalist works I have previously discussed.[161] By promising physical stilling, this piece investigates (and disrupts) some of the ideals of these minimalist-influenced dance and performance art works. For example, while I attempt banal actions in one sense to avoid theatrical gestures, they are theatrical in terms of their sense of affectation as modes of spectacle. To stand in front of an audience and perform this fry panning in a synchronized rhythm with this projected and somewhat stilted and formal-sounding spoken text is a theatrical gesture. In one sense, this choreographic labour idiotically repeats movement. In another, it attempts to hold off its excess by me standing on the spot, an excess normatively associated with Modern dance, in the form of, for example, dynamic structures, sense of timing, phrases, Classical ballet-influenced extensions, turns, jumps and leaps, and associated virtuosity. This repetition promises to resist these aspects of my genealogy, yet it still offers up a sense of 'movement-heroics' that is a trademark of Modern dance, by me performing a physically challenging task that requires a level of physical fitness; though with parody: different bodily techniques to dance modernism—in this case, weightlifting skills. While I lift the pans I continuously recite a memorised list of things that 'I must do' to improve my performance labour in front of my audience. I make a pledge every three to four lifts. Many of these pledges intend to conform to norms through which I have experienced being policed in

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[159] An example of this is in my experience of rehearsing and doing preparatory classes with the choreographer and director of Mau Dance Theatre, Lemi Ponifasio. Before performing his dance theatre work *Illumina: Embracing the Darkness* (Herald Theatre, Auckland, November 12th -22nd, 2005) Ponifasio acknowledged being influenced by the Japanese Butoh practices of Min Tanaka, and evidence of this is apparent throughout this full-length performance.

[160] An irony here is that I deny to myself at the time that these are reasons why I perform this, as therapy is often focused on helping individuals recognize what they deny, among other things.

[161] Rainer's *Trio A*, Bel's *The Last Performance*, Nauman's walking videos of the late 1960s, many of Acconci's works such as *Reception Room* and *Step Piece*, Graham's *Performer/audience/mirror*, La Ribot's slow falls and Ader's falling videos.

performance art and dance. I start off attempting to sound 'logical' and rational with my pledges, though more and more I make contradictions that even to me no longer make any more sense. In doing so I aim to test these norms through idiocy, by simultaneously and almost endlessly questioning, negating and affirming these norms. For example, I say "I must not be theatrical" (anti-theatricality of Parr and Abramovic), "I must have correct posture" (my dance training), "I must be fake" (and tell lies, as a response to Rainer's 'No Manifesto'), "I must move authentically" (a common notion in much Contemporary dance), "I must be more theatrical" (in response to a choreographic tutor I once had who said to me that my work needs to be more entertaining by involving more dramatic surprise and acting skills), "I must question everything" (playing off the norm of questioning in performance art), "I must follow current practices" (which implies not questioning them), "I must show unity and symmetry of form" (as another choreography tutor once told me), and on it goes.

At the time, I aim to make my spoken text sound like a slippery stream of (un)-consciousness the more I keep going, because I want to test out how I am often 'told' or policed by viewers, my previous teachers, and institutional norms to 'be this or that' as an 'acceptable' dance choreographer, performance artist and performer. These advising 'onlookers' are never coincident in their views, and often contradictory. *While making and performing it, from audience feedback and reflecting on it at later test-stages, it reveals to me that between dance and performance art there is a wealth of normative contradiction to be found.* This irrational litany, at later test-stages, reveals that when I attempt to be still by being conceptually singular and stick to a sense of 'the law' according to particular disciplinary perspectives, I keep finding a sense of 'un-stilling' or conceptual movement in terms of contradictions and reflections that traverse them. There is not one way to 'be' as a choreographer and artist—which, in itself, is readable as idiotic—as I have often experienced prior to this performance. By repetitively contradicting these disciplinary proclamations of the law, I highlight their fragility, and the potential error of artists and choreographers who singularly adhere to them (such as me, often).[162] While I attempt to still my actions in terms of 'moving for the sake of itself' with my frying panning, my conceptual movement is fluid, not pinned to being absolutist or non-absolutist, indifferent in its stupidity. As I keep lifting and pledging, I hold my gaze still on a fixed position straight ahead, transfixed on and through viewers in my immediate sightline. It is as though I can see myself being policed by something beyond them. By this I try to promise them and the force of a law (the other) that calls me up and partially writes me into this sense of choreographic being. I promise, without literally saying it, that I am still and unmovable,

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[162] As with my other works, and already mentioned in relation to *In the Round*, these norms continue to be interpellated discourses in this practice as they are repeated through my idiotic actions. As Butler shows about identity in general, without this embodied iteration these norms cease to hold currency over me, as the artist or, potentially, the audience.

in continuing to perform this task, forever. Spectators' 'listening eyes' promise to hold me still, and I attempt to continue to promise in my embodied thoughts that this gives me a purpose to continue in front of them. I am indebted to them for their 'generous' attention and patience with me. Stilling, in this sense, is essentially a giving, a gift.

Yet, despite managing this strenuous task with its coordination between fry panning, speaking, and puffing for air, I cannot keep still in my focus. I feel I need to stop more and more. My body tells me that it cannot remain in this site of being transfixed and unmovable. One of my arms gives way and I stumble by nearly dropping the pans. Yet I find impetus by refusing these signals of surrender. I, therefore, speed up, motivating myself to keep going. But this ends up being a crescendo in my dying moments. After another four minutes or so of me pushing against this fatigue, my body tells me it can no longer keep going. I am carried by this experience into finally giving up and dropping the frypans to the floor, as I feel some of my forearm muscles locking in spasm. Letting out a huge sigh, I walk off, out of the spotlight like a weight lifter going for the Invercargill title for the 'clean-and-jerk', failing to fulfil promises of stilling and labouring.

Stilling: gendered deafness

An insight revealed recently in this enquiry cycle is that by promising stillness in solipsism and attempting to stand still and face my audience, with *Check List*, I foreground that I am 'Mark Harvey an artist' written (and not) through my body by the underwriting force of the other: my practice-based and personal genealogies. This is catalysed by me saying 'I must' in relation to my listing of norms of dance and performance art.[163] Saying 'I must' repetitively calls up the imperative or force of something that signs me and instructs me on how to act as a live artist and choreographer, not clearly defined, as traces of the other. Yet, it also does not ever absolutely mean that 'I must', as it may be that 'I' 'will not' or 'I may not' or 'might', or that it *is* 'me' that is signed here, or that it *is* the other that signs me in 'I must'— along with other potentially deferring significations. Upstanding, I call up a ruse of my name 'Mark Harvey'. Yet, viewers (and I) still think that this 'I' is Mark Harvey who choreographs and performs this work. Lies are not truly guaranteed as lies, as truths or non-truths.[164] This sense of idiocy of solipsism arrests positivist perspectives dominant in performance art and dance choreography, by calling up alternative ways to see choreography as unfixed and open

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[163] Such as in applying release techniques from my Contemporary dance training and conditioning.
[164] Bel's engagement with mimesis in relation to playing with his own name and persona in *The Last Performance* is called up as a genealogical reference point for this when he says "I am Jerome Bel" (1999/2007). He is and is not necessarily Jerome Bel.

to discovery.[165] As with my other performances, the idiotic promising of stilling with *Check List* reveals insights to do with my personal identity in being the son of profoundly deaf parents, where my first language, through which I learnt to communicate, was sign language. The syntax of my repetitious actions is *shaped* like New Zealand/British sign language, where it is presented in almost disconnected phrasings that do not assemble or flow together as much as written or spoken sentences normally should, and are often spoken through a sense of regular rhythm, with very little sense of metaphor and conceptual nuance.[166] Deaf communication (and community) through which I have been called up is more conscious of and focussed on asserting identity and a sense of empowerment than is the case with 'hearing language' communities. Being 'heard' is explicitly never guaranteed, and so there is very often an explicit communal desire to be heard.[167] I have been policed into making repetitive performances like *Check List* in this practice-led research through this conditioning. As a member of deaf culture, I, like many others have a deep desire to be heard, and therefore the anxiety that without repeating my actions, my name, sense of identity, originality and 'voice', 'I' as well as my practice may not be heard by my audience, or the other's ear. I am therefore called up to iterate, to the degree that I may appear idiotic through a 'hearing' ear.

Promising 'stilling' calls me up as a gendered body—a white man's body. I recall a conversation I had with a viewer who drew attention to me being a white man performing this work, which was noticeable in the particular context of the event.[168] While promising inaction in *Check List*, a sense of action is invoked through my active gaze as I 'stand my ground' as a male performer. My gaze is active in that my eyes focus on a fixed point and I look into it directly.[169] I conform to dominant Western stereotypes of how men are often portrayed in public with an active gaze, portraying that they are 'in control'. This is not 'limited' to men, of course, the portraying to viewers that there is a sense of authority and purpose to performance. Though this is a norm of much performance art and dance

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[165] This Nietzschean-influenced perspective on idiocy differs to Lepecki's (2006: 44) use of the term in its etymological sense, as mentioned earlier. He locates dance Modernism as idiotic in the manner it construes the isolating and solipsistic individuated self, suggesting a break in conceptual dance with this. This research however locates idiocy as productive *indifference* that leads to discovery.

[166] This is not to say that it is inferior to the spoken and written word, far from it. It integrates the body much more than these other forms of language—in my experience.

