

MOVING WITH THE EARTH: SITE-SENSITIVE DANCE IN TRANSITION

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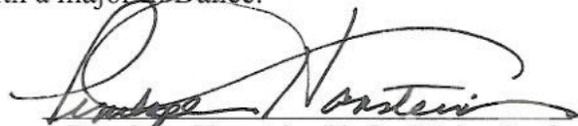
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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Tamara Ashley entitled *Moving with the Earth: Site-Sensitive Dance in Transition*. I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Dance.



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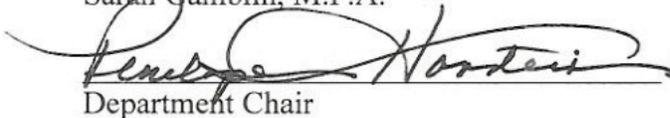
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ABSTRACT

TAMARA ASHLEY

MOVING WITH THE EARTH: SITE-SENSITIVE DANCE IN TRANSITION

MAY 2011

Over the past few years, I have cultivated a site-sensitive performance practice that seeks to move with the earth in ecologically sustainable ways. Often this work has been performed in partnership with others in collaborative inquiry. The nature of working with others, of co-developing knowledge and of developing trust and rapport in the sometimes challenging processes of working artistically in the environment informs the ways in which I approach this research. Through case study research of three ecologically concerned movement artists, I explore what it might mean to move with the earth: artistically, ecologically, sustainably and ethically.

In the dissertation, I discuss how improvisation serves as an entry to in depth emergent and participatory movement and dance practices within the lived in landscapes of each of the case study artists. The practice of improvisation is articulated as one that embodies dynamic, unfolding and emergent qualities. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *becoming* is explored as a theoretical pivot point of resonance in which the idea of a subject as an ecological entity is put forward. The idea of the subject as an ecological entity engaged in a process of *becoming* created methodological and ethical entry points for the research, and informed a research

design that incorporated heuristics, artistic practice as research, performance making and portraiture.

Through each of the chapters, I explore the ways in which the movement and dance knowledge of each of the artists informs a transition from site-sensitive to ecological performance. This transition is enabled by the conceptualization of the *Earth as Score* that informs a *Participatory Ecology* in which art practices and ecologically sustainable living are integrated. The idea of the subject as an ecological entity is then analyzed within the context of the artists' work and an ethics of ecologically sustainable movement practices proposes the idea of *Performance as a Ground for an Ethical Life*. Through the research, I illustrate how improvised durational ecological choreographic practices can inform civic dialogue and contribute to broader trans-disciplinary discourses on ecological sustainability and environmental change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
CHAPTERS:	
I. MOVING WITH THE EARTH.....	1
Walking into the Inquiry.....	2
Encountering Deep Ecology and Environmental Ethics.....	6
Becoming Sustainable.....	11
The Subject as an Ecological Entity.....	15
Becoming Body.....	21
Mapping a Path of Inquiry.....	29
II. TUNING TO THE EARTH: PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGIES...32	
Encountering the Artists.....	32
In the Same Field: Case Study as Appropriate Research Strategy.....	35
Artist as Researcher: Heuristics as Mode of Inquiry.....	35
Partnering Heuristics and Participatory Art Practices.....	38
Methodology and Procedures.....	39
Writing About Practice.....	42
Representational Issues in Ecological Knowledge Paradigms..	44
III. IMPROVISATION AND THE EARTH.....	50
Earth as Score.....	53
Walking and Working With What is There: Burnlaw.....	55
Stories that Arise on the Path.....	56

Everything Gardens: Nala’s Score.....	60
Scores as Containers: Working with the Water at Pen Pyn Farch.....	66
Dance as Container.....	70
Grounding an Ecological Perspective.....	73

IV. PARTICIPATORY ECOLOGIES: BODY, EARTH, COMMUNITY.....75

Body.....	75
Letting Nature In.....	76
Evolutionary Body.....	78
Earth: Valley as Teacher.....	82
Moving with the Wood and Water: An Individual Site-Sensitive Pedagogical Response.....	84
Embedded Body.....	85
Earth: Cultivating Fields.....	87
In Performance: The Trees at Burnlaw.....	89
Composting to Compose: Integrated Body and Earth Cycles....	92
Cleansing Nourishing Invigorating Earth.....	95
Community: Social Gardening.....	97
Participatory Ecologies.....	99

V. IN TRANSITION:
FROM SITE-SENSITIVE TO ECOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE.....101

Transitions: Fourth Walls.....	101
Sculpting through Walls.....	104
In Between Outside and Inside.....	108
Re-connective Tissues.....	111
Transitions: Grid to Off-Grid.....	115
Resilience and Resistance.....	116
Ecology to Economy to Ecology.....	118
Grounded Business.....	121
From Site-Sensitive to Ecological Performance.....	124

VI.	PERFORMANCE AS A GROUND FOR AN ETHICAL LIFE.....	126
	The Contract with the Audience: A Matter of Performance...	128
	Duration Matters: Ethics of Sustainability.....	129
	Between Artist and Audience: Ethics of Encounter.....	132
	In the Bones: Returning to the Subject as Ecological and Ethical Entity.....	139
	Improvisation: An Ethics of Leading and Following.....	142
	The Pleasure Principle: Creating Alternative Hedonisms as Ethical Response to the Ecological Crisis.....	151
	Choreography as Civic Gesture.....	154
	Performance as a Ground for an Ethical Life.....	156
VII.	MOVING WITH THE EARTH IN TRANSITION: ECOLOGICAL CHOREOGRAPHIC PRACTICES.....	158
	REFERENCES.....	173

LIST OF FIGURES:

1. Trees at Burnlaw.....91

CHAPTER I

MOVING WITH THE EARTH

The sky opens and rain starts to come down in stair rods. Visibility drops, winds pick up and our north-westerly facing receives the full force of the Atlantic weather arriving onshore as it meets the mountains. We are in the clouds. I am glad for the reasonable grips on my boots but my feet still slip inside them. I am co-leading a group of students down a fairly steep path to Buttermere in the English Lake District. I am hot inside and I am not sure if I am wet from sweat or the rain leaking through my clothes. It is a precarious 30 minutes. We are on a path but it is rocky and extremely slippery. We reach the valley floor, a road and a possibility to call a taxi or wait for a bus. We poll the group. Does anyone want to stop, go back or find shelter? With the sky still releasing all of its water, I am surprised at the unanimous vote to continue our planned walk around the lake. And then I find myself running and screaming with several others as we speed across the flat expanse of the lake's floodplain. I feel alive. I am saturated: wet inside and out.

The sky changes the walk. Rapidly descending clouds in mountain terrain transform this gentle traverse of a hillside into a deeper call on inner resources; wit, energy, persistence and greater attentiveness. Where dry rock offers traction and support, wet rock turns each transfer of weight into an in depth investigation of balance and maintaining grip that considers angle of foot placement, downward

pressure to be exerted, speed of weight transfer and sequence to the next step. The taken for granted action of stepping is visited anew in such conditions. Here, the step is given a similar attention to detail to that given in dance and body work and it is on this hillside that I find my dancing body in a most useful conversation with the ground.

As an improviser, I am interested in exploring a world that is in perpetual change as my perceptions of it continually change and evolve in synchronization with myself as a living dynamic organism. Over the past few years, I have cultivated a site-sensitive performance practice that seeks to move with the earth in ecologically sustainable ways. Often, this work has been performed in partnership with others in collaborative inquiry. Much of my work has occurred in the uplands of the UK, where working together with others is advised on the grounds of safety as well as for artistic benefit. The nature of working with others, of co-developing knowledge and of developing trust and rapport in the sometimes challenging processes of working artistically in the environment informs the ways in which I approach this research. This dissertation research pursues what it might mean to move with the earth: artistically, ecologically, sustainably and ethically.

Walking into the Inquiry

In the summer of 2006, concurrent with the commencement of my doctoral studies, I co-devised a large-scale site-sensitive choreography project along the 270-mile Pennine Way in England, with fellow artist Simone Kenyon. The *Performing the*

Pennine Way project offered me a sustained immersion in the land as a walker and inhabitant of some of the most rural areas in England. In this project, I noticed heightened sensitivity to weather and terrain, affecting mood, attitude and physical response. Over the 31-day performance, I developed a partnering relationship with the land through which I travelled, a dialogue between contours, bedrock, soils, gradients, winds, rain, sun and myself. This immersion in nature served as an initiatory experience in which I began to re-think performance, dance, movement and my broader participations with the world.

In the *Performing the Pennine Way* project, we destabilized the conventional artistic practice of creating an art object through which the work could be viewed and appreciated. We were not particularly interested in audience viewing our work, rather we were interested in those who came along to share the journey with us and to contribute to the emerging story of the work. In the project, some of our developmental work and conversations were concerned with tracking down the work itself as an art object (where is the work?). As makers, we struggled to identify where exactly the work resided, for it seemed to lack a definitive form and even in the accumulation of stories along the walk we found ourselves never able to settle.

We looked to other walking artists for reference, such as Hamish Fulton and Richard Long, whose documents of the walk became the artifacts with which the public interacted. Both Long and Fulton created texts and photographs that documented their locations but did not invite or expect audience to attend their actual

walk. Long's work often conveys literal information, such as the length of the walk or documented evidence of his presence in a landscape by photographing the imprints created in the ground. His first work, *A Line Made by Walking* (1967) was a photograph of a path that he made in his back garden by walking the same route over and over again. Fulton is more esoteric and abstract in his approach and will document photographs of summits with statements such as *this is not land art*. Examples of Long and Fulton's work maybe found on their respective websites at: <http://www.richardlong.org/> and <http://www.hamish-fulton.com/>. Fulton has also used the web as an artistic medium and has integrated sound recordings with his visual documents. As performers, Simone and I were interested in engaging the audience in the live event, which created both practical and artistic challenges.

With an awareness of the contingencies of meanings and the constant movement in all things, we encountered a certain reluctance to foreclose on structures and representational manifestations of meaning. We found ourselves constantly in a liminal space, where the potential for new meanings is never given up upon and where the potential for transition is always held in view. We were part of a performance that exists in multiple permutations, none of which are entirely satisfactory from a representational and repeatable perspective but remains creatively open to change. Each permutation embodies a fragment and a partial insight into the work through the specific conditions that informed its making. We resisted the formation of the art object at every opportunity. Part of our resistance to the

formation of a repeatable and representational vocabulary that might come to stand for the work was concerned with the tensions in time of the work. This work was about movement and change and we travelled along a path through continually changing landscape. Our performance was located in the interactions and encounters. One might assert that the walk itself was the art object and that the subsequent outputs were attempts to archive and re-represent what was experienced on the walk. Our outputs included a website, a book, a performance lecture and multiple video documents. We never settled on a definitive version of the work. This lack of tangibility, of reliable documents and archives and of our own ambivalence towards representation thoroughly destabilizes the role of the artist as a creator of products. In our commitment to being present with the art-work as evolving, Simone and I might be described as engaging in the cultivation of the art work as if it were a living organism.

It is this approach to moving that informed my particular approach to durational site-sensitive performance, where both environment and performer were positioned in an evolving and unfolding dialogue of encounters. While the spatial frame of the performance is completely unhinged by performances such as *Performing the Pennine Way*, the temporal frame remains, all be it in a very extended way in that the performance was bounded by the duration of a month. I became interested in durational practices that also sought to unhinge the temporal frame of the performance. Having spent a month being consciously aware of each and every

detailed interaction with the environment, I became interested in the ways that performance had framed an ongoing purposeful mindfulness in my interactions in the world. I found myself more receptive and sensitive to the environment and experienced myself in deeper participation with nature. I began to envision a more ecologically concerned art practice that in its gestures, designs, choreographies and relationships contributed to what I perceived to be ecologically healthy and sustainable. How do we move with the earth, sustainably, performatively, artistically and ecologically? Useful to contextualizing these questions are the discourses of deep ecology and environmental ethics.

Encountering Deep Ecology and Environmental Ethics

Arne Naess coined the term deep ecology in 1973. Naess was interested in how the integration of ecological scientific knowledge, experience and questioning could contribute to the development of an ecological philosophy of being. Deep ecology is broadly concerned with the interconnection of all life on earth and conceives the earth as a living organism. For example, James Lovelock's *gaia hypothesis* puts forward a definition of ecology where the earth is viewed as a self-regulating living organism. Lovelock defines *gaia* as "a complex entity involving the Earth biosphere, atmosphere, oceans, and soil; the totality constituting a feedback or cybernetic system which seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet" (1979, p.11). To regard *gaia* as a living organism is an invitation to come to know more deeply the ways in which one is a participant in the living

systems of the earth. Deep ecological perspectives generally describe human beings as part of the earth and its systems and works of deep ecology often seek to remedy perceived separations between humans and nature that are deemed to be part of the ecological crisis.

Some of those concerned with ecological crisis, such as Thomas Berry, have broadly articulated the need for a development of relationships of mutual sustainability and enhancement between humans and the earth. Berry writes that:

Whenever we forget our story we become confused. But the winds and the rivers and the mountains never become confused. We must go to them constantly to be reminded of it, for every being in the universe is what it is only through its participation in the story. (1991, § 36)

There are various versions of a story that articulates a gradual and, perhaps, unintentional separation from the natural world that supports human existence. Berry, for example, articulates a disconnect at the beginning of the agrarian revolution 9000 years ago, when humans first made permanent settlements and organized the land to yield more food than might have been needed. In the *Spell of the Sensuous* (1996), David Abram connects the agrarian revolution to the creation of more time and the subsequent invention of written language, culture and human media. Abram's thesis contends that the portability of the written word, in that ideas can be taken from place to place, initiated a separation of stories from the physical geographies that initially contained them. Abram traces this development to the present day. Human relations with nature are becoming so hyper-removed that our ecologies of perception are more

and more immersed in human manufactured materials, artefacts and experiences.

John Livingstone describes this situation where sensory stimulation is dominated by mostly human fabrications as “doing solitary in an echo chamber” (in Jensen, 2004, p. 61). Such critiques advocate for ecological points of view and some writers suggest ways in which ecological solutions might be found.

For Abram, the cultivation of first person perceptions of the world through the senses is an ecological imperative where:

A genuinely ecological approach does not work to attain a mentally envisioned future, but strives to enter, ever more deeply, into the sensorial present. It strives to become ever more awake to the other lives, the other forms of sentience and sensibility that surround us in the open field of the present moment (Abram, 1996, p. 272).

Abram is concerned with the over-engagement of the senses in what he perceives to be a mono-cultured human world where “our attention [is] hypnotized by a host of human-made technologies that only reflect us back to ourselves” (1996, p. 22).

Abram’s thesis in *The Spell of the Sensuous* suggests that the development of writing, in its enabling of peoples to transport their stories and create a media unhinged from the lived locale of the earth, has greatly contributed to relationships of separation between humans and nature. He writes that, “the ability to interact with our own signs in utter abstraction from our earthly surroundings – has today blossomed into a vast cognitive realm, a horizonless expanse of virtual encounters” (1996, p. 265).

Abram is interested in diversifying the sensual engagements of humans so that human beings might be in dialogue with the earth as much as one another. In *Animate Earth*,

Stephan Harding critiques the limitations of conventional science and writes, “can we let the science be like a juicy bone tossed to the rational mind to keep it happily chewing whilst the real work of developing our belonging to Gaia happens through our senses, our feelings, and perhaps most importantly, our intuition” (2006, p. 227).

For writers like Abram and Harding, an ecological perspective begins with sensing, feeling and intuition and is accessible for each person through the qualitative domain. Both Abram and Harding believe that change begins through individual insights and qualitative experiences and in their works they guide the reader towards what they consider to be ecologically just or good for the health of the earth. Harding is keen for the reader to gain experiential insight and throughout *Animate Earth* he encourages the reader to integrate first person exploration within the reading of the text. He couples scientific explanations of biological, ecological and geological processes with sensory explorations that invite the reader to cultivate felt knowledge of those processes in particular places as they relate to the processes of the body. Artists, who work through quality and sensation, are experienced navigators of the qualitative domain and offer much to this area of inquiry. For example, a perceptual exploration of nature might begin in the body with attention paid to the body in motion, in interaction with the world and in its everyday actions. Working with the physicality of the body allows for exploration of embodied relationships between nature and culture.