[167] This is manifested by the number of deaf gestures that appear 'larger than life' from a 'hearing' perspective, and how grammar is often short and concise and appears to draw attention to the speaker more so than in 'hearing language'. Crucially, the use of eye contact between speakers is valued far more than in NZ and British 'hearing' contexts.

[168] Lemi Ponifasio's Mau Dance Theatre 'staged' the performance event. Mau focus on Maori and Pasifika cultures and politics in many of their own performances of the last ten years.

[169] This engages Claid's notion of "full body" in performance persona, where the performer actively sees what he or she faces with his or her eyes and body, as opposed to an "empty body", which focuses on 'being looked at' (2007).

choreography by white men.[170] While I do not attempt to reinforce this myth, I am haunted by it all the same, revealing a sense of 'idiocy of identity' in my solipsism.[171] This myth of origin is, after all, part of what I call up with my body when I face the audience. It coincides with Kaupapa Maori perspectives in Aotearoa/New Zealand: we always lay our *whakapapa* or genealogies before us, in front of us. This cannot be hidden easily, despite how some, such as I, might attempt to hide parts of it. This performance art myth of origin haunts *Check List* and other performances, just as much as does 'modernism's being toward movement', the myth of the Modern and Classical dance master and other related positivist and universalist perspectives. They form part of my practice-based genealogy, even as points of departure. I additionally, idiotically, call up and affirm other aspects of my autobiographical genealogy while standing there gazing and speaking, such as my lineage as a NZ/Kiwi male with my accent and my clothes for mowing the lawn where, stereotypically, status resides in how much work you can do as a 'home handyman', in the mythical image of the 'number 8 wire' working man's hero, 'who can save the day'.[172] Yet, by continually making my pledges that imply I need to improve my performance, I play the fool by contradicting this via affirming the stereotype that Kiwi males cannot cope with emotions, in part due to our attempts to be 'so male' or macho.[173] This also calls up Acconi's art and therapy tests. Yet, I blur this by implying that I can cope as I attempt to maintain composure and 'stand my ground', and do something that 'most blokes wouldn't dare'.

Check List, like my other performances, calls up insights on my relationship with spectators through idiotic promises of stilling. My repetitive pledges are, as one viewer much later stated to me, autobiographic confessions to an audience as witness with the potential to 'testify' to others that I have said these things.[174] This is reinforced by how they sit and stand

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[170]   For example, Bel's *The Last Performance* (1999/2007) and Graham's *Performer/audience/mirror* (1975/2006). By being a solo white man performing in this way, I until now have unintentionally called up Schneider's point that much performance art literature affirms the myth of the original white male solo performance artist, Pollock (2004: 25-28). This is particularly so when my active gaze is juxtaposed with my directive text that calls up performance art and dance norms for me to adhere to.

[171] This is ironic given the extent of the literature, including performance art works, that I draw from in this research that have been written and made by women.

[172] 'Number 8 wire' is a NZ colloquial term referring to a mythical and nationalist sense of 'kiwi ingenuity' that popular media in this country have often reinforced in the last forty years. It stands in for the ultimate resource for a culture that likes to meddle in repair.

[173] See, for example, the work of Gwendoline Smith (1990: 9-32) and Jock Phillips (1996: 261-289). Of course, it cannot be assumed that identifying with 'macho sub-cultures' readily applies to all New Zealand men, such as middle-class artists (like me) and our particular audiences in current times. In my experience, many of us invest our time heavily in questioning dominant cultural norms like gender and cultural stereotypes. Even so, 'Kiwi macho culture' is something that is a significant part of my personal genealogy, as a bricklayer's son and member of a rugby playing family growing up in 1970s and 80s suburban Auckland, where this gender stereotype dominated.

[174] Just as witnesses of confessions do for Foucault (Taylor, 2009: 79). We also note that the "without alibi provocation" always already suggests that someone is holding me accountable for something,

quietly. I can see and feel their fixed gaze upon me. They are not silent (or still), as I can see them—my spotlights spill light onto them—yet they *appear* to be silent and still because they generally simply just watch me. I promise stilling, yet deliver action. I hear them in these ways, yet I choose not to because their presence and gaze is enough to verify my confession. Their part of the bargain is their promise of listening to me by being still and attentive. This is partly due to how the event of performance calls up normative theatre conventions where the audience is seen and not heard, and we who have been trained and policed as performers and choreographers develop embodied techniques for listening to their 'silent/not silent' presence, just as I have been conditioned to closely observe others' body language through my deaf conditioning.[175] As with *In the Round* and my other performances, while I perform *Check List* I sporadically perform an internal idiotic narrative about my audience members and my relationship with them. It pertains to imaginings and even fantasies about their judgments concerning what I am doing, with some positive, some negative and some ambivalent. I fantasize that later some will inform me that they like it and others that they dislike it. I therefore locate myself in terms of a normative field of 'acceptability'. In these ways I welcome being policed by the presence of spectators in and at my work.

Falling: being fallen

Promises of falling and being fallen are called up by choreographic tests via actions with spoken text, intended through promises of failure, physical falling and in the case of *In the Round*, being situated on the horizontal plane. As with my promises of labouring and stilling they call up insights influenced by my contingent genealogies, autobiography, interpellation and the other's role in partially writing this. Falling and being fallen are not necessarily themselves failure. When falling is unintended, helpless and cannot be prevented it invokes failing. The choreographic fall for my project is endlessly entwined with failure because of my genealogy: dance training, 'being deaf' and 'the son of a bricklayer.' In dance choreography, falling often equates with failure as with falling on stage in Classical ballet, making mistakes in morning technique class, and in dance-theatre where characters often fall mimetically through failing to cope with aspects of life.[176] Being fallen is where the body has given up trying to perform successfully in normative terms, where a performer assumes or is assigned a 'lower' status than others and may be considered idiotic or stupid. Examples of

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that I am asked to give an account, to eliminate accusation or suspicion about something, presumed guilty before being proved innocent.

[175] Example include looking at subtleties in body posture, eye contact and using peripheral vision to see where and what an audience is looking at, as I face them with my actions.

[176] Such as Bausch (1978) and Newson & DV8 (*Strange Fish*, 1990/1993).

where this has happened for me include: as a student, never living up to teacher's standards (in dance technique, choreography and studio making in dance and performance art), public reviews, and in spectator responses where viewers leave in the middle of a performance 'in a huff' or out of boredom. In terms of my deaf identity, falling has often arisen through me mispronouncing, misunderstanding and misspelling language in the 'hearing world' and 'deaf world', when my many 'stupid' 'slip-ups' are noted through the significant differences in the syntax and semantics between 'hearing' and deaf communication, and a related self-consciousness that is particularly common for the deaf. In my working-class upbringing as a bricklayer and stonemason's son, being fallen for me has often been when others told me that I am 'not cut out' for 'earning an honest living' as a tradesman like my father—to my delight.

Testing with stupidity via promising failure has been consistent in this practice, and has only been revealed to me since *Check List* in this enquiry cycle.[177] In *Check List*, I promise failing by repeating actions that appear pointlessly idiotic. Provoking, professing or confessing failure is common to performance art and dance choreography, as in studio critiques. I aim to play with such professions of failure to the degree that they are idiotically arrested, in certain perspectives appearing 'out of place' and 'ridiculous' to see what can be discovered out of them.[178] When I often attempt to physically fall I am promising to embody failure. When I am working on the ground for *In the Round*, I am promising an embodied sense of having failed. When I imply that my work is failing as I often do in my spoken text, I aim to test-play with the promise that my work is conceptually failing. Thus, with *In the Round*, I repetitively ask questions that request the evaluation of its progress. Called up by this is the norm in performance art and live art to question. I focus on failure in my practice through being motivated by my genealogies as a Modern and Classically trained dancer, my identity with deaf culture and my identity as a NZ Pakeha white man, where the anxiety of failing is a norm. In each of these there is the anxiety of failing to be accepted by others: not being selected for productions in dance, never being considered *normal* in 'hearing society' or 'deaf society', not seen to be 'manly' enough as a Pakeha male. This default structure of anxiety in my practice is also an inquisitive one as I identify failing as a 'core part of me' that always leads to insights and often discovery. *At least, this is what the other writes (of) me here*.

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[177] In reflecting on *Check List*, failure as falling and being fallen in this practice is intended out of my aim 'to care' for this test-framework. As with promises of labouring and stilling, promising falling and being fallen as failure is essential within my test-framework's idiotic focus on questioning, negating and affirming in that nothing absolute can account for my practice.

[178] Burrows & Heathfield (2007) and Forsythe (2008: 5) note that choreographic performance that attempts failure has the potential to lead to discoveries. Equally, Foucault calls for the genealogist to focus on error (1977b: 146) when 'failure' is error speaking the true.