As a philosopher, Felix Guattari offers both critique and tools for action. In the *Three Ecologies*, Guattari asserts that an ecosophical approach, which creates an articulation between “three ecological registers (the environment, social relations and human subjectivity)” is a way forward in working through solutions that address the ecological crisis (1989, p. 19-20). The articulation of three inter-connected bodies, or ecologies, is a useful tool for analysis. Guattari’s work moves transversally between theorizing individual bodies, or what Guattari terms a “nascent subjectivity”, community, or what Guattari terms the “constantly mutating socius” and earth, or what Guattari terms “an environment in the process of being re-invented” with an assumption that the boundaries of each body or ecology are open, permeable and subject to change. Guattari’s work is particularly useful for developing an ecological understanding of how individuals, social communities and the environment are located in matrices of inter-relationship, change and effect, in terms of ethics, behavior and sustainability.

Guattari sees what he calls “integrated world capitalism” as a process of social ecology that dominates the construction of subjectivity “by controlling and neutralizing the maximum number of existential refrains” (1989, p. 34). In short, individuals are limited in the ways in which they can make their own refrains, have access to experiences, what they think and how they live. Guattari is concerned by what he sees as the homogenization of subjectivity. *The Three Ecologies* is an attempt to give the reader tools and a method that put into critical relation

subjectivity, a social ecology that manifests as diverse and malleable and in so doing deconstructs the dominance of *integrated world capitalism*, and the environment, with which sustainable relations are essential to human survival.

Deep ecology and environmental ethics have been informed by several trajectories of investigation that include eco-feminism, spirituality, ethics, philosophy, and, social and critical theory. What is of interest to me in this research is to consider how ecological ways of knowing enable ethical engagement in the world. In particular, how do dance artists approach and deal with ideas about ecology and the ecological crisis? How does one cultivate an ecological perspective that is integrative and inclusive of all potentials, while sustaining the health and well being of individual subjects? Guattari's ethico-political articulation offers ways to engage in the world but how are artists and practitioners also working through these issues both as lived locales and philosophical perspectives? Below I chart an ecological perspective that draws on an axis of work developed by Deleuze and Guattari, and Braidotti in order to propose that the subject might be thought of as an ecological entity in a process of becoming as a way of creating methodological and ethical entry points for the research.

Becoming Sustainable

The *Performing the Pennine Way* project offered both a practice-based and philosophical orientation to the ways in which I entered into this dissertation research. The project gave me an experiential insight into philosophical issues of sustainability

as a key ethical issue in ecology. It was in the *Performing the Pennine Way* project that I experienced the limits of my physical capabilities in ways that sensitized my awareness to the sustainability of my own body. When working at the edge of my limits of physical endurance, what mattered in the performance was a mindful cultivation of sustainability of the body as an ecological system of support, movement and energy. This mindful cultivation of sustaining the body involved paying attention to sensations and making intuitive in the moment decisions, where a matter of the performance was the ecological health of the body itself. I experienced movement as a means to know the world through the scale of my body and it was through what it could achieve on its physical limits that I explored my relationship to the Earth.

By experiencing the embodied limitations of my body, I came to understand sustainability as qualitative and limited by the capacities of my body. I learnt that I could make choices that would extend my ability to sustain the walk but perhaps decrease the quality of interactions and attention that I was able to give to particular aspects of the walk. I learnt that sustainability was not only concerned with endurance but with the quality and nature of that endurance. An idea for a performance can call for particular boundaries of participation and action. However, boundaries can be very different for each participant. Simone and I endured differently throughout the project. The scale of my body, its condition and acclimatization, both physiological and psychological, to the task at hand defined the limits of what I could achieve.

Also interested in an embodied definition of a sustainable ethics is Rosi Braidotti, a feminist Deleuzian philosopher. Braidotti writes that:

Ethics is related to the physics and biology of bodies. That means that it deals with the question of exactly what a body can do and how much it can take. This is the issue that I code as ‘sustainability’: how much a body can take in pleasure or enhancement of its potentials, as in pain or impoverishment of its *potentia* (or *connatus*). (2006, p. 129)

For Braidotti, ethics is an embodied process concerned with the quality change in a body in terms of what it can do and what it can take. In other words, ethics is a moving process affected by the limits and capacities of a body at any given time.

Braidotti examines how Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of *becoming* as it is articulated in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) can offer ways to develop multiple realizations of ethical sustainability. This notion of becoming is key to how Deleuze and Guattari regard the operations of the subject in the world and thereby the ethical orientation of that subject in the world. Deleuze and Guattari regard subjectivity as a continual process of becoming in which the subject is defined as a non-unitary “cluster of complex forces” or “qualitative multiplicity” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 94).

Deleuze and Guattari write that:

becoming and multiplicity are the same thing. A multiplicity is defined not by its elements, nor by a center of unification or comprehension. It is defined by the number of dimensions it has; it is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension *without changing its nature*. Since its variations and dimensions are immanent to it, *it amounts to the same thing to say that each multiplicity is already composed of heterogenous terms in symbiosis, and that a multiplicity is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors*. (1987, p. 275)

Of particular interest to this research is that the subject is conceived of as in a continual process of change and comprises multiple flows, energies, forces and intensities at any one time. The subject is no more than its interconnections to time, location and intersections of assemblages that change in each moment. Memory is the passage that enables the subject to construct a historic assemblage for itself. Not settling, continually moving and resisting the formation of the art object characterized my experience of *Performing the Pennine Way*. I moved through a landscape that was also moving and a body that noticeably changed daily in response. I developed hard calluses of skin on my heels. A sunny morning changed the color of my skin and a steep contour charged up my hamstring muscles. A conversation shifted my attention and I found trees, streams and rocks that became landmarks in memory and experience, that then came to traverse the present moment of memory from time to time. What I learn from reflecting on this experience in relationship to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming is that one does not become once, but over and over and over and over again in a continual process of finding out along the way.

That subjectivity and the subject are in continual states of flux, change and movement is a major tenet in the philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari, whose complex, elegant and comprehensive project is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. It follows that the limits of the subject are also in a continual state of flux, change and movement in a nomadic traverse of meaning making endeavors. Braidotti locates the ethical dimension of becoming in the limits and thresholds of the

subject in the process of becoming. If a becoming exceeds the limits and thresholds of the subject, there is the risk of not becoming, of being in stasis and, possibly, death. It is within this conception of becoming as limited by the capacities of a subject that the subject can be conceived of as an ecological entity whose sustainable becoming is an ethical concern.

The Subject as an Ecological Entity

It is useful to further explore Braidotti's proposals for understanding the subject, particularly in relation to how a non-unitary subject, as articulated by Deleuze, might be understood as an ecological entity. Braidotti extends Deleuze's ideas that existence is immanent and processes of differentiation, divergence or stratification are expressions that actualize a pre-existing field of potentialities. In Deleuzian thought, new knowledge is always made from that which is already there and as such subjectivity is embodied and embedded in a participatory process with the world.

This metaphysics of immanence is foundational to Deleuze's philosophical point of view, where he makes a clear distinction between the coupling of the actual and the virtual (immanent), as opposed to the coupling of the real and the possible (transcendent). For Deleuze, the possible is a projection of thought that offers a limited representation of what is possible where the boundaries of knowing have already been predetermined. For example, a curriculum for a choreography course might be an example of a document that prescribes a possible set of ideas to be

realized through the course. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze explains that the possible is defective in that it is “retroactively fabricated in the image of what resembles it” (1968, p. 212). The coupling of the real and the possible sets up a transcendent philosophy because the possible creates an external to be aspired to representation – an abstraction - to be realized and thus the possible seeks to transcend the real. In the realization of the choreography curriculum, one might find that it is not possible to realize all of the goals and activities articulated in the curriculum and thus the possibilities of the curriculum do transcend what is realized in the actual teaching of the curriculum. An issue with the real and the possible is that in setting up transcendence it also sets up the notion of failure and, if rigidly followed, the commitment to fulfilling the predetermined schema of the curriculum might inhibit responsive teaching and learning as participants in the class negotiate the curriculum. Deleuze explains that the virtual is a real place that comes to be actualized where the virtual, “does not have to be realized, but rather actualized; and the rules of actualization are not those of resemblance and limitation but those of difference or divergence and of creation” (Deleuze in O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 100). For Deleuze, actualization of the virtual is a process of becoming and it is an articulation of what really comes to be known, rather than what might be prescribed as knowing in a particular context.

Such a perspective locates meaning making as a micro-political and minoritarian process in which configurations of knowing are not repeatable. As

configurations of knowing shift so do relations that manifest a politics of becoming or how becoming manifests shifting and changing power relations for a subject. Of interest are the qualitative changes, the embodied differentials and the ways in which the actualization of the virtual configures difference for each and every subject in each and every moment inviting subjects to become minor in divergent multiplicities. In its constantly shifting qualitative multiplicities a subject is without essence, and is conceived of as nomadic, transversal, in that it is multi-relational to intersecting times, spaces and locations, and always moving.

Braidotti draws attention to the importance of distinguishing quantitative pluralities from qualitative multiplicities where quantitative pluralities are a strategy of “the political economy of global capitalism as a system that generates differences for the purposes of commodifying them” (2006, p. 94). Qualitative multiplicities, on the other hand, express “intensity, force or *potentia* (positive power of expression), which trace patterns of becoming” (1994, p. 94). Open-ended, always changing and moving into difference are characteristics of the subject as ecological entity. What this also means is that the subject is open to relationship with shifting forces, intensities and potentials that shift the qualitative multiplicity of the subject as it comes into inter-relationship with these forces, energies and potentials that are also shifting. Such dynamics characterize meaning making as immanent and non-essentialist.

Deleuze's ontology of the virtual has particular implications for the meaning making dimensions of a subject in a process of becoming. Because the virtual is always present for each and every person, the actualization of the virtual is individually unique, where each person creates her or his own differentiation in becoming. Deleuze's critique of the real and the possible and of transcendence acknowledges that in becoming each being creates differentiations that cannot be controlled from the outside. Moreover, the actualization of the virtual occurs before it can be described, for description is a retroactive and reflective process that occurs *after* the event. In other words, we do not construct our realities rather we enact our realities. This enacting of realities has particular consequences for the ways in which subjectivity might be understood in the work of Deleuze and Guattari.

The *enactment* of reality synchronizes being and doing, where conscious thought is participatory to but not controlling of what is emerging. There is a great deal more going on that contributes to the process of becoming than what can be experienced in the perceptual field of the knower. If becoming is enacted as a qualitative multiplicity and description occurs after the event of becoming, the idea of the conscious mind exercising free will and choice is brought into question because the conscious mind cannot know the full conditions that contribute to its becoming.

Braidotti usefully summarizes:

Whereas the body cannot exist from its surrounding totality, the mind is capable of thinking itself as an autonomous substance. This is its weakness, however, because in so far as consciousness fails to understand its

interconnectedness, the mind fails to understand also its own loves and hates and its interrelations to its habits, hence failing to understand itself. (2006, p. 149)

That consciousness participates in the emergent qualitative multiplicities of becoming, which gives rise to the conscious mind only partially coming to know in the process of becoming is of key methodological importance to the dissertation research. An ecological subject never fully knows itself nor the knowledge paradigms with which it participates. In the work of Deleuze, Guattari, Braidotti, and others who are interested in non-unitary ideas of a subject in a process of continual becoming, the human subject is conceived of without an essence, core or consistency. Such a point of view calls for a research inquiry that enables the researcher to engage in a process of becoming as she or he engages in the research process. That is to say that the researcher might acknowledge her or his own qualitative multiplicities and the partial nature of one's conscious insights as part of the research. As shall be seen below, I became interested in heuristics as a mode of inquiry that enabled my research process to be located in a context of change, learning and, in a Deleuzian sense, becoming.

The concept of *becoming* as articulated so far suggests that consciousness is contingent and unable to fully understand itself. As well as having a methodological implication for the research, to regard consciousness as contingent, partial and participatory to a broader qualitative field also has ethical implications to the

performing subject. Braidotti explains how consciousness comes to operate in non-unitary subjects in processes of becoming:

Consciousness is redefined accordingly not as the core of the humanistic subject, but at best as a way of synchronizing the multiple differences within each and everyone, which constitutes the ethical core of nomadic subjects. (Braidotti, 2006, p. 266)

While consciousness does not allow the knower to know all that can be known, it is what constitutes the perceptual field and it is what enables awareness and articulation of knowing for an individual. Braidotti's thesis suggests that consciousness might be thought of as an ethical radar that enables the subject to make the best decisions that one can with the available information. Because the information available to the conscious mind is always incomplete and decision-making processes operate in a context of variables, or qualitative multiplicities, some of which will never be known, the subject as becoming is also conceived of as embodying, but not necessarily being consciously aware of, these qualitative multiplicities.

That consciousness is also regarded as contingent means that the perceptual field can be similarly regarded as malleable, shifting and changing. What a subject can know and has the capacity to know changes in relation to the particular conditions that arise in her or his embodied field. Braidotti explains how it is the embodied nature of knowing that limits the potential of what might be known where "the embodied structure of the subject is a limit itself" (p. 267). While much of Deleuzian thought is concerned with multiplicities, forces and intensities that form clusters that

might be recognized as a subject, biological bodies give material limits even if those limits are bounded by the porous layers of skin. A body can be virtually anywhere but is always materially and geographically embedded and limited within that embeddedness. This embedded and limited capacity of bodies gives them an ecological dimension where sustainability is an ethical concern.

Becoming Body

Becoming earth. Becoming animal. Becoming, in this manner, fully human.
(Abram, 2010, p. 3)

It is the embeddedness of the embodied subject that gives an ethical dimension to processes of becoming. A theory of a limitless field of potential becomes a serious environmental hazard when applied to the management of a limited material world. When limits are exceeded, dysfunction occurs; dancers, through injury or fatigue, are compromised in their ability to embody movement patterns, and ecosystems, through resource depletion, are compromised in their ability to sustain life.

Environmental philosopher, Val Plumwood, is broadly concerned with the ways of knowing in western culture that prevent a more urgent and cohesive response to the ecological crisis, ranging from strategies of denial to naïve and inappropriate solutions. She, like many others, recognizes that one of the major inhibitors to moving on to what she calls more mutualistic and communicative models with nature is the “old anthropocentric model that binds our relationships with nature” (2002, p. 122). Plumwood summarizes that in, “anthropocentric culture, nature’s agency and

independence of ends are denied, subsumed in or remade to coincide with human interests” (2002, p. 109). Plumwood’s argument goes on to assert that this denial of agency and creation of nature as other constructs humans as colonizers of nature, engaging in exploitative rather than mutually constitutive relationships. The ecological crisis encourages the practitioner who acknowledges it, and takes it to be meaningful, to search for more ecologically sound definitions of dance that perhaps create alternative modes of participation in the world. *What might constitute an ecological choreographic practice? In what ways are practices altered and changed by a need to act ethically with regards to ecological sustainability?*

Dance practices are well positioned to address mutually constitutive relationships between nature and culture. Dance scholar, Ann Cooper-Albright notes that dancing produces bodies. The ways in which movement is designed, structured and performed creates dialogues between sensation and meaning that is embodied in movement forms. Concerned with the epistemology of the body in both contemporary dance and in culture, Cooper Albright considers there to be potential for cultural transformation in what she calls the “slippage between the lived body and its representation” (1997, p. 4). Cooper-Albright describes a “double moment in which performing bodies are both objects of the representation and subjects of their own experience” (1997, p. 13). Cooper-Albright activates dance practices and the lived body as sites of critical theorizing. She asks how and why are bodies formed and what do they mean for individuals, for the art form of dance and for society in

general. Her anchoring of theorizing in the lived body is a useful starting place for the development of more ecological ways of knowing.

The mutually constitutive relationship between nature and culture in the body is one that is concerned with becoming. Within the context of this research, it is important to point out that I regard these mutually constitutive relationships as integrated, shifting and changing from moment to moment and that the articulation of a differentiation between nature and culture is designed to create a pivot of comprehension, rather than a schema of operation. As Brian Massumi writes in *Parables for the Virtual*, “the border between nature and culture is unassignable” (2002, p. 237), and in so doing calls attention to what he calls the *hinges* that we assign to nature and culture in order to operate, differentiate and understand ourselves. As the body coheres into a field of action that integrates biological process with dynamic expression, the unassignable border between nature and culture manifests as process, dynamic, feeling and biological integrate into one field of action. What is at stake is whether the ways of moving and the relationships formed between bodies of nature and bodies of culture are offering becomings that are sustainable, ethical and, perhaps, enhancing? How does one become an ecologically sustainable body, over and over again, as one might, if located within the Deleuzian concept of becoming?

As a dancer who moves together in contact with others, in touch and with the earth, I am interested in the nature and possibilities of my participation in these

relationships. As a dancer I begin in and cycle back to the body and I find myself asking, what does the body know and what can the body teach me? The activity of moving and dancing through an imaginative and safe environment, can draw on the lived experiences of ourselves, others and world as body – in its fullest sense – to create a positive cycle of benefit – ecological, physical, emotional, intellectual and social. The body becomes as individual, social and ecological and is a constituent of an open-ended participatory evolving subject.

In the *Performing the Pennine Way* project, my own experience as an improviser informed by somatic practices and Contact Improvisation, largely drawn from the North American perspective, influenced my views on the performance as a series of duets; between Simone and myself, between ourselves and the landscape and between ourselves and the trail. Simone describes her practice as being partly inspired by Body Weather, a physical performance practice initiated by Min Tanaka in Japan in the 1980s and developed around the globe by former collaborators and members of his Mai-Juku performance company. As I have worked with Simone, I have become more familiar with Body Weather as a practice and approach to performance making. Both Body Weather and Contact Improvisation offer radical views on subjectivity worth exploring here in terms of the precedents offered for how one might conceptualize participating in embodied moving dialogues with the earth.

Min Tanaka describes Body Weather as:

a notion of omni-centrality. Contingency as well. “I” is not the center. The center is everywhere. It is to make something between a person and another. “I am...” does not always come first. It can be, it is a viable notion. But it may drift around and be identified with someone else or some other thing. This is true about human relations, meteorological phenomena, the sun, animals, and almost everything around us. A weather-like contingent and ever-changing relationship. (in Kim, 2006, § 22)

Body Weather researches relationships between the body and nature. Tanaka describes himself as a professional farmer and integrates his dance practice into the life of his farm. Perhaps the most interesting dimension to this research is the participative immersive experiences often created by Body Weather practitioners.

Australian practitioner Tess de Quincey describes one of her projects, *Dictionary of Atmospheres* (2006) as developing, “moving climates that traverse relationships as much as they traverse space” (2006, p. 3). In some contexts, Body Weather inspired practitioners blur the boundaries between self and landscape, inner and outer, into a participative realm of flows of energy, different rhythms and durations, such as human time and geological time, dreaming and awake states.

Contact Improvisation offers practitioners opportunities to explore their subjectivity from an embodied perspective. Susan Leigh Foster describes her view on the formation of subjectivity within the practice, “it offered an intriguing new experience of subjectivity wherein dancers became defined by the contact between them. Rather than two separate entities coming together, they merged with the momentum generated by both bodies, a momentum that took on a life of its own”

(Foster, 2002, p. 132-133). In its pure form, where two dancers commit to follow the point of contact shared between them, this merging of subjectivity suggests blurring of boundaries between self and other, where during the dance, the identity of the participants is merged in the completion of the task of moving together. However, Contact Improvisation as a practice and community, has been characterized as resistance to codification and to the assertion of formalised authority. There is not a way to practice Contact Improvisation, rather there are a series of ways and a community of practitioners who gather around these shared and evolving movement investigations (see Schaffman, 2001). For this reason, it is important to stress that the practice promotes polyvocal embodied understandings of subjectivity. However, the task of navigating shared weight between two bodies through touch in an open ended improvisational dance is perhaps the most recognisable manifestation of the form and contributes to experiences of participatory subjectivity in a continual process of becoming in which I am most interested. In Contact Improvisation, there is explicit opportunity to investigate a participatory subjectivity that participates in a living ecology of movement with other dancer(s). Might one move with the earth in similar ways? Dance artists are also exploring the possibilities of moving with the earth and in so doing are bringing forward questions concerning ecological relationship and participation in the environment as it affects both body and earth.

Embodied arts practices often deal with relationships between body, movement, experience and the environment, where the artist is considered to be

simultaneously shaped by and shaping her or his environment. Hubert Goddard writes, “when you change something in the body, the concrete body, you change his or her way of perceiving space” (Goddard, 2006, p. 34) and draws attention to the idea that if something changes in a person’s body, there is an idea that her or his perceptual matrix is also changed. If space is perceived differently, for example, the experience of distance, of proximity and of inhabiting that space may also change. Similarly, somatic practices are often described as tools for critically reflecting upon the particular embodiment patterns of one’s environmental and cultural matrix. Thomas Hanna writes “somatics is the field which studies the soma: namely the body as perceived from first person perception” (in Johnson, 1995, p. 341). A somatic practice offers a methodological strategy for collecting data on first person perceptual experiences of the body in participation with the world.

Some dance artists, particularly those interested in experiential anatomy and somatics, have developed methodologies and ways of working that seek to develop more participatory relationships with nature in the creative process. In *A Widening Field* (2004), Miranda Tufnell and Chris Crickmay offer the reader an experiential guide to coming to know the anatomy of the body through various nature immersion exercises. Through poetry and images, Tufnell and Crickmay place emphasis on processes of listening to and receiving nature in one’s perception. Their views resonate with those of deep ecologists who view human beings embedded in larger ecologies of participation.

Tufnell and Crickmay write that:

The land connects us to a sense of time and space beyond the scale of our own lives. As we look to the horizon, go out into the weather, sense the slow rhythms of growth and decay around us, we feel our selves entering a larger realm of action. (2004, p. 242)

Similarly, Andrea Olsen's *Body and Earth* (2006) offers an experiential guide to coming to know the body and earth in integration as one explores human anatomy in the context of the broader environment. Tufnell and Crickmay and Olsen draw many analogies between the body and the environment, such bone and rock and breath and air, as well as encouraging personal story-making, creative response and the individual journeys of the reader. In *Life on Land* (2007), Emilie Conrad traces an embodied evolutionary story of the human body. Conrad articulates a perspective of a human being as an embedded ecological and transversal organism by proposing that the body is understood through three intersecting anatomies – the cosmic anatomy, the primordial anatomy and a cultural anatomy. Conrad explains that:

the Cultural Anatomy consists of all the many cultural adaptations, circumstances, influences, and inhibitors imposed on each human being by environment, family and society. The Primordial Anatomy encompasses our basic material building blocks ...our actual fluids and muscles and bones...Our Cosmic Anatomy can be understood as pure potential. (2007, p. 5-6)

Conrad's work has resonances with Guattari's *Three Ecologies*. The participatory perspectives on subjectivity that are broadly encouraged by the approaches outlined above do suggest that there are many useful connections to be made across disciplines in the search for more ecological ways of knowing.

My coursework enabled me to gain an interdisciplinary perspective through reading and practicing broadly across the disciplines of dance, deep ecology, environmental ethics, post-structuralist and pragmatist philosophy, somatics and dynamic systems theory. The connections between some of these disciplines and the ways of interpreting the world that they create offer a great deal of potential in the cultivation of ecological perspectives that might enable the transition to more sustainable futures. As a dance artist, I chose to focus on the lived and embodied explorations of these perspectives as manifested in the practices of other dance artists.

Mapping a Path of Inquiry

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, *The Performing the Pennine Way* project fore-grounded many of the experientially informed research questions that have shaped this dissertation research. From the beginning of the research process, I have been interested in my own subjectivity as a knowledge inquirer and the ecological implications of the ways in which I approached the research. As such, in this chapter I have articulated a view of a subject as an open ended ecological entity engaged in continual processes of becoming, which is of methodological significance in the foregrounding of the research design. I have also drawn connections across the literatures of philosophy, deep ecology and dance to illustrate how participative and embedded ways of coming to know are considered to be of ecological import across the disciplines. Not only is an embedded and participatory subjectivity considered to

be a way of developing more ecological ways of knowing, it also creates an ethical dimension that addresses issues of sustainability by assessing the limits of the subject.

As I began to think about integrated and participatory ways of experiencing embodiment, durational performance and art life distinctions, my research process brought me in touch with practitioners who I viewed to be on similar journeys, some many years into their investigations. My interest in durational practices that sought to unhinge the temporal frame of the performance brought me into conversations with practitioners who were cultivating various manifestations of what might be described as moving with earth every day through art practices that were integrated into their lived locales in extended durations. Moving with the earth is what inspired me to work with artists who were not only committing to ecological activism in their work but were living in ways that advanced their ecological agenda in every aspect of their daily life. Each of the artists moves with the earth by regarding their homes and daily lives as an extension of their art practice. It manifests differently for each artists and part of my interest in the study was to delve into the earthbound specificity of each of the artist's practices.

The purpose of the research has been to investigate site-sensitive improvisational durational performance practice from the perspective of an artist researcher. The perspective of artist as researcher framed the entry into the investigation where inquiry was pursued in performance dialogues and the ecological ethical dimensions of the practices investigated were considered. The research

process was entered into as an evolving and living ecological system in which the researcher became an integral participant. Research questions, arising from the literature, include the following:

- How might the work of the artists be understood in the context of environmental and ecological ethics?
- What can movement and dance practices offer to the development of ecological ethics and sustainable practices?
- What philosophical and ethical issues arise from the work of the artists and how do these resonate with the work of others?
- What does it mean to participate as an ecological ethical subject and how do dance practices offer solutions to this question?

From my experience of *The Performing the Pennine Way* project, I identified key practice based questions that informed the research design. These were:

- What ways of knowing/philosophical perspectives are embodied by the practices of the artists included in the study and how best are these articulated?
- What characterizes the processes of dance artists making improvised and participatory performances in durational site-sensitive contexts? How might one describe the nature and qualities of the artistic work and practices? How do the artists describe their work? What does it mean to engage in performances that are in continual states of emergence?
- Who are the audience and how are they encountered?

CHAPTER II

TUNING TO THE EARTH: PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGIES

Encountering the Artists

It is interesting that when one becomes concerned and pre-occupied with a particular question or area of inquiry, one encounters others who are making journeys along similar paths. I encountered each one the artists who became participants in this study through my artistic practice and it was as I developed my research interests that I came to understand how each one of them would offer a unique contribution to the project by enabling me to explore my questions around ecological, site-sensitive, improvisational and durational performance practices.

I first met Tim Rubidge in 2005 through a colleague at Dance City in Newcastle Upon Tyne. At the time, Simone and I were planning an outdoor performance-training course in Northumberland National Park for the undergraduate students with whom I worked at Northumbria University. On learning that Tim lived very close to where we were going, Simone and I invited him to join us for part of the training. Tim followed us through the tasks with the students and offered conversation and support. Good relationships were forged and we discovered mutual interests in improvisation, performing outside and working in nature. Later, Tim asked me to create a work for a performance evening that he was putting together and Simone and I invited Tim to contribute to *The Performing the Pennine Way* project as

one of six collaborating artists who joined us at various points along the way.

Through our work and conversations, I learnt that Tim's performance practice was deeply rooted in Burnlaw, the place where he lived.

Burnlaw is an old farm estate in rural Northumberland. Since the late 1970s, it has been owned by an intentional community that is committed to sustainable living and loosely follows values of the ba'hai faith. The farm houses three families. At the time of my research visits there were two young couples living in yurts. There is an artistic and community program that seeks to foster creativity, healing, well-being and self-expression through the nature immersion and cultural opportunities available at Burnlaw. The community have a studio called the 'beautiful room', as well as a bunkhouse for residents and a field given over to camping. Tim has lived at Burnlaw for just over ten years and in that time has cultivated a movement practice that is woven within the fields, trees, ponds and winds of this Northumbrian hillside.

For seven years, Eeva-Maria Mutka and her partner have developed a rural movement arts program and retreat centre at Pen Pyn Farch in south west Wales. I was aware of Pen Pyn Farch through the dance community and the opportunities to study with teachers such as Andrea Olsen, Karyn McHose, Miranda Tufnell and Simon Whitehead that were offered. Pen Pyn Farch also hosts artists in residence and it was through this scheme that I first met Eeva-Maria in 2006. My meetings with Eeva-Maria revealed her interest in cultivating her movement practice as part of the

work of Pen Pyn Farch. It was apparent that she thought of herself as a dancer in all that she was doing in her work at Pen Pyn Farch.

Like Burnlaw, Pen Pyn Farch has a small dance studio, which makes possible the explorations between moving inside and outside, relating studio based dancing to dancing in nature. Eeva-Maria lives at Pen Pyn Farch with her partner and her children. The property is a farmhouse, with an adjacent cottage to host up to eight guests, a barn converted into a studio and small apartment for visiting teachers. There is also a caravan and a field set aside for camping if the centre gets busy. Much of Eeva-Maria's work involves inviting teachers, organizing the program, cooking and hosting visitors. Eeva-Maria and her partner also undertake small scale farming and gardening.

I met Nala Walla in 2007, while at the Western Massachusetts Moving Arts Festival at Earthdance in Massachusetts and subsequently in 2008, when we both returned to Earthdance as faculty at the *Somatic Experiments in Earth and Dance Science Festival*. We came to know each other at meal times and through seeing one another's performances. Nala's work at the festival was concerned with improvisational movement arts and permaculture working in integration for ecological sustainability. As I got to know Nala, I learnt that she was running what she called a homestead in Washington State, where she was integrating her movement and permaculture practices as a way of life. Aware of the kind of work that was going on at Burnlaw and at Pen Pyn Farch, I perceived many connections between the

work of Nala, Eeva-Maria and Tim. I realized that each one of their intentional investigations were characterized by immersive, improvisational and ecologically concerned approaches to movement and dance.

In the Same Field: Case Study as Appropriate Research Strategy

Gerring writes that, “a case study presupposes a relatively bounded phenomenon” (2007, p. 18) and discusses how one should identify the specific setting or phenomenon that bounds the research. Case study research is appropriate where common practices and concerns are identified. By living in the landscape and immersing themselves in specific eco-systems as performers, Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim are engaging in various configurations of art practice, ecology and sustainable living. What is common to each of the artists, and also provides the common context for investigation, are the extended durations of their projects over several years, their improvisational approaches and their interest in moving site-sensitively and responsively with nature and the earth. Creswell writes that in a multi-sited case study approach, one can “show different perspectives on the problem, process or event” (1998, p. 62) and this approach is appropriate to exploring the nature of ecological, site-sensitive, improvisational and durational performance as practiced by three different artists in three different places.

Artist as Researcher: Heuristics as Mode of Inquiry

Given that I entered into this project from an ecological perspective as an artist and in artistic exchange with the artists who subsequently participated in the study,

my role as the researcher and the ecological perspective I bring were of great interest to me in the ways in which I developed the research process. Approaching the research process as an evolving ecological system in a continual process of becoming brings to the forefront questions of how the research is managed and how methodological decisions shape the emerging systems of the research. This creates opportunity for the investigation of research as a self-generating and interactive knowledge-making process and acknowledged that research and researcher are in continual states of becoming. I was particularly interested in engaging in the research process as a performer and to investigate the ecology of practice that emerges between the artists involved in the study and myself. Moreover, the process oriented perspectives of the artists and of the work under investigation calls for a research context that enables knowledge to be made and found through a participative and engaged process, where everyone in the project is a learner and knowledge is continually emerging. Thus, artistic practice and exchange formed a significant part of the research process.

By entering the research as a practicing artist engaging other practicing artists in dialogue, I implicated myself as a participant in the research, where my own experiential observations and data informed the research. As such, the research orients from a heuristic perspective that enables the researcher to incorporate experiences of changes in self-awareness and self-knowledge. Clark Moustakas incorporated heuristics and phenomenology, in order that the fuller dimensions of

human experience could be incorporated into the research process. Moustakas (1990) describes core processes of heuristics as self-identification with the research question, self-dialogue and locating the research within the researcher's internal frame of reference, which encourage a critical self-reflexive approach to inquiry.

Heuristics fully immerses the researcher in the phenomena under investigation and is autobiographic. Heuristics offers a particularly productive approach to researching my own artistic practice because a heuristic analysis of experience draws connections between my experiences as the researcher, relationships of knowing self and other, intuitions, the phenomenon and how explanations of that phenomenon are arrived at in terms of personal meaning and transformation of my own experience. Moustakas writes that, "the focus in a heuristics quest is the recreation of the lived experience: full and complete depictions of the experience from the frame of reference of the experiencing person" (1990, p. 39). This immersive autobiographic emphasis also distinguishes heuristics from other forms of phenomenological inquiry, which do not necessarily take into account personal transformation and intuitive knowing and instead, favor the distillation of structures of experience. In heuristics, the researcher is fully implicated into the research process and outcomes.