My aim is *not* to actually fall or be fallen (or absolutely fail) because to try to do this is to attempt to attain a truth. Rather, I aim to somatically and conceptually promise forms of failure and at times fantasies of failure, in front of an audience in order to test out how dance and performance art choreography are negotiated in my practice with their associated disciplinary norms. When audience members inform me that my work has failed, has not been 'good enough', has been boring, stupid, 'good' or 'successful', this promises to lead to discoveries for me. If my practice fails for me (in normative terms) to achieve what I intend it to, and I make 'mistakes' this potentially also leads to new insights.[179] This is an overture to experimental openness I want to particularly discuss: promises of falling and being fallen in relation to two works from later stages of this enquiry cycle, from two different series: *Wrap Me Up, Make Me Happy: Infectious Optimism Remix* (Harvey, 2nd September, 2006) at the Govett-Brewster Public Art Gallery in New Plymouth, Taranaki, from my *Wrap Me Up* series (Harvey, 2004-2008); and *Performance: Arrival: Bullshit* (Harvey, 28th November, 2009) at St Paul St Art Gallery, AUT, Auckland, from my *Bullshitter* series (Harvey, 2008-2009).[180] As well, *In the Round*, will be briefly reflected on in terms of being fallen.[181]

Performance: Arrival: Bullshit: Infectious Optimism: during and after

Performance: Arrival

In *Performance: Arrival: Bullshit* (2009), in the group performance event *Glitch* (Gallagher, 28th November, 2009), I play the fool with promising to physically fall along with vocalised text that promises falling as failure. I repetitively fall at the entrance to a gallery (St Paul St, at

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[179] It does not *guarantee* that I am achieving my project's goals or attaining a sense of 'rigour' that is acceptable for this research context.

[180] Of note here, a number of other works have been developed in this enquiry cycle, but are not discussed as they cover very similar themes to the ones mentioned in this chapter. Other works not mentioned here from my *Wrap Me Up* series include: *Wrap Me up, Make Me Happy: Again and Again Remix*, (22nd August, 2008) at Camp 22:30, Camp X (theatre), Copenhagen; *Wrap Me up, Make Me Happy: The Helper's High Remix* (Harvey, 29th April, 2006) at the Physics Room Contemporary Artspace, Christchurch; and *Wrap Me Up.* (Harvey, 7th Sep, 2005) at Tari: 2005. Kuala Lumpur. Another work not mentioned in my *Bullshitter* series is *Lie Down With Me and I will promise: The Performance Anxiety of a Bullshit Artist* (26th June, 2009) at Psi 15: Misperformance, Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia.

[181] The titles I give to my performances describe the actions I aim to achieve in them. Some, like the prefixes *Wrap Me Up, Make Me Happy* and *Performance: Arrival: Bullshit*, are also intended to be performative in how they call up an aim of for me to act on. *Wrap Me Up, Make Me Happy* in this case calls me up to wrap myself up in cardboard and, moreover, for the audience to do it with their gaze, as well as the other who partially reads and writes it and for audience responses to reassure me when I ask for approval (or not) while doing this. Both Nauman's late 60s walking videos such as *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* (1968; cited by Tuyl, 1998:68-69) and Acconci's *Digging Piece* (1970, cited by Acconci, 2002: 37), that operate performatively, are points of inspiration for this decision.

AUT, Auckland), while attempting to make false promises about what I will do in this performance.[182] I stand at the threshold between the main gallery and the lobby to St Paul Street Gallery, facing towards the gallery interior with my back towards the lobby interior. There are performance installations operating approximately ten meters away from me in the lobby, and throughout the gallery interior I am facing.[183] The audience mostly gather near a food and drinks table beside where I perform. Most are watching near the drinks table. Some are not; some are talking, some are trying to get past me, some are in front of me in the main gallery, some stand outside the building's glazed entrance, watching, talking and smoking. Some are walking between these locations. My choreographic script for this piece is:

> *Fall and get up*, *repetitively*, *make false promises for this performance to my audience*, *obstruct the gallery entrance*, *face in to the gallery*, *keep going for as long as I can*.

I start by standing facing into the gallery, wearing black (black jeans, t-shirt and 'trainer' shoes), intended to appear to conform with dance and performance art norms, in 'appearing fashionable' and 'workerly', like a gallery employee or stage hand. Most of the audience are out of my direct line of sight, but I can see many of them in my peripheral vision. I am breathing deeply and I wait until I imagine I have most of my audience's attention. Breathing in, then out, I imagine my head rising off my shoulders and feel space between my vertebrae, and yet my head feels like it is heavy enough to fall off my spine backwards. In freefall my head takes my shoulders and my whole torso with it. As I am letting go with gravity, I hinge in my hips and my knees and drop my centre of gravity from above my waist to the floor. As one smooth action it feels like slow motion that I have control over. Just at the last possible moment I place my right hand behind my back to find the floor, allowing my arms to catch me. I land in a way that feels soft. Despite the back of my pelvis jarring as it hits the concrete floor, its impact is swept aside with my torso, searching along the floor as it lands, with my feet pushing the floor. My body feels like a stacked pile of bones surrounded by fluid, that 'lets go into the floor', as I breath deeply in and out. I get up by leading from the top of my head, using my torso and neck muscles to contract against gravity. I transfer this momentum to one elbow-and-lower-arm and then to the other, pressing the floor with

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[182] As with all of the other choreographic tests in this practice-led research I perform it in front of an audience mostly consisting of individuals who are interested in experimental performance, choreography, live art and conceptual art. This is demonstrated in the accompanying DVD documentation of this piece and *In the Round* where spectators are captured by the camera.

[183] One of the lobby installations, *Untitled* by Phil Dadson (2009) is loud and repetitive. Piano accordions play in monotone by being lowered and raised repetitively from four stories above, echoing and reverberating in the surrounding architecture, and creating a sense of tension for my performance. The event has the feel of an 'opening': many spectators drift in their focus between my work and the other works, as well as food, drink and conversation (all in abundance in the lobby). This sense of divided focus increases the longer my performance continues.

my feet, gathering momentum with my out-breath and leg and torso muscles until my bones stack up, one by one, and I am standing—only to repeat this cycle again and again.[184] My haunted (and for me unintentional and at the time unwanted) promise of falling calls up a sense of unheard recurring helplessness that is traceable to deaf culture for me, of being conditioned to endlessly attempt to be heard by others, to iterate myself as an object of the gaze of others and the other's writing.[185]

I begin *Performance: Arrival'* with a ten minute speech, where I read a list of what I will (supposedly) do in this performance as idiotic promises to my audience. These promises aim to reflect on me being interpellated as a choreographer in dance and performance art. Several of these promises are similar to my text in *Check List*, because I aim to reinvestigate them in relation to promising physical and conceptual falling through my performance not delivering what I say it will. Live performance always involves promising and setting up expectations, particularly when it begins. I set myself up to lie in this way—considering that performance lies. During the speech I state "when I arrive I will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." This court of law reference intends to play on the normativity and interpellation of 'the law' in this gallery performance event context, where the public have the chance to scrutinize performances like this. A later examination of this line reveals it as a play on the normative notion of 'authenticity' in dance choreography. It also calls up claims of objectivity that choreographers have at times made and the norm of performance art in exposing one's process when performing (as with me referring to my goals). Another line is "I will have a beginning, middle and end" – referring the norms of public speaking in contexts like this gallery and Modern dance choreography in theatres. I make several other promises in this speech to do with choreographic norms in dance including: 'I will perform with theatrical melodrama' and encourage audience members to 'not be concerned for my health and safety' with me falling and hurting my body. I promise a range of other performance art norms such as me being 'purely conceptually focused', and 'not being theatrical'. I intend to realise none of these, reflecting on how they are each *only* disciplinary norms.

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[184] This trajectory of actions is something I have learnt from an eclectic range of skills acquired from my Contemporary dance training and somatic releasing techniques like Contact Improvisation, Skinner, Feldenkrais and Alexander Techniques in terms of initiating, coordinating, isolating and balancing the flow of these kinaesthetic acts of labour when attempting to fall and land. I note this here because, from a dance perspective, often these 'techniques of the self' are taken for granted and not expected to be mentioned. But for many who identify as non-dancers, such as performance artists, such insights may be informative. These skills play a clear role in how I choose to approach the embodiment of my actions, as is the case with all of my performance works.