Heuristics values the researcher's idiosyncratic process of self-discovery in the inquiry and, as such, it does not offer a prescribed or systematic approach to data collection. It is an approach that synchronizes well with Deleuzian notions of becoming as it enables the researcher to incorporate their multiple and unfolding

experiences throughout the research process. The approach to data collection should be open to all possibilities where, “virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion” (Hiles, 2001, § 8). Creswell is similarly un-prescriptive and advises the case study researcher to engage in, “a wide array of data collection strategies to build an in depth picture of the case” (1998, p. 123).

Partnering Heuristics and Participatory Art Practices

Heuristic inquiry also calls for the researcher to approach others with an attitude of learning and when bringing texts and literary sources, the heuristic approach suggests coming to know those sources in terms of what the author might have been trying to resolve in his or her own learning. Hiles writes, “Heuristic inquiry highlights the importance of working with the heuristic process of others, especially with the historical recordings of previous inquiry (especially spiritual texts). Indeed, it turns out that the works of writers, poets, artists, spiritual leaders and scientists can all be usefully treated as the creative products of heuristic inquiry” (2001, § 10).

In this form of inquiry, the researcher approaches the world as a learning opportunity and with compassion for the learning processes of others. One can do this if one takes responsibility for one self first, a principle from the form of Contact Improvisation that sets up an ethical engagement in the world. Contact improviser, Martin Keogh writes:

In Contact Improvisation there is a basic principle that each person takes responsibility for him- or herself. I am the only person who can be inside my body, so I need to keep a part of me awake—the part that can sense and

communicate (physically or verbally) my needs, limits, and desires. I need to keep myself safe and make sure I don't hurt others. (Keogh, 2008, § 17)

Development as a Contact Improvisation practitioner involves not only developing perceptual awareness of one's expressive, sensual and physical limits but also in developing awareness of how one responsibly engages others within the limits of that awareness. These boundaries shift and change with the changing experiences of the practitioner. Contact Improvisation offers practitioners opportunities to explore their subjectivity from an embodied perspective. Heuristics offers an excellent opportunity to engage with the learning and the changes that occur in Contact Improvisation and similar participatory art practices.

Methodology and Procedures

The open-ended and immersive approach of heuristic inquiry informed the ways in which I engaged in data collection with each of the artists. In the initial design, I proposed to spend at least five days with each of the artists, living with them and immersing myself with them in their ways of life, performance making and work. During my stay with each of the artists I proposed to engage in movement research, where we would collaborate on improvised performance tasks, participation in daily tasks, open-ended dialogues and interviews and observation. I allowed the research process to unfold between the artists and myself and negotiated what was mutually appropriate for me to document and include as data in the dissertation research. It should be briefly pointed out that this dissertation participates in a larger ecology of

knowing and that the dissertation project briefly captures individual time-sensitive, person-sensitive and place-sensitive data that give rise to the findings of this research.

At the time that I engaged in the research process, I was living in Newcastle Upon Tyne in the UK. My proximity to Tim Rubidge enabled me to engage in a visit of five days and then to continue our dialogue in person throughout the few months following the visit. I spent ten days with Nala at her homestead in Washington State and five days with Eeva-Maria at Pen Pyn Farch. I was able to follow up with all of the artists on email, skype and by telephone. I conducted my research visits, performance projects and follow up conversations between April and December 2009.

A limitation of the study might be in the varied ways in which I have come to know the artists and that the immersive unfolding approach of heuristics might have limited a more rigorously even-handed investigation of each of the artists. It is also the nature of an artistic process that the outcomes can differ vastly from project to project and person to person. Different modes of artistic expression, such as film, solo dancing, duet dancing, poetry and dialogues, were employed as research practices to explore the qualities and dynamics of my relationships with each of the artists and the places in which they live. While I allowed the artistic process to unfold in response to impulse and creative desire, I did engage each of the artists in in-depth conversations and open-ended interviews on their practice, which I recorded and transcribed. The interviews offered a methodological consistency in data collection with the three artists and served to offer explorations of mutually shared ideas,

detailed discussion on their practices which I might not have been able to observe while living and working with them and opportunities for reflection on shared activities.

Throughout the research process, I kept a researcher's journal in which I recorded personal observations, reflections and logs of daily events and happenings during my stays with each of the artists. In keeping with the heuristic approach and the intention to document my own learning processes, I continued to keep this journal throughout the data analysis, interpretation and write up stages of the dissertation project. Throughout the research process, I also read related literature and witnessed the practices of artists with similar ecological concerns. I allowed my readings and broader experiences of related art practices to inform my research process and incorporate my reflections into the ways in which I worked with the artists and reflected on my experiences with them. As such, part of the methodology involved moving between literary and philosophical concepts and experiential data. This moving between experiential and literary data created a critical context for the research in which I was not only interested in the practice-based questions of engaging in ecological concerned choreography but how these practices might contribute to the development of ethical ecological perspectives.

As discussed below, within the literature surveyed in performing arts and deep ecology, there is acknowledgement of an ecological crisis that threatens the continued health of the earth and its ability to sustain human life. In the research, I assume that

there is an ecological crisis that needs addressing. How to address this crisis is an ethical concern because solutions and practices offered are deemed of value if they advance ecologically sustainable ways of knowing.

Writing About Practice

This dissertation research is primarily concerned with the practices of the artists and the ways in which those practices offer ways of knowing about performance, ecology and ethics. In short, it is the practice-based perspectives that give rise to a philosophical framework of knowing that is presented through Chapters III, IV and V, and then theorized in relation to some of the literary issues raised above in the Introduction in Chapter VI. This moving between practice and philosophy offers a critical and activist frame for the research in which the practice-based discourses are analyzed in terms of their potential to offer solutions to philosophical and ethical problems in performance, ecology and environmental ethics. While I present the practice-based data in Chapters III, IV and V, it is useful to point out that the emergent qualities to this study are framed by the practices of the artists as site-sensitive, improvisational and durational, and the literary context of deep ecology. The work of the artists is considered in terms of significance in relation to both the practice-based propositions of their work and the philosophical (ethical) contribution that they make to performance practice and ecological ethics.

The narrative structure is organized thematically, rather than case-by-case. Early on in the data analysis process, I observed many shared themes, patterns and

connections across the work of the artists and thus I chose a thematic presentation of that data in order that the broader and shared concerns of the artists could be appreciated. The themes of the research were arrived at by coding of research data, which included interviews, essays by the artists, and my own researcher's journal. As themes emerged, I began to cluster data within each theme. I allowed data to be assigned to more than one theme where appropriate and maintained an open-ended perspective on the coding process.

I also used the data to construct written and movement-based portraits of the work undertaken with the artists. Some of the portraits are co-devised and co-created as duet performances and two-way dialogues. These portraits are woven throughout the text as poetic descriptions and kinaesthetic evocations designed to further illuminate the research findings and perhaps stimulate imaginative and creative response by the reader. I have chosen to use portraiture because it enables the researcher's perspectives to be explicitly acknowledged within the representational discourse of the dissertation. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis write that:

With portraiture, the person of the researcher...is more evident and more visible than in any other research form. She is seen not only in defining the focus and field of inquiry, but also in navigating the relationships with the subjects, in witnessing and interpreting the action, in tracing the emergent themes, and in creating the narrative. (1997, p.13)

The use of portraits also allows for aesthetic descriptions within the narrative.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis describe aesthetic experience as “a conversation between two active meaning makers”, which contributes to “a co-

construction of meaning in which both parties play pivotal roles” (1997, p. 29).

Through the aesthetic experience of making work with the artists, I have been particularly interested in the co-creative elements of the research. However, I do acknowledge my unique position as a knowledge inquirer and that I sought to work with these artists to investigate my own particular questions on performance, ecology and ethics. Thus, my concerns as the researcher guide the organisation and interpretation of the research.

Representational Issues in Ecological Knowledge Paradigms

Above, I pointed out that the dissertation participates in a larger ecology of knowing and that the dissertation project briefly captures individual time-sensitive, person-sensitive and place-sensitive data that give rise to the findings of this research. The contextual nature of the research is particularly important to consider in relation to the construction of a narrative of representation that tells a particular story from my perspective as a researcher. Because I have been concerned with coming to understand the practices of the artists, the inclusion of practical movement portraits was an important methodological choice in seeking to diversify the media of representation employed in the dissertation. Digital technology enables a broader ecology of representational strategies, such as video and images, to be utilised in the dissemination of findings. The larger ecology of knowing of this research is the immersive and participatory experience that I gained from living with the artists, which I can only partially convey in this document. Also not included, although

informing the research paradigm, is a performance that I created with the artists in October 2009. Some video material is included as partial portrait of this event.

Also of interest to some ecologists has been how the act of writing creates an ethics of engagement with the earth. The act of writing could be considered symbolic of human mobility. Writing enables a transmission of stories and ideas that transcends local geographies. It is a social ecological process that enables the exchange of ideas and culture. When these ideas and stories are transmitted through the Internet, for example, an immediacy of interactive participation between many locales is created. As ideas are exchanged in this virtual realm, knowledge development, as well as transmission, becomes a global enterprise, which brings together participants from many countries, backgrounds and locales. The writer can embrace the virtual and in so doing engage the imagination to tell stories that depart from and return to perceptions of the actual. The writer can be purposeful in creating a virtual world that might become embodied and materialized in the actual world. The ecological crisis, however, is concerned with the actual and the material resource depletion that threatens the health of the earth and the increasing tendency to virtualize culture in non-material realms. The gap between words, and other media, and the world deserves further exploration in terms of ethical and ecological relationships.

David Abram has theorized that the practice of writing can be seen to contribute to an increasingly virtualized culture that writes itself away from the

materiality of the world. Abram suggests that the development of writing, in its enabling of peoples to transport their stories and create a media unhinged from the lived locale of the earth, has greatly contributed to relationships of separation between humans and nature. He writes that:

Once the stories are written down, the visible text becomes the primary mnemonic activator of the spoken stories – the inked traces left by the pen as it traverses the page replacing the earthly tracks left by the animals, and by one’s animal ancestors, as they moved across the land. The places themselves are no longer necessary to the remembrance of the stories, and often come to seem wholly incidental to the tales, the arbitrary backdrops for human events that might just as well have happened elsewhere. The transhuman, ecological determinants of the originally oral stories are no longer emphasized, and often are written out of the tales entirely. In this manner the stories and myths, as they lose their oral, performative character, forfeit as well their intimate links to the more-than-human earth. And the land itself, stripped of the particularizing stories that once sprouted from every cave and streambed and cluster of trees, begins to lose its multiplicitous power. The human senses, intercepted by the written word, are no longer gripped and fascinated by the expressive shapes and sounds of particular places. The spirits fall silent. Gradually the felt primacy of *place* is forgotten, superceded by a new, abstract notion of “space” as a homogenous and placeless void. (1996, p. 184-5).

For Abram, it is as if humans have written themselves away from the world. It is this cognitive realm that perpetuates the illusion of humans’ separateness from nature but is also within this realm that relationships between the word and the world can be re-imagined. In his work, Abram draws contrast between literate western societies, who are able to take their writing and thereby their cultures with them, and oral indigenous cultures in which the earth still contributes essential meaning to cultural orientation and daily life. For indigenous cultures, language, stories and

literacy are embedded within specific geographies of place and serve as referent points that guide the population.

Abram troubles the role of writing as an inanimate representational system that contributed to the development of humanist paradigms that would seek to transcend the earth. Regarding reading as an animate activity, he asserts that, “the participatory proclivity of the senses was simply transferred from the depths of the surrounding life-world to the visible letters of the alphabet” (1996, p. 138). In so doing, Abram describes that humans began interacting in contexts that were exclusively human, where texts became self-referential of themselves and lost their meaningful relationship to anything outside of the human realm. Abram seems to think that writing should not be abandoned but taken up and moved towards more intimate relationships with the earth:

For those of us who care for an earth not encompassed by machines, a world of textures, tastes, and sounds other than those that we have engineered, there can be no question of simply abandoning literacy, of turning away from all writing. Our task, rather, is that of taking up the written word, with all of its potency, and patiently, carefully, writing language back into the land. (Abram, 1996, p. 273)

In the writing of this dissertation project, I have sought to represent in words, image and movements, experiences of the body, the earth and the creative process with the artists as we engaged with body and earth. My own process involved deep immersion in the landscape and in movement practices and I hope that the language and representational strategies found do offer resonant insights into moving with the earth.

Having spent a great deal of time moving in dance studios, I am not only interested in writing language back into the land but in moving dance into the land and furthering my investigation of what that might mean.

When considered within the context of Abram's work, the intention to develop languages, whether written or movement based, that move back into the land, the proposition to move with the earth takes on a further ethical imperative. Moving with the earth might be seen as an ethical endeavor to reconstruct the lost rapport with nature as articulated by Abram, Harding, Plumwood and others: a process of tuning to the earth. The intention to situate the work of the artists in an ethical ecological paradigm gives an activist orientation to the research. The ethical perspectives of the artists will be read in relation to the literature introduced above and in relation to the discovering of open-ended and individually idiosyncratic manifestations of ethical practice that reflect the time-sensitive, person-sensitive and place-sensitive nature of the data.

Throughout Chapters III, IV and V, it is my intention to evoke the qualities and dynamics of the places and people as I experienced them. My narrative is a story that makes sense to me and charts my own path of learning as I tuned to the practices of the artists, their ways of life and the landscapes in which they practice. I do not expect that your path will follow mine but that you might find meaningful waymarkers, puzzles and places to rest within the narrative path. I am as ambivalent about representation as I found myself to be in the *Performing the Pennine Way*

project and in the evolving movements that comprise participation in an ecology, I invite you to treat the narrative as an improvisational score that initiates your own departures and arrivals and journeys in imagination inside and out.

CHAPTER III

IMPROVISATION AND THE EARTH

Improvisation was an opening dialogue between the artists and myself. It was through improvisational practice that I first encountered their work in performances, workshops and conversations at improvisational events. It was through these initial meetings that I became interested in their work in the landscape. As I developed my research dialogues with the artists, improvisation emerged as an important and central practice for each one of them in their day-to-day work and projects. As part of the research process, I engaged in improvisations with each of the artists. The exploration of each one of the artist's practices in more depth allows improvisation to be theorized as a grounding practice in the cultivation of a participatory ecological approach. The practice and principles of improvisation are integral to the cultivation of each of the artist's approaches to developing relationships with their land, with their bodies and with others. What is distinct about the artists is that they are working to develop integrated, artfully nourishing relationships with nature that are enduring and long term. The daily-ness of their practices rooted in improvisation is foundational to their engagement in the landscape and creative processes.

Improvisation is both a tool for developing choreography and a performance form in itself. In general, the improviser works to trust in the moment responses from physical, expressive and compositional skills. In the making of choreography,

improvisation tasks are often used to develop repeatable movement motifs and phrases. Still compositional in nature, improvisational performance emphasizes clear crystallizations of movement in the present moment. Improvisers allow one moment to lead them to the next as they give attention to the present moment. Senses open and expand into listening; sounds, textures, feelings. In an improvisation, time, space, body, person can become immersed in the one thing and there is what might be described as an integration of all perceptual phenomena into a field of action. The playful and open-ended character of improvisation enables the practitioner to bring into focused relationship multiple and diverse worlds of perception: the worlds of sensation, thought and action into relationship with the worlds of witnesses, images, external architectures and environments. In improvised performance, the performer cultivates these relationships by making more focused the dialogue between particular phenomena, whether that is attending to audience, a landscape or the weather, or a specific object or an image. Improvisations can be open-ended and free or they can be structured through scores that are made up of rules to guide the choices made in the dancing.

Improvisation is anchored in principles of emergence, sensitivity, spontaneity and trust in the moment response. While much art seeks to question and develop new ways of experiencing, the practice of improvisation is particularly resistant to reproduction and the dynamics of a market requiring reliable predictable and repeatable products because it is driven by questioning of pre-determined form and

designs. This questioning of pre-determined design and form was common to each of the artists in the research as they embrace working without a blueprint and enjoy finding out what they need to know along the way. While they work without a blueprint, the artists do work with certain structures that give their work shape and direction. In improvisation, such structures are known as scores.