[185] Haunting this smooth, controlled and un-helpless iterative action is the genealogical influence of Bausch herself feigning helpless falls in *Café Muller* (1978), that melodramatically promise despair, and many other subsequent dance theatre works such as by DV8 where falling is promised.
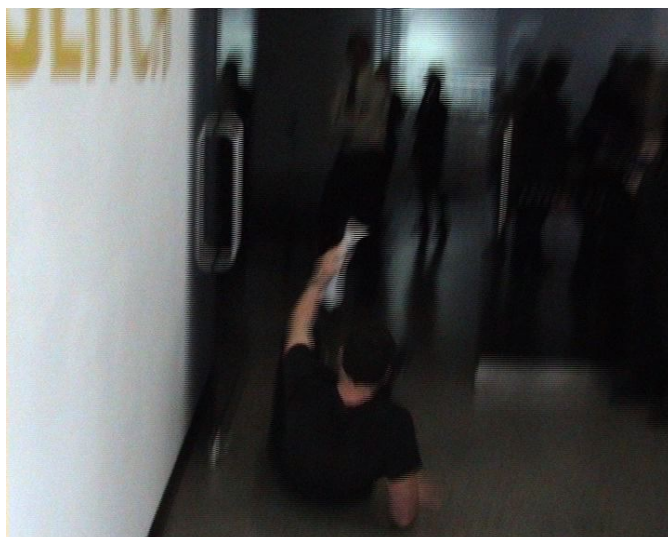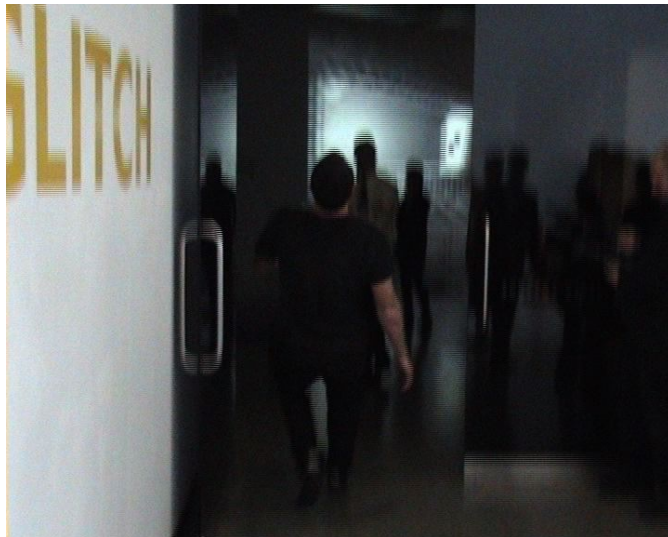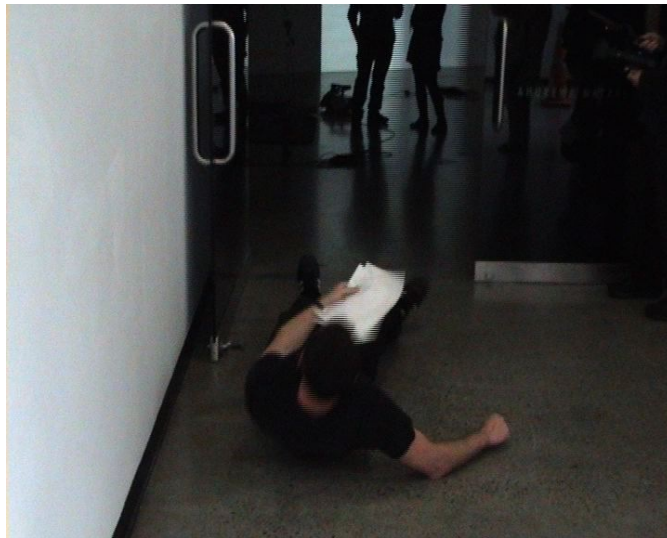
Figure 38.
Performance: Arrival Bullshit,
Mark Harvey
(2009; Video
Stills).

Performance: Arrival' reveals other insights as promises of failure. My falls are timed with my text, with the aim that each time I speak a promise, I fall. In doing so, I emphasize the futility of my falls, as 'un-helpless', intentional free-fall. Failure is promised by me feigning that I cannot enter the gallery space I face, which I iteratively fall away from, despite me promising that I will perform in it, as though the invisible force of the other prevents me from entering, telling me my work is not 'acceptable' enough. In speaking for ten minutes, lingering with my falls for another thirty, I potentially test the expectations and patience of my audience.[186] However, two viewers inform me that they could not hear me clearly enough to register this, reminding me of my deaf identity, me preventing myself from being heard. I *feign* making a mistake by falling continuously, as though I cannot stop, while 'blocking the entrance', another viewer later mentions to me. Approximately 20 minutes into this performance, one of my own children (my 2 year-old daughter) stands close behind me and says "daddy", in a

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[186] I later have one viewer confirm to me that this is what she experienced at the time.

tone of voice she often uses when she wants a cuddle, which blocks my line of falling. This moment breaks the flow of my falling, as I pause for approximately ten seconds, anxious about landing on her, a mistake that would be unintended. Then a spectator (the child's mother) takes her by the hand and leads her away. An unintended autobiographical encounter (of my identity and personality) collides with my *idiotic* negotiation of dance and performance art choreography that refuses to be concealed by me.[187]

Infectious Optimism: Remix

In *Wrap Me Up, Make Me Happy: Infectious Optimism Remix* (Harvey, 2006), I slowly and arduously wrap myself up with thick heavy cardboard and packing tape.[188] The choreographic script I set myself is:

> *Walk in, present myself to the audience, present cardboard and tape, wrap myself in cardboard, use only one roll of tape, seek scrutiny with my voice, don't give up, spin around when wrapped (like a Transformer), until dizzy, try to fall over helplessly, pull tape off (like a strong-man), downplay this performance, walk away.*

I walk on stage, I present myself by attempting to stand still before the audience, making eye contact with them, inviting them to gaze at me, to scrutinize everything they see.[189] Drawing attention to their scrutiny is a significant part of this work, as it tests their and my interpellation just as with *In the Round*. I walk out, collect my cardboard and packing tape and return to place it on the stage floor, 'ready to begin'. I attempt to use only the same roll of tape, as though it is precious and its *force* binds me, as though it is a trace of the underwriting other.[190] It is a physically straining task that feels difficult to achieve as I get stuck in precarious positions, where I take what appears to me (and to some viewers who talk to me

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[187] While this is not unlike one's friend yelling something out when one performs, as I repeatedly experience with *In the Round*, or even when one's hair unintentionally gets in the way and someone shifts it while you continue performing a structured choreographic script, this incident goes further by calling me up in terms of norms of ethics and responsibility to viewers, to my family and my sense of (institutional) 'professionalism' that I have previously experienced in public performances in dance choreography and performance art.

[188] As with other versions of the *Wrap Me Up* series (Harvey, 2004-2008), I wear the same white outfit I do for *In the Round*. This had been a 'costume' that appeared in most of my work until the end of this series. Reasons for using it iteratively, I discover later, include its 'worker' connotations, and my personal genealogical associations, as discussed earlier in relation to *In the Round*. See the accompanying DVD for documentation of this.

[189] Unlike my other performances, there are several children sitting in the front row. While my practice is not specifically aimed at children, and more specifically at audiences of experimental performance and conceptual art, their presence is not irrelevant. These children appeared to react as much as adults in my other versions of this series. I have also since been informed that most of them were the children of people who normally attend conceptual galleries and were used to seeing a range of art practices.

[190] I use approximately three rolls this time.

later) to be a considerable amount of time to work out ways of getting myself out of these moments, in order to continue with my wrapping. The more I wrap, I become puffed, sweaty, and physically strained, and the harder this task becomes for me. I accumulatively constrict my body with cardboard. In order to perform my wrapping, I often need to fall and land in precarious ways. Often I fall on my elbows and my stomach. I keep going with this arduous labour because I fantasize it promises my audience and me with a sense of purpose and achievement. I will, eventually, be covered in cardboard, like a heroic *Transformer* from TV.