A score is a holding structure for action in an improvised dance. Scores invite diversity of response. Anna Halprin, a pioneer of scoring processes in dance, explains that a score “defines activities. It tells people what activity to do, not how to do it” (1995, p. 202). Halprin also explains that some scores are about finding further scores for the dance that will be a meaningful experience for a group or an individual. A score is full of potential. It waits to be realized, to be explored and transformed. It invites participation and shaping. Some scores are full of instructions, with many limitations, while others are sparse and call for the inventive resources of the performer to more fully realize them. Scores are often thought of as a precursor to the dancing but in a free improvisation, a score might emerge where patterns of choices may become discernible and the dancers choose to develop these patterns.

Some scores endure for a very long time. Enduring scores and practices offer lessons in sustainability. How does one reach a score that endures, that holds interest and that allows one to settle into an exploration that sustains for several years, or even a lifetime? Contact Improvisation, although widely regarded as form of dance, is in fact a score for two or more people moving together by sharing weight through

physical contact. It is a score that has multiple permutations and has evolved a great deal from the initial explorations by Steve Paxton in *Magnesium* in 1972. These multiple permutations, informed by other bodywork practices, such as the martial arts form Aikido and the somatic practice, Body Mind Centering, contribute to a vocabulary through which practitioners can be initiated. What is particularly interesting is that even though there are shared vocabularies that give the form an epistemological identity, there is a commitment to evolving and expanding that identity in the practice of the work. Nancy Stark Smith discusses her view on the form as it has developed more recognized ways of moving:

I think this is part of the danger of so much vocabulary. You can make a whole dance of very familiar moves. But you can also change it just a little bit to make it your own, to custom-make it in the moment—in the timing, phrasing, or the weight of it. It's like practicing scales before you're going to play. It's not wrong to do familiar things, but once you get warmed up, maybe you want to open up and improvise a bit. (2006, p. 46)

Stark Smith's description illustrates how Contact Improvisation, as a score, aims for a fluid interpretation, where the score enables the development of plural and diverse responses that are connected through the shared premise of improvisational partnering.

Earth as Score

Each one of the artists in this study takes the local environs as a resource and starting point from which to work. As I reflected on the data, I became very interested in the idea of the earth as a score for their work. I observed several longitudinal

relationships to place that echo the clarity of Contact Improvisation's successful coupling of a strong identity with an evolutionary fluidity, where principles of the earth as score were cultivated while adaptations and permutations informed the evolution of relationships and the scores themselves. For all of the artists, these relationships were grounded in improvisation and then coupled with various other practices, such as walking, in the case of Tim Rubidge; permaculture, in the case of Nala Walla; and curating, in the case of Eeva-Maria Mutka. In improvised movement practices, the design of the choreography emerges in the moment through interactions and resolutions of questions and ideas proposed. What occurs is an evolving architecture of movement that in performance contexts seeks to make the most of spatial, temporal and interactive dynamics. When the earth is taken as score, how do these relationships transform? How do the artists partner with the dynamics of the earth in their various locations? While the earth as score might be a common idea, it manifests differently for each of the artists and contributes to their particular interests and qualities of their evolving practices. Looking broadly at the scores offered by the earth in each place allows a portrait of geography, environment and working contexts of each of the artists to emerge. What will also be explored is how, through each of the artist's practices, improvisation grounds an approach to ecological living.

Walking and Working With What is There: Burnlaw

With Tim Rubidge, I share an interest in pedestrian practices, such as walking, and their relationship to movement, dance and the environment. Throughout the research process, Tim and I engaged in daily walks through the countryside around Burnlaw. For Tim, walking is analogous to improvisation, where traversing terrain requires presence, focus and attention as the body partners with the ground underneath the foot. For Tim, performance and walking “share much, in terms of embodied experience and focus of attention” (personal communication, April 2 2009). On particularly challenging walks, I have experienced each step as an in depth investigation of reading the ground, gradient, texture, ability to balance and required speed. Tim sees the outdoors as his studio and incorporates daily open ended and exploratory walking practices into his making processes. Tim regularly walks in the landscape around Burnlaw as part of his daily practice and views the practice as a rich creative resource where he finds that, “for me, my most interesting thoughts have come out of walking or dancing” (Tim Rubidge, personal communication, June 12 2009). On moving and walking in the landscape, Tim reflects that he “is not looking to find nor answer questions” (personal communication, April 3 2009). Tim’s responses are shaped by the weather, as much as by the ground and he discusses his concern with allowing work to emerge rather than trying to make something happen:

Sometimes it is just wall of wind – breeze, all that air current and dynamic of air and wind I find myself much in relationship with. I am not looking to have a conscious relationship with it – I am here anyway so it is present. I am

not looking for what I might bring back – stuff will come back, it's a given so other things can be more alive and emergent. Being outside is a big studio. (personal communication, April 3, 2009)

Tim also highlights the specificity of place, perception and response. A wall of wind is a weather feature regularly encountered in the upland moors of Northumberland and can be so strong that it requires physical effort to work outside in it.

Stories that Arise on the Path

The most prominent features on the upland moors that surround Burnlaw are disused chimneys from the lead mining industry that was most active in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Tim regularly walks up to the chimneys. On our fourth day of working together, and after a morning spent dancing in the studio, we set off for the chimneys. Tim decides to reverse his usual route. As we set off, Tim's cat, Jelly is following. The first part of the walk is on a road and it is not safe enough for her to follow. We shoo her back and try running away. Jelly still follows. Tim picks her up and drops her gently into the field next to the road. She jumps back onto the wall. I start to feel as if we will not be able to get away but Jelly sits on the wall and instead of following, wails. We continue on the road past an old schoolhouse with its open and empty belltower. Some schoolhouses have been converted into homes but this one sits empty as a reminder of a time when many more people lived in these valleys. We turn off the road into a field and make our way down a steep bank to a stream and then up the other side. As we cross the water courses draining from the hill we repeat this pattern several times. I realize that I am tired. We have

undertaken a physically ambitious day. We keep going up towards the moor and the chimneys. As we come onto the moor, there is what looks like a dyke running up to the summit. Tim explains that they are the remains of flues that allowed the noxious fumes from the mine to be expelled. The flues are large enough to walk through.

When I get inside the flue, it is still. There is the sound of running water. I enjoy this hidden place on the hillside. Sheep are also using the flue as a shelter and run away from me as I enter. With the miner's cottages in the valley, the disused railway to take the lead away, the veins of ore reaching inside the hill and the flues that lead to the chimneys on the top, I realize that the whole hill was conceived of as an industrial structure. The structure is in serious decay now, with the buildings in ruins and the hill subsiding, where large deposits have been mined. At the top we walk inside the chimney and enjoy the circular framed view of the sky. The smell of sheep manure is overwhelming and we do not stay for very long.

We are on the highest point for several miles but the clouds are low and the wind is strong. The hills in the distance appear a deep grey blue and almost blur into the deep grey sky above. It is a panoramic view of blue and grey. Immediately in front of us is the brown moorland grass and a track that we follow down another way. We walk through a conifer plantation, one of many that are managed by the forestry commission. The plantations in Northumberland make up the largest human-made forest in the North-West Europe. Two farms in the distance have installed wind turbines to take advantage of the abundance of wind in the area. We come to a

crossroads visited earlier in the week and meet an old friend. For several days we have encountered a lone cockerel at these crossroads. He has obviously escaped from a nearby farm and is surviving at this place. Each time we have passed, the cockerel has ventured towards us with curiosity. Today, we are able to give him some crackers.

Talking about wild and adventurous spirits, Tim and I make our way back to Burnlaw via a forest track. The light is fading. We walk past the cages left for grouse, and in one of the cages, a bird has been caught. The bird is too small for the cage and has injured its head by repeatedly jumping up to escape and snagging its head on the chicken wire. We lift up the cage and set the bird free. Later in the year, it is likely that the bird will be hunted and shot. Grouse shooting is a popular pastime in the Allen valleys and it makes a significant contribution to the local economy. I learn that the land in this area is used intensively: for farming, hunting, and, in the past, mining.

As we complete the final part of the walk, we talk about the events that emerged in our path and the characters that we met. Tim reflects that if you let it happen, stories will arise in your path. He talks about walking without searching but then also walking into relationship with others, such as the cockerel, or an enhanced understanding of place, such as my reflection on the hill as a factory, or into a situation that requires an obvious intervention, such as the setting free of the grouse. In the studio, Tim endeavors to work with a similar approach.

*Tim is moving. His feet plant in the chunky tilled soil. Arms extend into space and space inside fills the body. Shoulder blades anchor sweeping arcs. He travels through time. Each step crosses an epoch. He returns to 1920 in a homage to his teacher. The feet find themselves in new worlds drawn by the fingertips. Body rolls into the floor. He scoops, gouges and dives.
(researcher's journal entry, April 2, 2009)*

Moving in the studio at Burnlaw, Tim lets the landscape in. The studio becomes significant in its location. It is not just a studio anywhere in any place but it is the studio at the bottom end of the valley, where the Rivers East and West Allen meet. It is a studio on a north facing slope that inhabits the boundary between open moor and pastures with a view to hills for sixty miles or more and a sky that continually rushes by. Tim is open to all of this. Later when we are talking, he explains that he does not necessarily search for something but he tries to let it be and trusts that something will emerge in his dancing. Tim views the perceptual field as a resource to be embraced and worked with. He is interested in what is present in the here and now in his attention. Tim's score is to work with what he finds.

In working with what he finds, Tim follows sensation and intuition. When we were discussing his work, Tim expressed his difficulty in finding the language to describe what exactly he thought might be going on in his process:

So here I am having trouble trying to intellectually articulate that but I do trust my body and its experience. I know that I am not replicating an experience or repeating a set of circumstances found in the landscape and yet that's what I am working on and endeavoring to embody something without my mind having too much conversation or comment, really just trusting the body to be its own landscape. (Tim Rubidge, personal communication, April 2, 2009)

As a choreographer, I cannot often explain the meaning of my movements in words or if I can, the meaning and feeling of the movements is never quite satisfactorily captured by words. The body in feeling, sensation and movement has its own way of knowing that comes to be known in feeling, sensation and movement. Words offer another way of knowing and a translation is navigated in the attempt to convey the meaning of movements in words. The words might offer a map of the body's landscape and, perhaps, a score for another mover to interpret later. Tim and I move between witnessing one another moving, walking in the landscape, moving together, free writing and discussing what we perceive to be going on. Sometimes we respond to one another through movement and at other times through conversation. We loosely follow the roles of witness and mover but break roles to move into dialogue or shared dancing. The work comes to be explored in dancing, conversation, walking and writing. While we choose to develop a movement score for a performance, the work resides in all these places. It is an ecology of knowing that synthesizes intuition, intellect, sensation, movement and relationship and is not contained within one way of knowing. *What is there* is given freedom to roam and find its place in the emerging work.

Everything Gardens: Nala's Score

We are sitting on the stoop of Nala's wooden house. It is raining ever so gently. It is a cool summer day. In the days that I have been here, the weather has swung between warm sunny days and cool rainy days. It feels like a swing between

two seasons and there is not really an in between state where clouds and rain bleed into sun. Weather systems decide what to do here and then they do it. Nala is pleased for the rain because the garden really needs it. The garden is the central feature of Nala's land. The buildings on the land organize around it and there are gates in the deer fence in several places to allow access from the outdoor kitchen, the house and the yurt. The deer fence is a fairly recent addition and one that Nala was ambivalent about as she considered its impact on the local ecosystem and relationships with local ecologies. This garden is one of Nala's main improvisational scores, which she tends to with sensitivity and responsibility. The bath house, where outdoor showers are taken in the summer, is also in the garden, which creates a wonderful opportunity to graze on strawberries while drying off. The garden is organized on permaculture principles and, to me, the garden seems abundant and rich. Every day we have harvested more than enough leaves for salad and berries for dessert. I think about the love and care that has gone into the garden that now yields in return. At the edges of the garden, Nala's land extends for a few hundred meters. The land here is thick with vegetation and is as it was when she moved here.

When Nala moved onto her land, she literally hacked her way through the wilderness. She recalls the whole place being overgrown and impossible to move through. She lived in a caravan on the edge of her land of brambles, bushes and trees, gradually making in roads with a machete and then with a bulldozer. Her initial score was concerned with creating access to a relationship with her place. Her arrival

was a watershed between years of searching and the beginning of a way of life that would start to cement her vision. Nala physically cleared a space in which to work, in which she could move and in which she could live in tune with her land. Practical and strong willed; Nala is not romantic about the land or her way of life. In order to gain sustenance from this land, Nala had to cut away much of what was there and begin a partnership with the land that she felt brought nourishment to herself and the earth. Practically, that meant making her land accessible in order to create spaces to grow food and build a place to live.

Her partnership is one that is continuously evolving. Nala recalls that she and her partner “were just two kids from the city, the suburbs...and we don’t know what the heck we are doing” (personal communication, July 9, 2009). Prior to settling on her land, Nala’s journey had taken her in search of ways that exemplified ecologically sound living. She initially moved to Seattle to study freshwater ecology and dance at the University of Washington. Seeing dance and ecology as interwoven and connected through creative processes and living systems and wanting to explore these interdisciplinary connections in her work, Nala encountered resistance to her ideas within academia. Nala recalls that, “it was all too theoretical. I was testing water samples in a fluorescent lit laboratory and I was thinking that this was not really ecology” (personal communication, July 9, 2009). She left, feeling that it would be more fruitful to explore her questions on her own. Her subsequent journeys took her on a two-year boat trip to Alaska and to the eventual acquisition of her land. Looking

at her choices as an improvisation, one might reflect that she used scores to find further scores that enabled her to develop her vision. In this sense, the first part of the work was a score, or a series of scores, to find the score that she actually wanted to perform.

When Nala encountered permaculture, an ecologically sensitive form of farming, she recognized many parallels between permaculture and improvisational practices:

When I started hearing about permaculture it immediately rang true for me ...its the exact same language as improvisation. The exact same concepts, slightly different language - working with nature, going with the flow, respecting edges in an ecosystem as the place that has the most productivity and the most diversity. (personal communication, July 5, 2009)

Nala believes that, “we can have a relationship with the environment where we are actually enhancing the environment, creating more abundance for everyone. That is one of the main principles in permaculture; that everything gardens” (personal communication, July 9, 2009). A key idea in permaculture is to apply understanding of natural ecosystems, particularly in terms of their sustainable and self-sufficient qualities, to the design of a garden. A forest, where all different kinds of plants grow together, for example, provides good inspiration to a permaculture practitioner. As found in many permaculture gardens, the beds in Nala’s garden all contain several species of plants that might come to function a mini-ecosystem in the bed – potatoes and other root vegetables in the ground, lettuces and strawberries at the ground level, kale and beans that grow to a mid level, and small apple trees to a higher level.

Permaculture practitioners respect the diversity of nature and as such weed killers and pesticides are not used. In permaculture, the role of gardener is to use nature's design as a guide.

Gardening and the garden guide Nala's movement practices. It is through gardening that Nala weaves permaculture and improvisational dance practice. The cultivation of a garden enables her to work on a score that brings her into close relationship with the earth in terms of sustenance and moving towards integrated systems of movement, body and earth in one place. These integrated movement, body and earth systems arise from practical need as much as artistic vision. Nala states that one of her goals is not to ever "leave this spot, except for where I can walk" (personal communication, July 9, 2009) and seeks to cultivate a score that moves her closer to that vision. The off-grid way of life that Nala and her partner are cultivating is a time-intensive, as well as physically intensive, way of life. Living without running water, for example, means that rainwater is collected and each day jugs for water needs are filled. Living without electricity means ensuring that there is enough firewood cut for the burner and that the wood shed is well stocked before the winter. Such tasks are physically strenuous and offer invitation for exploration in terms of movement practice.

Nala uses her bodywork knowledge to be mindful of how she approaches these physical tasks where she feels that her experience of yoga, for example, can help with finding "the best way to squat and working your body where your best alignment is"

(personal communication, July 9 2009). Moreover, the integration of artful moving with practical tasks enables Nala to be “in and out of mindfulness all day long”, where an aim of her practice is to integrate with the rhythms of living on her land (personal communication, July 5, 2009). For Nala, integrating improvised movement practice with permaculture enables the dancing to become part of the gardening and the gardening becomes part of the dancing.

In an article written for *Contact Quarterly*, Nala asserts that improvisational practices are a form of “earth activism”, where she discusses the qualities of improvisation that open the practitioner to not knowing, not judging and to embracing “acceptance of and co-operation with whatever sprouts” (2008, p. 30-31).