Figure 39. *Wrap Me Up, Make Me Happy: Infectious Optimism Remix*, Mark Harvey (2006; Video Stills).
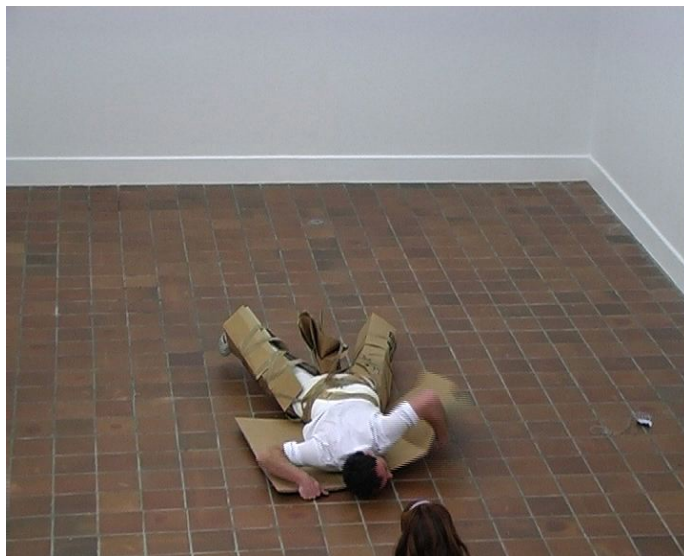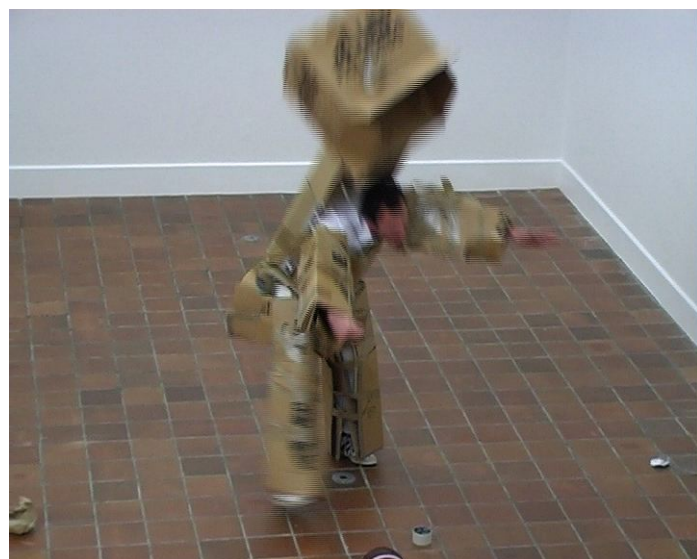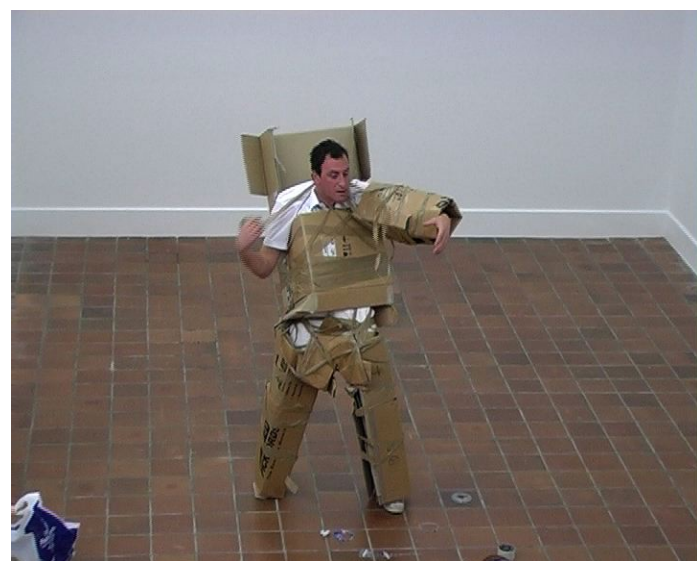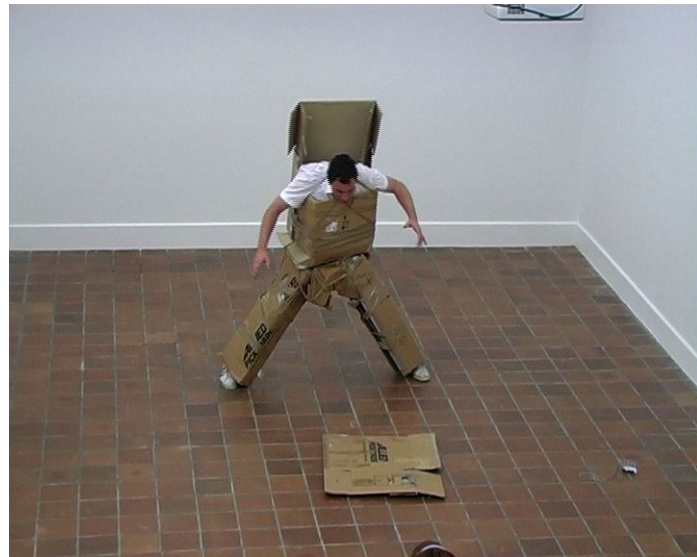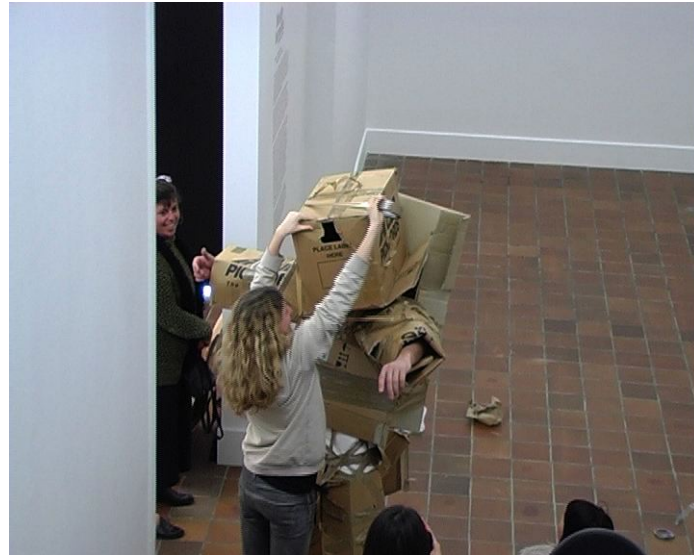
In *Infectious Optimism*' I repetitively ask very similar (perhaps unheroic) questions as in my previous work *In the Round* – "is this ok(?)", "should I do that(?)", "how about that(?)" and so forth. I pose these rhetorical questions to my audience and to myself after every few wraps or so.[191] By asking these questions I idiotically present an assumption to my audience that my work is failing and needs to improve in order to meet their standards, irrespective of whether viewers pass these judgements or not. By this, I aim to activate reflections for viewers as to how they judge and influence this live performance.[192] I repeat this text in a similar way to *In the Round* because I intend to test out re-working choreographic actions to see what I can discover from doing it with this form of accumulative labour. By repeating lines like these from performance work to performance work, there may be an element of stupidity, as some of my audience would have heard me say these lines before.[193] My wrapping, I note in later test-stages, was influenced by my dance and performance art genealogies and was policed through them. My repetitive text in relation to my wrapping plays on my sense of being policed, in relation to my audience's role, and I fantasize that 'we' are reinforced by the repetition of my actions. I am anxious that without this sense of repetition and reworking (of this version of the *Wrap Me Up* series) I will lose my relationship with my audience and will no longer 'be' a choreographer and live artist who has genealogies in dance and

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[191] As with *In the Round*, these questions are attempts by me to draw attention to my audience's normatively influenced readings of 'acceptability' in my live art practice, such as the fantasy-potential that what I am doing with this cardboard is stupid. I aim to rework this text into a more theatrically melodramatic performance, than with the durational form of *In the Round*, so as to experiment with reflecting on a more conventional theatrical structure, with beginning, middle and end, intended highs and lows. This calls up the narrative lineages of the dance theatre of Bausch (1978) and DV8 (1990/1993.

[192] This is an aspect that many viewers tell me informally later that they read into this performance.

[193] Just as with my *Wrap Me Up* and *Bullshitter* works in general.

performance art, and I will no longer be an artist who attempts to resist them.[194] When I have managed to 'somehow' wrap myself up I perform a 'transition'. I spin around as much as I can to get as dizzy as possible. I do it to test-promise yet again another 'stupid' and 'pointless' action.

This spinning calls up my many hours spent attempting to practice pirouettes in ballet, and master particular phrases in Modern dance. I then fall dizzy to the ground, then stand and spend the next while attempting to pull off my firmly clad cardboard 'like a heroic strongman'. This is also difficult for me, and causes me further strain, sweat and puffing, to the extent that I groan as I pull at the packing tape. Meanwhile, I attempt to unheroically project more failure into my labour by stating that the work has not been successful, conforming with *my* fantasies of my audience who are currently critiquing my performance in their minds and finding fault with it. I say: "yeah, you're right, this isn't working", "no, I agree, it's not working", and "yeah, that's right, I need to try this another way." This is also aimed at idiotically calling up viewers to reflect on their own processes of judgement and their evaluation of my choreographic labour along with their appraisal of my evaluation of the same labour. It is revealed later that my actions call up idiocy by avoiding a sense of rhythmic timing and somatic flow normative to Modern dance, while activating the banal that is generally common to performance art and conceptual dance.[195] I promise falling over and feign it when I cannot tape body parts and, when dizzy from spinning like a 'macho-Wonder-Woman', feign 'falling from being a hero'. Again, these are not helpless falls. They are intended, despite my genuine instability.[196]

I aim to 'raise the bar' each time by choosing to use cardboard that is thicker than in previous instalments of my *Wrap Me Up* series so as to increase the difficulty of my workload, to more palpably call up a sense of idiotic struggling. Performing a sense of struggling is intended to reveal and foreground my work effort as central to my promises of falling as failing. I find it almost impossible to manipulate the thick cardboard with my hands. Persevering with this labour of struggling promises a sense of purpose that calls up my athletics and dance training and endurance norms in performance art where physical challenges are valued. It reveals my sense of material processing as a norm in performance art. Struggling with this cardboard promises failure. This positions me as subservient to an

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[194] In essence the same applies to me reworking falling in doorways in my *Bullshitter* series. Without re-staging it, and repeating its individual action of falling, I might no longer identify as a choreographer and artist.

[195] I am thinking of works by Acconci, Nauman, Graham, Rainer, La Ribot, Le Roy and Bel.

[196] They are haunted by Ader's premeditated falls that on the surface appear unintended. La Ribot's slow-falls that play with 'everyday' falling in a normative sense, appearing helpless, ghost my falls in a similar way although I do not attempt slow falls like her.

audience that masters me. There is a moment in this performance where I find the cardboard so tough to manipulate while I tape myself up so thoroughly that I can almost no longer move my limbs. After several 'unsuccessful' attempts I cannot place a box on my head and tape it up. It is a moment of arrest, where I turn to my audience and say: "help". After a pause, with me just standing, barely, an audience member stands up and places the box on my head and tapes it on tightly. In *Helper's High'* (an earlier work in this series) I made the 'on-the-spot' decision to do this at the same moment in the performance, as an unplanned action. Resultantly, I have adopted this as a contingency for this piece, if I cannot physically manage to attach the box after several attempts. I adopt it with the intention of breaking the flow of my physical and socio-cultural distance with my viewers and it further tests the relationship I have with them. I now rely on them (someone) in order to make my performance happen, with their gaze, their presence and in this case with their participation. I do this also to test my sense of normative theatrical distance with my viewers. Several spectators have since responded to this by telling me that they felt it was not a 'break in the flow' of my performance, but a moment in which they perceived actual desperation, adding to their experience of the performance being an 'emotional roller-coaster' for them. This moment also tests how I expect some spectators want to 'get up and help me'.[197] But I fantasize that they will not. As with all of my works, I have set up a distance between audience and me that is resonant of dance and theatre on stage, where 'it does not feel appropriate to intervene'.

Falling: Repairing: Crawling

Repairing

Infectious Optimism Remix and *Performance: Arrival* provide examples of how I promise a sense of repair via my idiotic promises of falling and being fallen. 'Repairing' in general terms is inherent to falling and failing and refers to one's effort to return to the 'original' position before falling. It can only be promised, as there is no absolute return. A quest for repair is just as much a part of falling and being fallen in my genealogies. It manifests in attempting to be heard (by attempts to repeat messages), in training harder to fix mistakes for 'next time round' before the 'next dance class' and 'next race', and in 'rebuilding the bricks that have fallen over in the wind'.[198] Yet, these are promises of repair, not authentic repair because

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[197] Many viewers have informed me in earlier instalments of this series that they feel like getting up and helping me, with or without this explicit call for assistance.

[198] I always stand up again after falling in *Performance: Arrival'*, as Bausch does in *Café Muller* though without someone picking me up as she often has. I always manage to get myself back off the floor from my (physical) falls in *Infectious Optimism'*, just as La Ribot does with her slow falls.

these falls promise to be helpless. There are, therefore, no authentic falls to repair for me. *Infectious Optimism*' and *Performance: Arrival*' also promise a dynamic of repair with my viewers in this practice, with inviting interaction and participation with my text, and self-infliction of bodily stress and pain with bruises, grazing and muscle strain.[199] In *Infectious Optimism*' I promise audience repair via requesting feedback. I promise repair in both works by inviting spectators to feel empathy for my bodily trauma and desire to physically rescue me from this. As several spectators have implied in their subsequent conversations with me, my struggles and strains and bruising in these works invite them to 'take me seriously', to feel like witnesses to my embodied catharsis, to sometimes feel the need to 'help me out of this', while sometimes feeling a sense of moral dilemma over the light injuries I cause myself.[200] Yet, I repel repair through my text being rhetorical, particularly in *Infectious Optimism*'. It also does not ask for them to answer. This text defers and displaces my quest to know if my performance is 'acceptable, 'unacceptable' or anything in between, as it searches for the underwriting other (that has a hand in writing it) to repair it, and not just the audience This only foregrounds the illusiveness of the force of the other, and the impossibility of it giving an explicit and finite answer. I also repel repair through testing of my gaze in relation to normative conventions in the use space in public performances.[201] From the start of each of these works, I spatially structure them to encourage viewers to conform with and be policed by Western cultural public codes of the theatre, galleries and public performance spaces in terms of 'keeping their distance', in order for spectacle take place, allowing others to see and for them not to distract from the object of the performance (me). My rhetorical text enhances this distance because it is impersonal and not directed at anyone in particular. This insight into how my performances engage with repair emphasizes the essential role of my audience in that I idiotically require them to witness my falling and failing and to feel invited to 'repair me', yet keep their distance as 'silent witnesses'.

Present in these promises of repair is how, as a member of a deaf community, I have been interpellated to seek to be listened to. Yet, as is the norm with deaf culture, I choose to maintain my 'deafness' by not encouraging my audience to be situated where I can truly

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[199] This is despite my aim to minimize injury by applying somatic techniques to increase my felt level of kinesthetic ease and comfort, as suggested earlier on. My works test the performance art norm to seek participant involvement as repair, such as the intimate one-on-one works of Kira O'Reilly (Zerihan, 2010: 35-42). With her 'skin works' like *My Mother* (2003) that activate 'moral catharsis', one-on-one intimacy and a sense of repair with spectators: sharing stories about their mothers or asking for consent for her to cut herself (ibid.).

[200] On this issue, see Vergine (1976/2000: 8)

[201] This happens when I gaze at spectators in *Infectious Optimism*' and when I look away in *Performance: Arrival*'.

listen to them.[202] My promises to invite audience repair in my performances, and its resultant sense of performer-audience 'distance as deafness' also calls up questioning as to whether true intimacy in theatre, gallery and related performance contexts is possible. Theatrical codes of public display and mimesis are inherent within such modes of spectacle, where a sense of distance is always maintained between viewers and performers, and the interpellating other always has a hand in authorship.[203] The moments of arrest in *Infectious Optimism*', where I ask for help to attach the box to my head, and in *Performance: Arrival*, where my own daughter stood in the way causing me to pause, also test audience repair in related ways. While the distance between my audience and me appears to be broken, I do not 'let down my guard', as I continue with the same distancing composure and persona that I have beforehand. I do not interact with these spectators in any other way and in so doing maintain the audience-performer distance I have set up. In a similar way, when I obstruct patrons from entering the gallery by performing in the doorway in *Performance: Arrival*, and some struggle to get past me, I invite interaction with them on a visual and spatial level as a form of repair. But, I still maintain a sense of physical distance from them by maintaining a sense of 'stilled' composure in not publicly acknowledging them. My distance and 'deafness' is maintained in these instances, despite me feeling very aware of the changes in 'being in the moment' and a sense of related vulnerability I feel while performing, which these occurrences of arrest occasion.[204]

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[202] This reflects on how many deaf people and deaf commentators have promoted deafness as a positive way of being and a culture with distinctive frameworks of normalisation. There is a faint shadowing here in my work's sense of 'deafness' in Graham's *Performer/audience/mirror (1975/2006)* where he requires his audience to witness and experience his and their own scrutiny, but *from a distance*. My work departs from this with my engagement with manual labour and physical trauma on my body, among other differences.

[203] This is despite how some works such as *Café Muller*, for Heathfield, open a space for considering repair, in terms of performers catching performers and spectators 'carrying' performers. However, for Heathfield, with Bauch's play with temporality, in her 'slowing' of time, an audience is incapable of being carried along, resulting in an inability to sustain the work of repair (Heathfield, 2006: 191-194). Even when spectators are encouraged to touch, this distance is maintained, as is shown in *Infectious Optimism*. Private worlds can never be completely shared between performers and viewers. A metaphor for this is one from my Dutch family: while the windows are open and one is nude, one still keeps 'personal' things to oneself. We may contrast this with the comment by Read in "Say Performance," where he invokes the "Emperor's New Clothes" in defining the exceptionality of the bare exposure of certain Live Art performers. He quips that they might reply something like: "Yes, we are naked but we have nothing to hide" (Read, 2004: 243).

[204] Uncovering of repair in my practice calls up a reading of Goat Island's *When Will September Roses Bloom?* (2005/2007), where they set out to explicitly explore the question of what it means to repair or 'when to repair.' As Read notes, Goat Island engages with notions of repair in relation to explicitly political (though non-politically-aesthetic) response to hegemonic 'super powers' in an age of "right-wing retrenchment," in addition to the company's own finality of existence (2008: 251-252). See Stephen Bottom and Matthew Goulish, *Small Acts of Repair* (2007). However, my practice departs from Goat Island with my idiotic repetitious endurance actions that cause physical trauma to my body, in relation to playing with my relationship with my audience. *When Will September Roses Bloom?* activates reflections on repair through a poetics of physical actions and text that is more conventionally theatrical, with dramatic characterisation and scripting, under stage lights, keeping an audience at a safer distance in raked seating. All of this emphasizes their strong theatre influences. A further

As discussed earlier, *In the Round* engages with promising being fallen and failed in terms of me plunge-crawling with my body while lying down on the horizontal flat plane of the floor.[205] My crawls feign being fallen, from the position of identification as a white Pakeha man, assuming the image of the stereotypical and archetypal colonizer in New Zealand or elsewhere. I am therefore situated in a culturally privileged position.[206] By taking up a position that appears subservient to my audience—plunge-crawling on the floor at their feet—I get dirtier and dirtier, evidenced by my white clothes. In response to Pope.L's *The Great White Way*, *In the Round* poses the question: what does it mean if a white man presents himself in a subservient position on the colonized flat-plane? In one sense, by me presenting myself in relation to *The Great White Way* I potentially empathise with, yet play lip service to, the colonization and cultural marginalisation of indigenous peoples here in Aotearoa NZ (Maori, in particular).[207] *In the Round* is, however, more focussed on exposing me called up as the choreographic-author than being the image of a colonizer. This reading of *In the Round* foregrounds me as a named white man, who cannot escape from cultural and political readings to do with colonization and marginalisation of people not of the same image. In some ways, this topic is an unintended 'can of worms', but this is indicative of this practice-led research, where I, as the artist, cannot plan and fully control the insights and discoveries that will be dug up by my practice.[208]

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perspective on 'repair' though one not pursued directly in this thesis, is that of 'empathy' as developed by Leigh Foster in *Choreographing Empathy* (2011). I am to follow up on this framework, particularly with respect to unravelling the complexity of a *psyche* and *soma* that is implied in orthodox understandings of empathy.

[205] Reading this piece in this way is now ghosted by Pope.L's crawls and group crawls in *The Great White Way* (2002-2007, cited by Lepecki, 2006: 100-101) as being fallen in cultural and political terms. This relation was unintended at the time of *In the Round* and for the following year, when Pope.L performed this work at the time I was performing *In the Round.* While his crawls are intended to question the marginalisation of African Americans through performing on 'the colonized flat plane', as Lepecki notes, my plunge-crawls are aimed at questioning concerns with performance that have a politico-cultural import with respect to its fields of practice, rather than with specific issues of racial injustice.

[206] In contrast, Pope.L takes up a stereotypically marginalised position and potentially questions my stereotypical role of cultural and political privilege.

[207] In this case it is no coincidence that I trace my personal (genetic) genealogy to early NZ Pakeha colonizers. Further research could shed more light on this topic however.