Improvisational practices that emphasize paying attention to working with what is arising in the present moment without judgment do allow for the not foreseen and unpredictable to exist. From an ecological perspective, Nala sees such practices as an antidote to systems of control that eradicate diversity for the sake of efficiency, as in industrial farming, and that are played out in our individual bodies through our participation in mono-cultured consumerist habits (personal communication, July 5, 2009).

Nala believes that improvisational practices enable the development of listening and witnessing skills and that these are important to “the conversion of the stresses of life into growth” (2008, p. 31). She believes that the healing potential of improvisational practice lies in the holding structures of witnessing, moving and

participating in open ended processes of moving that like natural processes, allow for growth, death and decay. It is through the sharing of such processes that Nala believes a healthy functioning of communities can be developed. As a forum of storytelling, Nala believes that improvisation can also develop “bonds, which hold the group together in times of stress” (2008, p. 31) and that communal practices of storytelling, art making and ceremony are important to individual, communal and ecological health. Just as plants need attention, if they are to grow well, people also need tending to through supportive processes. Nala’s idea that “everything gardens” is envisaged throughout her relationships to the world, with the garden, with her home and with people.

Scores as Containers: Working with the Water at Pen Pyn Farch

Eeva takes me for a walk at Pen Pyn Farch. We walk up a stone track behind the cottage. Finding the easiest route down, a stream follows the track. We navigate around it, giving way to the water. The land is saturated. Wood and water are present here. Present in sight, sound, smell, and sensation. I can hear the stream, the rain, resonating with my fluids inside. I can smell damp wood rotting. I can smell the centre of fallen trees, a mush of sap, wood and leaves. The water runs down the hillsides to meet the stream. The stream carries away the rain. It has a strong current and a strong sound. The main river feels far away, even though I have walked to it and witnessed where these rivers meet just a mile or so away. So much more water

will join this stream before it converges with the main river. It seems to rain every day and the trees constantly glisten with glassy beads that adorn their damp overcoats.

As we walk up the track, water attracts our attention and our conversation. Eeva tells me that there is a spring under the living room and one year they had to deal with it bubbling up through the floor. Eeva explains that they had to drill through the thickest stonewall of the house to let the water out of the living room. At the top of a track above the property is a quarry that also has a freshwater spring. The stones for the house were taken from here and now it serves as a swimming hole in the summer. There is so much water here that sometimes it needs guidance in order for workable co-existences to emerge.

We descend through the trees to the valley floor, where every step sinks deeply into the ground. In one place, we give up on the muddy path and wade in the stream. The valley floor is marshy and boggy but the riverbed is sandy and even in the water, each step is a little more stable. I enjoy the fact that the muddy land has persuaded us to walk in the stream. We hold onto the trees on the riverbank for balance. Some drops of rain make it through the leaves. Nothing seems to dry out here. We walk back up the hill towards the house on a new road. Eeva explains that a landslide caused the old road to fall into the valley and they had to build a new one. The road is a public right of way, which means that Eeva and her partner, as the landowners, are legally required to ensure that it is passable. Making the new road was a large task that involved cutting back trees, taking more stone from the quarry

and considerable drain on economic resources. I look at the muddy bank to the right of us. It is still saturated. Water continually courses through the earth disassembling its structure and integrity. To live here without sinking into the ground both economically and physically, the water needs to be channelled and contained.

Working from a perspective that accepts the many potentialities arising from the life lived in the valley of Pen Pyn Farch, the questions for Eeva-Maria are concerned with what needs to be done to support what is happening in front of her. Her view of dance summarises this approach. For Eeva, the dance is always happening and everything within her field of action becomes part of the score where, “its all dance, us eating the soup together, or making the soup or walking through the mud. Its all there. That’s what I’ve learned through improvisation” (personal communication, September 2, 2009). In her daily activities, Eeva-Maria fluidly moves between being a mother, an administrator, a host, a chef and a dancer. The overlapping and inter-changeability of roles is a necessity to living a sustainable life at Pen Pyn Farch. Eeva-Maria views the valley of Pen Pyn Farch as a kind of teacher that continually has something to offer (personal communication, September 3, 2009). For Eeva-Maria, improvisation has a similar pedagogical role:

Improvisation is kind of a teacher for life...I am sure that you have met people where unmet situations can cause anxiety, whereas I think there is a lot of creativity with improvisation, you are just ready with a bit more presence and embrace the unknown and you can just do your best as a human being with kindness and light. You find a way through. (personal communication, September 3, 2009)

Much of Eeva-Maria's work at Pen Pyn Farch has been concerned with the development of a workshop program that brings in artists who are interested in working with the body and with the valley of Pen Pyn Farch as a site. In her choice of artists for the program at Pen Pyn Farch, Eeva-Maria has worked with those who approach the development of body-earth knowledge through improvisational explorations. Such practitioners include Andrea Olsen and Karyn McHose, Miranda Tufnell, Simon Whitehead and Oguri. In conversation, Eeva-Maria indicated her interest in the findings of each workshop because they also teach her something about the place of Pen Pyn Farch.

Eeva-Maria recognizes that the processes of the valley, and of nature, have demands that visitors might not be accustomed to and that she has had to improvise to contain and accommodate shifting expectations. When organizing an artist's exchange, where artists worked for a couple of hours a day on the land in exchange for accommodation, Eeva-Maria noticed that many people were easily fatigued and actually needed more of a retreat than a working experience on the land. Considering future events she told me that, "next time, I think that I would just put a higher price and have people come for a retreat because that is what people need" (personal communication, September 3, 2009). As a curator and program of workshops that integrate embodied processes and earth based explorations, Eeva-Maria has been learning about the kind of container for human development and expression that Pen Pyn Farch can be. Living in a place like Pen Pyn Farch is very different from visiting

and Eeva-Maria has learnt about the needs and expectations of visitors from the people who participate in the workshop program or come to stay on a retreat or holiday. Eeva-Maria discussed the phenomena of green fever, where, “when you come from the city, it is kind of inevitable that at first you might feel very tired and you might have a kind of ...Green fever – where you just want to roll in it” (personal communication, September 2, 2009). Many people do come to Pen Pyn Farch to engage in personal development in a peaceful and unobtrusive environment. Eeva-Maria recognizes that there is particular space that needs to be contained if the in depth arts based process work in which she is interested can take place.

Dance as Container

Eeva-Maria’s personal investigation of integrating movement practice with work in the valley also formed part of my research process. Eeva-Maria is actively investigating the idea that everything she does in the valley is the dancing. Discussing a recent project to clean the lake she reflects, “it was very interesting when we cleared the trees from the lake. We were doing experiments with sticks and stones in relation to gravity. Sometimes we would be moving – hey this is dance, or is this dance?” (personal communication, September 3, 2009). In our small investigation of this question, we start our day by cleaning out the chicken coops. It is raining and the coops fill with water. We scoop out the sodden sawdust and muck and replace it with fresh sawdust. We are focused and task-oriented. Eeva-Maria tells me that she needs to do this every three weeks. In the field above the coops are flocks of sheep that are

to be sold. Eeva-Maria explains that they are downsizing some of the activities in order to give more focus to what they can do. Having a flock of sheep meant that either she or her partner always have to be there to look after them. We take out four or five wheelbarrows of muck. We then make our way to the dance studio.

We begin by moving freely in the space. I find that the task like attitude employed in mucking out the chickens informs my movements. I start building a series of repetitions with my left arm. Eeva-Maria is walking through the space, building rhythms with her feet. We solidify our patterns and then teach them to each other. We use the foot and arm pattern as the basis of an improvisation, playing with time and space. What I experience throughout this process is a change in embodied attitude. The task like attitude with which I began has become more playful and I find myself shifting qualities as the choices in gesture and rhythms become more complex. I think of all the different ways my body works and is worked. I am dancing to balance the physical work outside in which I favored the right side. I am dancing to come to know memories and shapes encountered only momentarily in more depth.

We find ourselves in a making process and enjoying the task of sharing movement ideas. Eeva-Maria reflects that, “I love that you are harvesting and pulling something off the earth and then you go in the studio and your blood is kind of full” (personal communication, September 3, 2009). The work outside did warm us up but it also resourced us with movement ideas so that when we came into the studio, we

continued moving, gradually transforming our movements into expressive dances. Flow of ideas run freely here and Eeva-Maria extends an invitation, “it would be nice if you will come back” (personal communication, September 3, 2009). I think about how it would be nice to come back and step into the flow of the work here but I also think about the containers around my time and resources. Still, to live in an abundance of potential is a rich place to be and to find the scores that contain that abundance so that it can nourish, rather than overwhelm, seems to be one of the key ideas in Eeva-Maria’s work at Pen Pyn Farch.

It is in the process of planting seeds, or ideas, that improvisation as a practice has much to offer. Many movements and offerings to an improvisational dance or event are often not taken beyond their initial expression as the individual, or group, choose to cultivate the ideas that can be best resourced. When talking about developments at Pen Pyn Farch, for example, Eeva-Maria commented on the ways in which relationships developed through repeated visits and a deepening of understanding through extended work that contributed to “different kinds of ripples” (personal communication, September 3, 2009). Eeva-Maria’s metaphor of ripples suggests an open-ended approach to being in interaction with what might be found in different relationships. While working together with Eeva-Maria, I learnt that these ripples can be contained within the valley of Pen Pyn Farch, but that they also travel away from the valley with those who visit. While I was there, we focused very much on each moment in the day as it came, not thinking about where our process and

ripples might take us and that if they are meant to be contained, containers will be found, and if not the ripples will disperse and inform something not seen by those who initiated them.

Grounding an Ecological Perspective

Returning to the definition of ecology given in the Introduction to the dissertation, that of an evolving dynamic system of inter-relationships, one might reflect that when working with the earth as score, improvisational approaches partner well with ecological approaches. Working improvisationally enables the artists to synchronize with the fluid and evolutionary qualities of nature, where certain rhythms, such as the seasons, give structure, but where what is working today might not work tomorrow. Tim's approach to *working with what is there* assumes a synchrony with the patterns of nature, in the body and in the environment. If, as Nala asserts, "everything gardens", then cultivation, growth, building, harvesting and tending are the indicative actions for the person who takes the garden as a score. Eeva-Maria's perspective on abundance suggests that what is needed are appropriate containers to make the most of what is already there. Each of the artists has been cultivating their scores for several years. In Chapter Four, I will explore in more detail the specific vocabularies and practices that have emerged from the scoring of place through walking, gardening and curating. As the earth as score is continually cultivated by the artists, they yield uniquely earth-sensitive approaches to working with the body, with the earth and with the community. The earth as score opens the

dialogue through which relationships form, and it is these relationships of body, earth and community that will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPATORY ECOLOGIES: BODY, EARTH, COMMUNITY

The improvisational approaches of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim, where the earth manifests as a score for each one of them in some of the different ways described in the previous chapter, emphasize participation in an embedded evolving ecology of practice. Each artist works with the dynamics of movement and process to develop and continue the cultivation of their relationships to place. What is particularly interesting to this research is the ways in which their participation as performers in the ecosystems in which they are embedded is given active attention in their creative choices. In their work, the artists illustrated integrated views of the body, where their concept of embodiment was embedded in the processes of the world around them. It is the purpose of this chapter to investigate the artists' ecologies of participation that integrate perceptions of body, earth and community into fields of action, that might constitute choreography, performance and the on going practices of living life with the earth as an improvisational score.

Body

Inhale, exhale and notice the changes in your body. Our respiratory system is in constant interchange with the environment, taking in air, bringing oxygen into the circulation system so that each and every cell in the body can function and expelling

waste products, such as carbon dioxide. Every moment of life is concerned with this exchange of nourishing materials and waste products bringing the outside into our bodies and sending the inside out. Each breath changes the body through increasing and decreasing the volume of the lungs. Notice too that by changing your breath you can activate physiological change – breathe slowly and deeply, breath quickly and short and perhaps you will feel different. A dance might begin from this place.

Dance can offer investigation into embodied experience through physical, sensual and emotional articulation of the body in motion. Sensory insights can form a basis of knowing in physical practices and serve to guide the expressive, experiential body. Coming to know the nature of the body can lead one to a deeper appreciation of the natural systems in which it is embedded, where paying attention to the body is a way of connecting with and tuning with nature. Dancers work with natural forces in the making of movements, and in the making of their bodies. While the human body is an evolutionary response to forces such as gravity, air pressure and other environmental conditions, mostly dealt with unconsciously so they can be taken for granted, dancers, and other movement practitioners, work consciously with these forces in order to harness them for means of expression, physical development, artistry, healing, and performance.

Letting Nature In

To move, then, is to participate in nature; and to move is also to manifest a perspective in that participation and to be in particular relation with body and earth.

When discussing their own embodied experiences, both Eeva-Maria and Nala drew attention to the felt sensation of the larger body of the earth within their embodied awareness. When discussing her experience of place and memory, Eeva-Maria describes how places “rise inside of you. Your breathing changes” (personal communication, September 3, 2009). This idea of a place rising inside is echoed in Nala’s recollection of how she first felt a connection to earth in her movement, where she “felt it come up from the earth, into my legs and body that way, not in from some intellectual place” (personal communication, July 9, 2009). Both Eeva-Maria and Nala identify sensation as means of initiating and continuing a dialogue with nature.

Coming to know nature in the first person is concerned with movement, quality and direct relationship and manifests individually unique responses. The environment is encountered through touch, sound, textures and experiences of time and space, both inside and out. When sensation is privileged, perception opens to what is felt in the moment. Tim perceives that when working in the natural environment, there is “no gender or age issue around embodying” and that one is working with a “primary lump of stuff” (personal communication, November 2, 2009). Partnering with an environment such as a river, a rock, a tree, a forest floor, a bed of moss offers insight into the qualities and processes of those environments. Tuning in, listening and sensing allows one to be receptive, in relationship and to be changed by such an environment. One can imagine what it might mean to inhabit such an environment, how one might move within it and evolve in relation with it.

Moreover, when working with the body in nature, the body is experienced at its scale and potential in relation to the scale of the environment. Engaging in pedestrian practices, such as walking, can reveal the very fast beyond ‘natural’ pace of daily lives that involve regular car, train or plane journeys. Boundaries and physical limits in relation to the land are part of the discourse of pedestrian practices and reveal how technological innovation literally transcends nature by making irrelevant the scale and capacity of the human body in the design of cities, consumer economics and industrialization. For Tim, there is honesty in relationships between body and nature, where this “integrity is connected with nature” and “there's no construct that I am aware of that we are filtering things through” (personal communication, November 9, 2009). For Tim, the body in and with nature takes its own time and has its own rationality.

Allowing the scale and temporal rhythms of nature to inform the experience of the body was something valued by all of the artists. A first step in the process of developing an embodied approach to ecological participation is listening to nature and letting it in to one’s perceptions. As a dialogue with nature is developed, particular ideas of embodiment emerge. While there are similar themes through the artists work, I wish to probe each one of their practices in a little more depth.

Evolutionary Body

*She is leaning on the wall moving slowly, listening
Weighted, rooted. Thighs rest on the ground.
Dropping through water to something more solid*

Descending slowly
Growing in water
Anchored branches extending
Pausing in each posture
The wind seems to take her
She shifts across the space and stands
Each movement is given evolutionary clarity

(Researcher's journal entry, September 2, 2009)

As I witnessed Eeva-Maria's dancing, I noticed her clarity and presence in each moment of movement. Her dancing seemed to extend time and she fully inhabited the postures into which she moved before leaving them. She allowed herself to be satisfied that she was truly finished in the exploration of a postural place in which she found herself before leaving it. Not only did I witness a clarity of image but I was also able to imagine the inhabitation of that image. Later, in conversation, Eeva-Maria talked about the influence of her butoh teacher on her approach to movement, composition and working at Pen Pyn Farch, "it comes from slowing down and making *ma* – a Japanese concept of making space between each impulse. The impulses arise from that and that is something that relates to my living with the valley" (personal communication, September 3, 2009). Reflecting upon the dance that I had witnessed, I realized that Eeva-Maria was listening to the impulses arising from the spaces of her movements. This particular form of listening is a listening without searching and is more a listening for what is present in each moment and then choosing to cultivate that. Knowledge is found as tasks are undertaken, which is not

to say that Eeva-Maria does not work without particular aspirations but that she is open to learning from what each movement and moment can teach her.

Working with attention on the present, Eeva-Maria does not write off any possibilities but speaks in terms of “perhaps, one day” or “it will be fortunate if” (personal communication, September 2, 2009), while focusing on working with the resources that she has in front of her. Eeva-Maria’s dialogue with her body embeds her in the movement of the earth at Pen Pyn Farch, where she has cleared vegetation from the lake, dug holes for fence posts, felled trees, cultivated a garden and developed an expressive movement practice. Eeva-Maria creates a dialogue between imagination, movement and working tasks that contribute to the ongoing way of life at Pen Pyn Farch and she talks about really coming to know the land through digging the earth. For Eeva-Maria, the physical work on the land has evolved with her movement practice. She explains that, “I like mud and I like going into the lake and pulling out wood... It makes you feel robust... This robustness is a nice balance and very important for all the somatic feeling and listening work” (personal communication, September 3 2009).

The physical work with the land enables the cultivation of a direct embodied relationship with the local environment. Cleaning out the chickens, carrying wood, cleaning and gardening create memories in the muscles and come to shape the body. When I approach these tasks with Eeva-Maria, I am very aware of my dancer body supporting me through a mindful use of centre and distributing weight through

postural organization. It is interesting to observe my body awareness knowledge derived from dance and somatic practice meeting the performance of these everyday tasks. Here somatic attention is directed inward and outward, cultivating body and earth together with both being transformed by the task.

Much somatic work invites the development of ecologically informed body awareness. One can tune the internal fluid systems, for example, to the flow of a river, or the skeletal system to the support of rocks. Such images and connections offer the body support in terms of internal organization and structure, while also developing sensitivity to the processes of natural systems. Bodily organization might reconfigure but the open ended embodied relationship with the larger environment that manifests through the choices we make about consumption is not necessarily changed. Changing embodied relationships to the world means not only changing the body but changing the relationships to the ecosystems in which one participates. Eeva-Maria describes how the working relationship with the land changes her experience of the natural environment,

I was talking about trees – you understand them differently when you have felled one and you have done everything that goes into that process of getting it to fall – you can get caught, its dangerous and then the massive task of processing. Its massive – a huge amount of work to process the crown, the trunk is one thing but the crown is massive. (personal communication, September 3, 2009)

Working the land moves Eeva-Maria through the imagistic and texturally associative practices of somatics and bodywork into a relationship of physical intervention with the land that changes both the environment and the body.

Earth: Valley as Teacher

As I am engaging in the dissertation research that is very much about how artists have developed their work in place, locally and with sensitivity to their environment, I reflect on how my own process of working with them has caused me to accumulate a few thousand miles in travel. I travel to Pen Pyn Farch on public transport. A 5-hour train journey to Bristol, change, a 2-hour train journey to Cardiff, then 2-more hours along the south Wales coastal line to Swansea, then an hour or so more to Carmarthen and then a bus inland to Llandysul, where Eeva-Maria meets me to take me the last two miles to Pen Pyn Farch. I arrive in the dark and it is pitch black. There is no orange glow from light pollution and no moon. I cannot see the contours of the land or what might be the dark outlines of the trees. I can hear the stream in the valley and the sound of the wind moving through the forest.

Perhaps it is because I have arrived in the dark that the next morning when I wake up and go outside, I feel wrapped in by the land like I have woken up in a finely woven cocoon of earth, forest, hills and cascading water. The ends of the valley are not visible. There are just long ridges of forest and fields and the ever-present sound of the gushing stream. The horizon here is never more than half a mile away, which gives the feeling of being enveloped and pulled in close. It is a drawing in that brings

attention to detail and to the present moment. As the light falls through the trees it reveals the bright green moss on the ground, the rotting wood and fallen trees, as well as the old stone houses, now with no roofs, and overtaken by moss so that only the outline of the foundation is visible. The trees and contours create mini-ecosystems within the valley. The only weather that can be seen is that which is with you or that which will be with you very shortly. How does the body become in such a place?

Eeva-Maria discusses the valley with affection and describes it as something to get stuck into and as a place that is constantly offering something to be discovered. She explains that she has not yet explored some parts of the valley and that there are places within the land that are not known to her. This embracing of the unknown enables Eeva-Maria to live with the changes and opportunities offered by the valley, as she describes it,

...living with the valley; the sort of wilderness out there in the valley, the unknown, the muddy, the messy, stuff out there. It feels like the valley is rumbling away. It is a reminder of presence - the dark stuff. (personal communication, September 3, 2009)

Eeva-Maria's perspective also creates an invitation to visitors to go off and explore and perhaps discover something new, for themselves and for the valley. Eeva-Maria feels that it is, "in our relationship with the valley that there is something in it worth communicating to other people" and is supportive of explorations in which the valley is used as a learning resource (personal communication, September 3, 2009). In her curation of workshops, Eeva-Maria has brought practitioners to Pen Pyn Farch who

have particular interest in weaving studio and outdoor practices. This can take many different forms, such as reflective walks, anatomical exploration and creative responses to places within the environment. Eeva-Maria is excited by each of the artist's potential to open new avenues of learning in the valley. With dance artist, Simon Whitehead, for example, Eeva-Maria and her son participated in a workshop where they were asked to make a bed resourced from what they could find in nature in the valley. With her son, her response was to make a bed over the lake – a waterbed. Finding the materials and assembling the bed was considered part of the embodied practice. Eeva-Maria is enthusiastic about these projects that approach the valley as a teacher that offers questions and propositions, and as a living material, to be sculpted and transformed with artistry and sensitivity. The geography of the valley invites a particular kind of pedagogy: a site-sensitive pedagogy that might be different for each person.

**Moving with the wood and water:
an individual site-sensitive pedagogical response**

*I am lying in the ground on the valley floor.
It is raining and there are pools of water accumulating between the trees. I am lying
in an old plantation. The trees are large and not likely to be harvested. It smells
good. Fresh conifer. Like many plantations it is also very quiet. There are few
animals here and, surprisingly, few birds.
Lying on the ground, feeling the soft, damp texture of the ground absorbing
the rain, my attention moves to smell. There is a strong smell of manure. I turn to
smell the ground under me. It is there. I get up and walk up the hill towards the edge
of the forest and in the direction of the water source. Fields extend beyond the
boundary of the plantation, ascending to the top of the hill. I realize that the
agricultural effluent is draining down into the valley floor.
(Researcher's journal entry, September 1, 2009)*

Above the valley at Pen Pyn Farch is a farm. All farm activity within the watershed affects the valley. The valley offered me a lesson in its role as a carrier of materials from within in its watershed and in the interconnected nature of everything within the watershed's ecosystem.

Embedded Body

When discussing his work, Tim articulated the potential of the body as a locus of community and shared dialogue, "I really was taken with the body, that one could be expressive, imaginative and bring people together" (personal communication, April 2009). Tim views the body as a "connective tissue" (personal communication, November 2009) that can be developed to bring ideas, people and landscapes into relation. For Tim, the development of this connective tissue is embedded in processes of embodiment that emphasize sensing, instinct and trust, where there is "no construct that I am aware of that we are filtering things through" (personal communication, November 2009). The body is a resource to be listened to, trusted and worked with in the development of work. When I asked Tim to offer a more detailed explanation of the term, he emailed me the following:

Connective tissue is fibre that forms a framework and supportive structure for body tissues and organs. I am working with the body as a connective tissue between our inner world of ambition, reflection and imagination, and the outer world of our surroundings, the place where we find ourselves. A supportive structure that can listen and notice; that can receive, feel, hold, embrace, and respond. It is through the body that we meet the world, explore our place in it and grow our knowledge of it. (email communication, November 9, 2009)

In one of our dances, Tim and I work on sharing weight. As we build trust, the sensation of support goes deeper through skin to soft tissue to bone level. The depths and contours of our bodies become a shifting geology of a dance in formation. We are two bodies moving on the earth as the earth moves. The body navigates change in gradient, shape and form moving within and without, inside and outside, in dialogue. The dialogue literally creates a connective tissue of muscle memories and physical patterns of support to which we can return and build upon. This connective tissue is not only built from physical work but from the multiple dimensions of emotion, trust, sensitivity and rapport that constitute participation in a dialogue.

When discussing the performance process in which he and I engaged, Tim highlights how processes of witnessing and moving contribute to the development of trust, rapport and honesty:

When we first started working together physically, we were soloing and witnessing each other's solos and then we got to a stage where we went into contact. We had to do a lot of finding out and in that finding out there were sensitivities, there was a tentativeness as there is and can be in any situation of finding out. We were very supportive of each other's tentativeness and then in that support, what was grown in that support, was trust, confidence. (personal communication, November 9 2009)

In our creative processes, Tim and I chose to improvise together and apart as the moment took us, both in the studio and outdoors on long walks through the landscape. We let both body and earth guide and support us, while also trying to be respectful of what we were yet to find out. In our particular encounters with change and not knowing, we were tentative as we felt our way into what it would be like to partner

with one another, and for me, with the earth at Burnlaw. We were interested to discover what kind of connective tissue we could form. During our process, we added sessions in order to allow for the completion of processes and cycles that we had initiated. The improvisational nature of our approach meant that some tasks took more time than anticipated if they were to be completed in ways that felt complete to us.

Earth: Cultivating Fields

I follow Tim around Burnlaw. A warm up. It is the end of winter. Snowdrops are pushing through the ground but the days are still short. The first hour of light seems sleepy and reluctant. Some days it has felt like twilight all day. Dark shades intensify in their difference. The wind is up. Each field has a different mood. A different aspect to the sky and the valley. Each has a name: the top field, the dip field, the eight-acre field, the big field, the bottom field, the orchard. Each one has a different character. The fields are framed by stonewalls and twisted trees. When I watch Tim moving through the fields, I am reminded of his use of light in performance where each lighting choice sets a different field of action. Tim's use of light projects space into the stage. He moves with the light and we never see the whole stage lit. The darkness frames the field of action.

The wind is blowing me sideways. Tim runs ahead in the field. Lapwings are flocking and the sky moves quickly. A flash of blue; then back to overcast. We are in the lower field; an open expanse that invites running. At the edge of this field is a

brook and a stone on which to lie. Tim reclines in this opportunity. We move back up the hill through the plantation. The bark of the saplings has been stripped away by deer. Tim tells me that they only do this when there is persistent snow, which stops them from grazing. There has been a prolonged cold snap this year (2009), with six weeks of continuous snow cover up here on the higher Pennine hills. On some of the trees, the connection of the bark around the trunk has been broken. Some of the trees will die. I lie in the ground. The grass is lush, deep and soft. It has never been grazed.

Each field calls for a different response. We move up the hill to sit on a tree, up further still to fly kites in the wind made from bin bags left on the ground. Then we lie down and look at the sky. A different perspective. The top field calls for lying down and taking in the sky. We return through the field with the yurts, through the chicken run to an enclosed garden. From the garden, we can see the Cheviot, the highest hill in Northumberland and over 60 miles away. A small enclosure from these vast skies.

Tim reflects on one of his walking practices through the fields at Burnlaw, which embodies the integration of physical and imaginative explorations:

Big, single low clouds were moving across the sky, and on the other side of the valley their large shadows were also moving across the ground. The edge of the darker shape took details of landscape into muted color while at the same time brought other detail into the light again as the shadow moved on. It took me on a little voyage in both thought and movement. (personal communication, November 9, 2009)

For Tim, part of his participation and performance in the ecosystem is concerned with appreciating what is offered to the imagination by the performances of nature. In this exploration, the body creates an imaginative connector to environment where the wind, the ground, the light and the trees can be called upon in the fostering of relationships that start to constitute a community. Recalling a walking project in which he was leading a group in the practice of silent walking, Tim spoke of how he became aware of the need for silence to be in dialogue with nature. Tim noticed that to come out of the social community offered opportunity for the senses to wander more freely into broader community of which one is a part into the complexities of nature. The session closed with conversations in order to enable integration of perceptions into the social community. For Tim, participating ecologically means paying attention to how the individual body creates connective tissues. He considers the qualities and resonances of the tissues made, whether they are human to human or human to nature.

In Performance: The Trees at Burnlaw

The wind in Northumberland is fierce and unrelenting. In the winter, the wind can blow uninterrupted for weeks on end. The speed of the wind brings the weather in and away faster than can be followed, whipping the ground in its insignificance. On the moors and high slopes of the North Pennines, the trees are particularly hardy and build for themselves connective tissues that resource them to sustain through the winds. At Burnlaw, there are several trees that have grown around corners, whose

branches extend in spirals that coil around themselves, whose extensions form right angles in wood. The trees here have twisted around themselves; creating spirals to support them from the constant battering by the winds. They are robust knarly trees, rough to the touch, solid almost making themselves as hardy as the gritstone found in the hills around here. These trees root deeply and broadly. Roots spread out on the ground, spiralling and twisting like their airborne counterparts. Wood finds new forms in response to what it encounters here. While others might recede and go inside for shelter, a tree must stay where it is rooted, accept the conditions and work with them. The trees wholeheartedly respond to the environment here: resilient and with a commitment to staying put.



Figure 1. Trees at Burnlaw (researcher's photographs)

Composting to Compose: Integrated Body and Earth Cycles

For Nala, bodies are processes in which individuals and communities are nested in inter-relationships of need and nourishment. In her writings, Nala articulates the body as a way of learning the principles of permaculture. Working in tune with the moment in place and as local as possible are ideas that guide Nala's approach to the body. Permaculture gives Nala's practice a framework through which she can extend ideas that are already resonant to her. Nala articulates the body as *zone zero*, being the most local zone and the zone with which everything begins. Nala does not view the body as self-contained but as an open system that interconnects through zones of proximity, from the local to the planetary, in order to source support,

I talk about the three levels of body - your personal body or your soma, and then there's the social body, or the body politic, so there's a community body and there's also the gaian body, the earth as an organism that's also a body. (personal communication, July 9, 2009)

Her view manifests very clearly in practices such as composting, where human waste, for example, is harvested and cultivated for future fertilization of the garden.

The practice of composting integrates bodily processes with environmental processes. A key principle in composting is the reduction of resource use, such as water and electricity, in the processing of human waste, food scraps and any other organic waste. In such practice, the body literally becomes part of the garden, as human waste is converted to compost and soil is kept replenished of natural fertilizers. Nala remarks: "one of the things that we have the capability to do

amazingly efficiently is build soil. What we are doing now is destroying soil, almost as fast as we possibly can but what we can do is collect materials and let them rot down.” (personal communication, July 9, 2009). In fact, if one were to harness the potential of composting everyone’s waste the global soil bio-mass would be greatly enhanced. Nala believes that “we can have a relationship with the environment where we are actually enhancing the environment, creating more abundance for everyone” (personal communication, July 9, 2009). On Nala’s homestead the compost is used to fertilize plants in the garden and she aims to localize the cycle of growth – body is given energy from foods grown in the garden, waste is broken down and becomes nourishing compost for the next season of plants.

A video of this process with Nala maybe found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/improvmoover#p/u/4/m24Z5cF23ug>

Nala’s practice of composting is an example of how she is present with every aspect of her embodied experience, from sensation and well being, to the impact of her body’s processes in the broader environment. Her dialogue with the body is ongoing. She is mindful of her movement when she can be and takes opportunities to stretch, move, dance and express through movement as and when she can, and feels inclined. The work on the homestead means that there is no time that can be specifically set aside for art practice, yoga or meditation and because Nala has no space to function as a studio, she uses the garden. Things happen as and when they need to, according to season, weather, health and well-being. Nala is deliberately

resistant to compartmentalizing her time, where she reflects that, “most people who are living in a village would not have time to devote 6, 4 or 2 hours to separate a practice” and questions the sometimes cosmetic applications of body based practices (personal communication, July 5, 2009). For Nala, body based practices, such as somatics, enable the body to engage in healthy and sustainable ways with the landscape.

Off grid life creates a daily rhythm of lifting and carrying water, carrying out compost, splitting wood and tending to the garden. Most tasks are completed by hand and, as such, take longer than they might in a contemporary home with modern appliances. Nala is interested in how these tasks can be completed as a somatic practice, not only in ways that prevent injury but also in ways that allow for a healthy evolution of the body. We are working in the garden and we practice observing one another. The plant beds are designed on the African keyhole concept, which means that nowhere in the bed is beyond arm’s reach. I am slicing brasic plants. It is interesting how the task becomes the focus of all of my energy and I forget about my posture. I reach into the plants without thinking about my movement. Nala offers feedback on how I am moving. We start to choreograph our tasks. We analyze, codify the stages of moving and create repetitions. As each plant is unique, there are no exact repetitions. Everything takes a little longer but the task becomes a partner to creativity and moving together.