[208] It is not possible to avoid a reference to Pope.L's crawls, because for me it has been the closest physical example of another artist's work to *In the Round*, despite its points of difference. One other point of difference between *In the Round* and *The Great White Way* is in Pope.L inviting his audience to participate in group-crawls, perhaps an invitation to empathise with the artist. I invite audience 'repair', with some spectators walking with me and answering me back. In my work I 'keep more of a distance' with viewers, than does Pope.L here, by not inviting them to physically experience what I do.

6 1/2

So Far

Anticipations and recollections

As with my previous live performances, this test-stage begins by spending time improvising with physical actions on a studio floor as somatic testing, to attempt to discover what responds to, yet extends, what I have so far choreographed in previous works as part of this project. Over several sessions, I start and aim to once again 'throw everything in the air' that I have *so far* made, just as I often have before. I do not use text as yet. I simply attempt whatever comes to me as free-association, based on the goal of developing *idiocy* through banal actions. As in my other works, this is, in one sense, not unrelated to Freudian free association.[209] However, I only use my body for this. Videoing myself, I start by lying down and take as long as I can until I begin to repetitively sway, hop, slide, crawl. This builds to a jump, bounce and roll against a wall. I propel myself, spin, balance, and run in as many combinations as possible until, after approximately two hours each time, I give up with exhaustion. Many of these actions are repeated and evolve into other actions. They promise a sense of productivity for me because I may later select something from them. What resonates with me the most is running-backwards. It presents a sense of embodied idiocy as

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[209] As for instance discussed by Malcom Macmillan (2001: 167-175).

'pointless risk' in its banality with the potential of me crashing into something and falling over (helplessly). It is hard to sustain for a long period of time, revealing my workload and hinting at my performance-art lineage in this way. Attempting to fall over backwards also resonates with me. I have been doing it in other works recently, particularly in the *Bullshitter* series, which my *body* remembers.

Figure 42. *Digging For New Insights in the Dirt in the Dark*, Mark Harvey (2005/2011; Video Still).

After several studio practice sessions like these and watching them back on video, running backwards and falling appear to promise the greatest sense of workload, productivity (in particular, conceptual productivity), yet promises pointlessness and stupidity, particularly if repeated. I observe that this is the case when I pause between repeating runs and falls, as this appears to emphasize these iterations by leaving spectators and me time to contemplate the actions. This intermittent pausing also calls up a sense of waiting and action-potential, as though I am listening to instructions before resuming my travelling-falls, as though I call up moments of listening to the traces of the underwriting other which is, of course, my psyche as invention of the other. I refine this material, in reflection on my earlier live performances in attempting to make a more 'disciplined' and serious work. This is reminiscent of balletic and Modern dance training for me when before and during a performance my body would be limbered up and focussed and attuned to carrying out my and others' choreographic scripts. Attempting to work with a sense of discipline, I find, aids me in creating a minimal and rhythmic set of actions, in the form of a choreographic script. An aspect of this discipline is

the rule that I attempt to avoid doing anything outside of this script, as arbitrary and contingent as it is. It also provides me with the promise of a sense of test habit, where I attempt to balance out, in normative terms, my methods of choreographic actions with not doing 'just anything', while attempting to be open to new insights in what I might discover from performing these actions. I attempt idiocy through this minimal 'disciplining' by consciously attempting to be disciplined, serious and professional.

Resultantly, *so far* my choreographic script is:

> *Stand still near a corner of the room, very slowly attempt to fall backwards, into walking backwards, keep falling backwards, go backwards in a circle that traces the edges of the room, get faster and faster, until I am at my fastest, pause in my starting position, catch my breath, settle, say something to my viewers, repeat this until 10,000 kilojoules are burned up by my body.*

This script calls me to perform repetitious cycles of falling backwards with my upper body, leading from the top of my head, that helps to propel me from standing into walking into running. While I do this I can see the ceiling, and other things in my peripheral vision. I use them as cues to navigate my intended circle around the room. I stop at the moment I feel I cannot go any faster and attempt to pause until I imagine that I am still. This can last up to 30-40 seconds *so far*. During each pause, I attempt to stand still and relax, I catch my breath and state one short line such as "let me know", "it's coming" or "you'll give it to me". These are attempts at calling up a sense of futurity and the promise of discovery with the piece.[210] Starting and stopping, walking and running, this piece calls up a training regime, like a 'get fit quick and lose weight' programme, hence a play on this with me attempting to burn off 10,000 kilojoules. I ask: what can 10,000 kilojoules mean for me? This 'measure' comments on how most professional dancers I have known, like me at times, have welcomed the interpellation of fitness training, with a quest to gain 'the body beautiful', so that we promise to be more desirable as embodied 'choreographic tools'.

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[210] I think again of the conversation between Forsythe and Birnhaum where, for Birnhaum, the future is but a figure of speech that also drives, at once 'new' and not 'new'.

Figure 43.
*Taking Steps
Backwards*,
Mark Harvey
(2010; Video
Stills).

As a potential live performance this set of actions operates as a belated *and* anticipatory 'warm-up' before the game begins. This choreography will be performed after I have already performed four pieces, that is, re-worked versions of my four previous pieces outlined in the last chapter. So, by the time I perform this new piece I anticipate that I will already be fatigued. *There will be no need to warm up by then*. And after this, I plan another performance that all this warming up promises to prepare me for, that arrests my desire to move, that plays with my desire to being moved, that calls up further presences in relation to audience repair.

7

Needs Improvement

I've never told the truth, so I can never tell a lie. (Tom Waits, 1978)

Failure is not an option. (*G.I. Jane*, 1997)

You can't handle the truth. (*A Few Good Men*, 1992)

Figure 44. *Oh Dear*, Mark Harvey (2006; Video Still).

Nearly there, but not quite, keep going, needs more work…

With this conclusion to the PhD exegesis, I want to briefly go through six key arenas that the thesis has engaged with, in terms of the most important contributions of this research to what I have termed, in its generality, choreography in the expanded field. Initially, I want to succinctly provide what I have read as a cutting edge of contemporary thinking on performance practices, giving due consideration to those practices themselves. This is what I have demarcated as my field of engagement, where I consider knowledge is for cutting. I then want to offer in summary terms my own practice as one that responds to the field I have outlined, but responds to it critically and in a way that aims to renovate it. Core to this is my understanding of the ontological relations between the promise, labour and worklessness. Thirdly, I need to bring concise concluding remarks to my continual invocation to *idiocy*, in ways that are at odds with the strong delineation offered by Lepecki. "Choreographing idiocy in the expanded field" never aimed at being a repeated mantra, a cute label or a transgressing overture for this thesis, but rather the heart of a way of conceiving, affecting and perceiving a movement-writing underwritten by *différance*. We recognise with the ontology of 'stilling' something essential to movement.

The fourth key summative engagement concerns the movement writing economy of the promise as a future to be made good, as a credit line to the other who gives surety for my

179

name and what it nominates, who inescapably signs my work. As unconditional, the promise is impossible. It already harbours failure and falling, being fallen. There is a call to repair, to make good the bad debt or conscience. Of course, 'repair' is no guarantee for things actually getting better. The fifth approach opens how we have engaged phenomenology as that which reveals some basic structures whereby a thing shows itself showing. We recognise that all phenomena, in the sense of *phainesthai*, are ontologically self-showing. How they are so construes their 'what-being'. We explore how performance ontologically structures our being-in a world and being-with others. Finally, and in concluding, I locate something like the training circuit that has made me what I am, a circuit that stretches between what I have incessantly referenced as the iterative interpellated 'call' to be and the 'ear' of the other, an 'ear' whose 'hearing' is the originary possibility of that call. I engage my genealogy and why the confluence of Nietzsche and his 'disciples' made me a better performer.

Fields of lethe

We have often made reference in this exegesis to the notion of revealing or 'un-concealing' with respect to critical approaches to dance choreography and performance art. We understand that Read places particular emphasis on an un-concealing that the exceptional may bring, the 'barely bare' of Live Art. So too does Lepecki emphasise, with 'conceptual' dance, a political unconcealing with respect to a radical rethinking of the choreographic. His thinking does not simply herald a new, an avant-garde with respect to new 'forms'. Rather, he approaches, historically, genealogically, such that the originary writing of a 'movement-writing' is assayed anew and the discipline's 'history', wholesale, is rethought. Claid's understanding of the 'still act', coincident with Lepecki, opens ontologically, not to movement-being but to something fundamental to revealing, unconcealing being-with as such. How am I with another? Stilling is not a movement technique but a mode of revealing. Or, rather, before it is a movement technique it is a mode of revealing. Forsythe, like Read, places emphasis on truth and error, history of a lie, on what we recognise as something commonplace in Nietzsche's thinking, though equally significant for the philosopher Heidegger, who famously encapsulated the work of art as "truth happening in the work," where "truth is non-truth." Anyone who has spent any time with Heidegger's writings, across many of his lecture courses, will recognise the small obsession he has with *Aletheia*, with "truth" as "unconcealing." This "truth" he opposed to "truth" as correctness, as verification or ratio, truth as rationalisation, measure, quantification but also qualification where one wants definition and closure. The "opposite" for the Greeks to *aletheia* was not falsity but

pseudos, that which feigns by dissimulation. The word itself is formed by a common Greek grammatical construction of the 'privative a,' a prefix that deprives a more originary word. That originary word was *Lethe*, almost never used in Greek. It means concealing as oblivious "forgetting." Un-concealing, revealing, is a bringing to showing of what shows, a *phainesthai*, or phenomenon. The most famous "use" of *lethe* is in Plato's myth of the afterlife, at the close of his *Republic*. Running through the field of *Lethe* is the river of forgetfulness. Anyone who drinks from its waters remembers nothing. The souls of those to be reborn are obliged to drink so as to erase memory of a past life.

Why this small tutorial on Heidegger's understanding of unconcealing? We would not need to conclude, to sum up, if you had a perfect memory. A quick test: what was chapter five concerned with? But, in this writing here and now we do not want (a) to repeat everything, or (b) ensure we correctly verify what we supposedly said earlier. Rather we want to unconceal what always already was on our mind, what we hope we (you) have remembered. But this also has everything to do with the fields of engagement I have just alluded to, those of a politics of choreography, the exceptionality of bare life, test-labour emphasised by Heathfield (I overlooked that earlier), Claid's I-You exposure in stilling and the question of failure and the lie we see with Forsythe and Read. When Heidegger mentions 'forgetting', he is not referring to your pin number or the name of someone just introduced. He is referring to the forgetting of Being, what ontology is, how the question of 'being' has become scientific, truthful as verification. We recognise in what I am framing as my cutting-edge field that ontology is foregrounded as the consideration of dance choreography and performance choreography as something other than historicist or technical exactitude. In Read's terms, all of the alibis are recognised for what they are, not dismissed but recognised and a particular horizon of possible knowing emerges, in general, with the exposure of a "without alibi" that is an ontological disclosure. This is how we read Lepecki's conclusion to his book that radically dislodges the perspectival vanishing point of dance's melancholy loss.

Working the field

How are we placed in this field? I have time and again emphasised somatic labour and a body's trace-structures, imprints and markings that enable it to *know* what it is. I keep coming back to the division of the *soma* and *psyche* and try to work through this binary. An understanding of the field has this binary as a great legacy: it gives and it takes. I try to work through it with the gay science of Nietzsche, with an irony I picked up from Ronell, with Foucault's relentless negotiation of an understanding of knowledge as power's inscriptions on

bodies. There is also Derrida's relentless deconstruction of this binary, not inverting the dominance of psyche, such that a "materialism" of the body wins out, but a deconstruction: making undecidable just where one might draw the line between them. Hence, for this self it is the other who determines, what in his writing on Nietzsche's ear, Derrida calls "Otobiographies." And there is Butler, who explains the mechanics of all of this in her diverse appeals to performativity, interpellation and subjectivation. But crucially, for me, the labour is *promised*. That's it. That's all anyone can do, I promise my name and my self to the 'work.' While there is labour, it is not thereby the 'work.' There is a worklessness to the work. This is something I recognise in the ontological questioning undertaken by Blanchot concerning the workability of a work. In Blanchot's terms what I produce are bodily movement phrases and occasional vocalisations in their meaninglessness as sounds and interrupted bodying. His question is, in the "that it is" of a work, how does one ever get from the exceptional exposure of a "that it is" to any question of meaning. This is particularly the theme of Blanchot's "The Essential Solitude." What he means by 'solitude' is not equivalent to Lepecki's solipsistic idiocy. Here there is something more ontological at stake. My practice aims at encountering the "that it is" of choreography in the expanded field as the unconcealing or disclosure of labour as promise.

If there is something essentially different for Lepecki and me with respect to 'solitude' as marker, we want to attach this difference to our working with the allied notions from Derrida concerning *différance* and the 'without alibi', a *différance* at once the same one, that is both with and without alibi. My performance practice aims at this exposure, this baring of a life that cannot do without its fabulations but cannot, politically and ethically, hold them to be the summation of a self. Hence we understand Blanchot's invocation, at the conclusion to his *The Disavowable Community*, to a worklessness that exposes the "that it is" of an ethico-political aesthetics (Blanchot, 1988). *Différance* is the unconditional guarantee, at once, of the undecidability of meaning and of the production of meaning, the exposure to the archi-trace as the 'that it is' and the *necessity* of contingency, chance or throw, the falling of or into meaning. This is how I understand idiocy in my choreography in the expanded field, a stupidity that continually and ironically points to the necessity we make of sheer contingency when it comes to fabricating truths. These 'truths' are extracted from a body and severed as idea or ideal. *Aletheia*, the unconcealing of 'truth' concerns the ontological disclosure, not of the severing *per se* but of the fallenness of 'truth' when it comes to its idols. We promise the world. Every day. Idiocy is not just this promising of this world but the building of an expanded field of choreography as my worlding. The 'work' is phenomenal precisely in the sense of it becoming a self-showing of itself, the 'barely live' and 'barely art' that Read

emphasises. The 'work' is not that which is anthropocentrically deliverable to, accountable to or derived from an authorial expertise.

Credit risk

As we have reiterated again and again, the promise opens a future. More so, my future, any future is what is projective, what my project promises (for me, for you). As a credit line, it is made good, honoured, acknowledged, signed and authored by the other. We cannot reduce this 'other' to simply my good friends or enemies, my bank manager or parent. While all of these others do call me (sometimes shouting), their agency is primordially ontological in that the call is callable and 'hearable', just as the ear we discuss is on my head but equally not, ontologically speaking. In this sense, regardless of whether I clearly and definitively, responsibly and solvently undertake things decisively, I am, primordially, promising in all of this. In as much as my being is futural I am a promise. The promise, its responsibility, opens the possibility of not delivering. Hence, failure and falling are not promise's defaults but its genuine possibility. I am, essentially, as Heidegger, Derrida and Lepecki remind me, *verfallen*, fallen, thrown and chance. Promise is my necessity; chance is my possibility. That is why every making-good, every 'repair' repeats the cycle of test-promising. Repairing further entangles all of the reparations aimed at responsibly honouring my promises where they have fallen. It is here we engage phenomenologically with a self-showing of the relationality of dance choreography and performance art choreography, an idiotic choreography in the expanded field. We emphasised at the opening of Chapter 6, a 'thick description' of my practice, how we approach phenomenology. We recognised that we are in our world, we are essentially 'awhiling', in the sense of an 'I' who is carried along in a doing, a projective anticipation to be. This "I" is carried along in particular modes of being. We highlighted how performance carried that "I" whether one is 'performing' or 'performed to'. We also emphasised that while an "I" is carried along, this same "I" carries over, which is to say, finds significance that constitutes an historicality. The "I" is as much carried over here as well. We suggested that "carrying' suggests a supporting-transposing. "Stilling" may here be recognised, ontologically, as the essence of transposing. We also emphasised that, as primordial, carrying-with and carrying-over also open possibilities of not-being-carried-with and of leaving behind. These are ontological possibilities to be. We also recognise that, ontologically, and essentially, there is the possibility of not-supporting, of falling and failing. Promising, labouring and stilling then become the impotentiality to be, the exceptionality of bare life, a politico-ethical aesthetics of a 'work'.

The call and the ear

The question is no longer: "who am I?" but how I become what I am: what is this body capable of? My dead father(s) and my living mother(s), I have enumerated, endlessly my small history, all of my legacies that will never, in truth, be enough to make sense even of one small step I make, or hesitate to make, on the floor. My thesis acknowledges the haunts, the ghosts, the masters, the callings-up, the policing, the body-trainers, the mental gymnasts, all of them who already were what I am to become, the proper-name litany of significant others who teach me to think with my body. But my thesis emphasises that I am not the convergence of these reckoning forces, the more or less correct or poor version of their capabilities. They are not an archive of well-numbered references. They are, rather, a messy dossier, dropped too many times on the way to rehearsal, pages lost, soiled with fast food and cheap wine, read too early or too late, hated by some (including me) and misunderstood by some (including me). I am not the distilled model of their excellence but the dehiscence of their germinating potentials, the dispersed and entangled palimpsest of their over-determinations. My practice is not the addition to their raw measures. Rather it is the unconcealing, exposure of a bare life to the potentiality to be choreographic, which, without delay, would be its impotentiality: ear becoming loudspeaker, throat swallowing its words.

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Appendices

I am a wee bit stumped

Performance by
mark harvey

6pm, Tues 26th July
Newton Old Folks Hall
Gundry St. Newton
Auckland. Free Entry

PhD Submission
AUT School of Art and Design

I am a wee bit stumped

Performance by
Mark Harvey
26th July, 2011
Newton Old Folks
Association Hall

Six tests measuring my promises for choreographic idiocy in stilling, labour, falling, being fallen, and audience/self repair:

First Test
Promises: welcoming the floor
(attempted falls, attempted introduction)

Second Test
Round in circles: live feedback loop
(seeking the perfect plunge, seeking performance appraisal)

Third Test
Needs more work: developmental check-list
(fry pan weightlifting, fry pan improvement)

Fourth Test
Tell me about it: re-remix wrap
(transformer in recall, seeking supported recall)

Fifth Test
Burning 10,000 kilojoules: So far …
(moments of around in reverse, moments of tidying myself up)

Sixth Test
Proposed crescendo: any suggestions?
(crawling 10 cm each time, crawling with personal whispers)

On the reverse you will find the Abstract for an alibi and excuse (see earlier in this thesis for this).

Refreshments are available from the tearoom. There will be a five-minute break (approximately) between each of the tests.