Cleansing Nourishing Invigorating Earth

Nala is going to show me the beach. We walk along the sandy shore on the southern tip of the island. The panorama takes in Mount Rainier, the Olympics and the western edge of the Rocky Mountains. Sea separates us from all these mountains. We talk about how Mount Rainier is past its due date for an eruption. The sand is very hot and so I walk in the cooler water, letting the seaweed gently wrap around my ankles in such a way that it does not prevent me from taking my next step. We arrive at a very small cove where clay cliffs meet the sea. We sit on the edge of the water and I follow Nala as she uses the seaweed as a scrub to clean her skin. The seaweed has a rough rubbery texture that makes it a good tool for cleaning. The sea is cool and refreshing in the hot sun. From here it is possible to whale spot. Small movements in the water become potential sightings.

At the bottom of the cliff is a spring and the clay here has softened. We rub our hands in the clay and then cover ourselves in it. It very smooth and finely textured and applies to the skin like cream. We bake ourselves dry in the sun and sit naked in our clay clothes. The sun is very strong today and I am grateful to be covered head to toe in a natural sun block. I feel myself becoming part of the island, wearing the earth and eating the food grown here. Nala explains that she often uses the clay as body paint in performances as a way of bringing part of the earth with her into the performance. I think of how part of the earth is also part of her body having partly formed through the composting process.

A movement response maybe found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/improvmover#p/a/f/2/Xp9Y2n314ZA>

The sun disappears behind the cliffs and we enter the water to wash ourselves clean. The seaweed is very useful this time and helps to remove the clay while giving the skin a good scrub. There is salt left on my skin from the sea. As we walk home, we pick berries on the lane. I experience my body in and of the body of the earth; fed from it, covered in it, cleansed by it and accepted by it. It is a glimpse into what it might mean to become nested in a place in such a way that relationships between body and earth become interdependent, where the individual integrates into and becomes part of the local ecosystem. To participate in this way with the earth is to work with local resources with understanding, sensitivity, intuition, care and skilful means. Nala is in part, guided by an interest in what it might mean to live in-place in ways that are similar to indigenous peoples who were able to harness the resources of the earth in more harmonious ways than twenty-first century techno-industrial culture,

So what would it be like, to be a native person, to be an indigenous person, within this landscape...What would that look like, if I were to be native? There are cultures all around the world that have a small little cabin, that collect their rainwater off the roof. I'm trying to create a little model of what that might look like - to be a neo-indigenous person. My footprint is small and I'm developing those techniques. (personal communication, July 9, 2009)

Nala is interested in learning from indigenous practices that model local, sustainable and in-place ways of living.

Community: Social Gardening

Nala has a particular concern for the role of the broader community in initiating changes that will support sustainability and health for the future of the bodies of the individual, earth and community. She currently perceives that the ecological crisis is as much concerned with the environment as it is with human relationships,

Human cultural and social structures, which evolved over millions of years, have been clearcut in much the same way as our forests have been... When this forest is clearcut, the intricately woven fabric is left in tatters, and it takes time and attention to reweave it. (Walla, 2010, § para. 3)

Nala is interested in repairing and (re-)discovering some of the wise knowledge that has developed through human evolution but has been rapidly clear cut by processes of industrialization. From her perspective, humans are compromising their community of support. Such knowledges include those of indigenous peoples, hunter-gather cultures, pre-industrialized farming methods and pre-industrialized models of settlement and community. Nala does not reject everything that there is in contemporary society but as she has developed integrated cycles of body and earth in process in place within her own life, she is aware of how her approach finds her at odds with the status quo. Critical of tokenistic environmentalism, Nala is committed to deep changes in behavior that involve giving up central heating, running water and convenience foods. Because Nala sees body and earth nested in inter-relationship, she considers her behavior to be part of the ecosystem,

I think it is a perverted kind of guilt thing that people should be concerned about the environment other than changing their own behavior, which is the real problem. (personal communication, July 9, 2009)

Nala's work begins in looking at how her own actions and choices impact upon the world. She develops her work with regard to how she can move her own interactions in the world to what she might recognize as ecologically just. Part of that ecological justice includes healthy social relationships, where people can work together in the similarly dynamic ways of an ecosystem.

Anyone who has ever tried to do any project in a group knows that its not because people are untrained that the project doesn't work, it is because people can't get along, their egos get in the way – they're sabotaging it from within, their backstabbing... this is what is going on. That's why my personal contribution to the world is going to be along the lines of how the arts can help alleviate [this kind of] social dysfunction. (personal communication , July 11, 2009)

Nala approaches developing a healthy social ecology as she might her garden. Her concerns are to grow, cultivate, nourish and support. For example, Nala has created a downloadable zine with a series of games that develop eco-somatic awareness (the zine is available at: <http://www.bcollective.org/html/ideo.html>). Games include name games, release exercises, walking tasks and tasks where participants embody the quality of a natural element. In the zine, Nala explains that the purpose of the exercises is to develop group trust in the context of eco-somatic awareness. From my interactions with Nala, I interpret her goals with this kind of work are to foster functional and supportive social relations. When working with Nala in the garden, I came to understand gardening as a socially co-operative

enterprise and that to sustain a small community from the land would take many people. The eco-somatic work creates a context in which such co-operation can be practiced and is an expression of Nala's commitment to evolving a sustained practice that seeks to develop social justice.

Participatory Ecologies

For each of the artists, the relationships between body, earth and community are integrated and inter-dependent in many different ways. How each artist perceives body, earth and community is coupled with the conditions of the places in which they practice, which lend particular parameters to the potential of each place. For Eeva-Maria, the evolution with place is contemplative and open. Eeva-Maria moves in inter-relationship with her learning in the context of the valley and the tasks that need to be accomplished. To visitors, she extends this contemplative invitation to receive information from the valley of Pen Pyn Farch and in a gentle way to allow it to teach and guide. For Tim, the body embeds in earth and community through relationship; the connective tissues created through empathy, imagination and movement. Movement and choreography are ways of creating connective tissue that integrate body, earth and community. Tim's cultivation of the fields creates a connective tissue in his body between earth and performance. In Nala's practice, body, earth and community are perceived as nested and inter-dependent. Nala's concept of embodiment includes her body, the soil, the plants, the weather and broader social communities. As such her systems of practice seek to foster healthy ecosystems in

which performances are contributing to well-being and growth of all the bodies in which she is nested.

What emerges in each of the artists' practices are participatory ecologies that are both visions for how one might engage with ecological living, as well as practical ways of implementing such practices. In this chapter, I have focused on a description of what the artists do and aspire to do. The focus of the next chapter will be to contextualize and make sense of the artists' work in terms of performance proposition and in terms of the ways of life envisioned by the artists. How do the relationships that manifest in the artists' participatory ecological perspectives resonate with broader human concerns? A participatory ecological approach to living seeks to integrate body, earth and community in embodied relationships. It is of interest to explore how Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim meet the contradictions, ruptures and disruptions in their work as they move between their own work and the worlds encountered beyond their work.

CHAPTER V

IN TRANSITION: FROM SITE-SENSITIVE TO ECOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE

Each of the artists works with the earth as a score that enables them to cultivate a participatory ecology with their lived in environments. The improvisational approach of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim allows them to synchronize and work with the fluid and evolutionary qualities of nature in their own particular ways. The earthbound intentions of each of their scores, where ways of working are specific to place and seek to embed within their local environments, set up a context of transition where the earth as score manifests pathways to the future as well as a guide for present action. To work with the earth as a score and to be in participatory ecological relationship with place is to work with movement, change and evolution as the dynamics of nature are moving and changing and these are qualities that one might associate with a transition. To move with earth is to be in synchronous transition with nature's cycles of seasons, weather, growth and decay.

Transitions: Fourth Walls

Throughout the research process, I was intrigued by the ways in which the artists moved with the earth as a performance and as a way of life. The improvisational, immersive and participatory qualities of their work invite reflection on the definitions and roles of performance practice. How does one recognize a

performance? Where are the borders between performance and everyday life?

Conventional performance practice offers the device of the fourth wall as a way of delineating the performance from the everyday. Traditionally, the fourth wall is a conceptual barrier in theatre that separates performer from audience, the not real from the real and the inconsequential from the consequential. The delineation of stage space constructs a fourth wall, as does a screen or a virtual space. The fourth wall is also constructed temporally by delimiting the time of a performance that creates a temporal slice in which reality might be suspended. It is this suspension from the everyday, from the real and the consequential that might separate the realm of art from everyday life.

It is in their intention to move with the earth as fully as possible that Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim approach the phenomena of the fourth wall in performance practice with particular sensitivity and critical awareness. Eeva-Maria discusses how her interest in breaking the fourth wall is connected to her participatory vision for performance:

I think there is a real kind of room for - breaking the fourth wall, where people sit down to watch the performance - and I'm interested in something participatory where there is an event, rather than a performance. (Eeva-Maria Mutka, personal communication, September 3, 2009)

Nala explains how the fourth wall can also create barriers to meaningful participation:

usually the fourth wall is the computer screen and it is not possible to get through; so there is this phenomenon that, for example, you are walking down the street and people will kind of glaze over ... in an encapsulated world. (Nala Walla, personal communication, July 9, 2009)

In his own questioning of the role of theatre and performance, Tim reflects that he still has “great respect for the theatre to draw our attention to specific things” (personal communication, April 2, 2009). None of the artists rejected the idea of the fourth wall entirely but sought to work with it as a tool for engagement and as a way of connecting with audiences.

The work of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim also proposes transitions for the role of the artist. The artists’ shifting of dance earthwards might position the role of the performer as steward, healer, cultivator, farmer, researcher and guide as they develop their relationships between movement and the earth. Tim Rubidge reflects:

Dance as portrait, profile, performance. Dance as interview, research, provocation. The dialogues between the solo dancer and the observer as witness. The dialogue between the silent witness and the landscape – ground, stone, grass, trees, wind, weather, sky; birds and animals, singly and in flocks. I am part of the landscape; we are partnering this land. (Tim Rubidge, email communication, April 11, 2009)

Within Tim’s description are ideas that the landscape can perform for the witness, that the landscape can be in dialogue and that the individual can become part of the landscape. This expansive definition of dance and performance, explored through the previous chapters, dissolves the fourth wall of time and space that traditionally delimits performance from other social and cultural activity. To work with the earth as score in a participatory ecology is to propose a transition to dance and performance practices in terms of time, space, participation and audience engagement. It is to research what it means to transition from a site-sensitive performance bound by

specific and contained conditions of space and time – a performance in which one may suspend reality - to an ecological performance, open ended, fully implicated in life and evolving in place with the earth as score.

Sculpting Through Walls

While movement in place and on site is a core part of Nala's investigation, she also engages in teaching, writing, video making and performing in order to communicate her work to more people. Motivated by a desire to stimulate ecological awareness in others, Nala is keen for her work to be witnessed and engaged in by multiple audiences. In so doing, she engages with multiple constructions of fourth walls between author and reader, and performer and audience, in movement, text, sound, online and in person. Nala explains that, "there have to be some people who have the experience of being in the wilderness and also be the translator and mediator between the two worlds" (personal communication, July 9, 2009). It was through one of my first observations of Nala, that I perceived her commitment to the advancement of ecological awareness in accessible and entertaining ways:

*Nala stands still, doing nothing
An audience of children are transfixed
A nothing materializes between her hands
The nothing moves and initiates vocal sounds
She passes it to her performance partner
And back
It shifts and modulates in sound and shape
They pass it to a child in the audience
It is passed around
Changing with each pass
Every child is eager to play*

*A ball game with nothing
Nala catches the nothing and says to the children:
'Now wasn't that fun and it didn't cost anything'.*

(researcher's journal entry, July 3, 2009)

Filming *The Harmonica Pocket Children's Show* at two different libraries is how I spend my first day with Nala and her partner. They are completing a two-week tour of Washington State and I meet them as they finish the tour in Seattle. The show, called *Shake, Rattle and Read*, promotes reading, literacy and ecological awareness for primary aged school children. While the show's primary purpose is to inspire a passion for reading, Nala and her partner encourage self-sufficient and creative play of all kinds. Nala reflects that, "we're trying to give these kids a message that...they don't necessarily need their computers, ipods, dvd players to entertain themselves" (personal communication, July 11, 2009). For Nala, dislodging some of the consumptive habits of others is important to opening a more grounded relationship with the environment.

Nala believes that breaking through the fourth wall in these performances is essential to the encouragement of creative play and the development of embodiment, healthy relationships and growth as human beings. She advocates for the development of unmediated play as essential for physical and mental health for some of the "most mediated kids in history" (personal communication, July 11, 2009). Nala connects immersion in mediatized environments to feelings of alienation and dynamics of othering. She describes how the viewing of screens, such as the

television and the computer, can render the seeing of others as if through an impenetrable barrier:

I've noticed people pass by someone and they look me up and down like they are looking at some object on TV. Its like there is this voyeuristic operation that is created and so purposely breaking the fourth wall is a treatment for that. (Nala Walla, personal communication, July 11, 2009)

The fourth wall is not broken in the show but it is given varying degrees of solidity –the provocations and invitations are sculpted by Nala and her partner who sometimes create ways through the wall for participation and at other times create a more solid boundary in order to communicate a particular idea or gesture. The show is structured around songs and within each song is an opportunity for the children to move, sing along or make a creative contribution of their own. I notice that the interactive nature of the performance with its tasks and games does hold the attention of the children throughout. Nala also believes that introducing children to improvisation stimulates creativity and skills for self-sufficient (and self-sustaining) play that will later support them in life:

I believe that improvisation is an essential skill for surviving in the world, especially the world that these kids are going to inherit, with alot of instability and rapid rapid change - they're going to need to improvise. (Nala Walla, personal communication, July 11, 2009)

Throughout the show, the gentle invitations to participate, to follow and creatively respond to tasks brings the children into the imaginary world that Nala and her partner create. I notice that the children behave as if they are part of this imaginary world: inside it sculpting and shaping it while guided by two playful performers and I reflect

that what is created is a good analogy for how Nala might envisage planetary participation.

Being able to engage a global audience in the issues and concerns of her work is of interest to Nala. In our discussions, we reflected on the cultural impact of the internet through its facility for communicating with audiences in dispersed geographies. Nala has unwillingly but quite articulately embraced the internet as a tool for communicating her ideas through uploading her writings and videos online. For Nala, there is conflict and tension in her work because part of her practice is concerned with listening to her body, which is consistently telling her to “get off the computer” (personal communication, July 9, 2009), while also creating opportunities for a broader public to interact with her work. Nala explains her strong feelings as she engages in this part of her work:

its really a source of outrage when I'm spending time that I know I need to spending in my garden learning these computer tools that my choice has been taken from me on how I spend my time. I don't want to learn this and I have to in order to communicate with the mainstream on its terms and that it will not listen to any other language. (personal communication, July 9, 2009)

Nala is ambivalent about her use of the computer. While having the potential to inspire people with ideas and bring them together in virtual communities, she believes that the screen also creates separation and alienation (personal communication, July 11, 2009). It is useful to think of the computer screen as another fourth wall of engagement, which enables communication with otherwise unreachable audiences. Her engagement with the fourth wall of the computer screen, and her endeavor to

develop vocabularies that enable an effective use of it, is driven by an activist commitment to reach and engage with the audiences on the other side.

In Between Outside and Inside

During my first visit to Pen Pyn Farch, I engaged in a solo research project in which I was able to work within the landscape and in the studio. The presence of the studio at Pen Pyn Farch creates an opportunity to engage in a somatic research that puts into dialogue outside and inside: body in the earth and body in the studio. To research this idea, I created a small video project *Outside In* (available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iJMnbqB2-c>). I was interested to explore how one moves and makes movement inside the studio after extended immersion in the outdoor environment.

Outside:

Wind and light through the trees
Soft and soggy underfoot
Presence of breath and air
Bones stretch, blood flows, birds call
Branch creaks, body darts
Hands fall to moss, to ground
Supporting and supported

Inside:

Flex and point
Stretch and turn
Roll and dive
Move more to sense, to wake up
A tiny movement in the vertebrae meets the middle toe reaching
Head falls, thigh lifts and circles
Internal architectures tune senses
(Researcher's journal entry, September 1, 2009)

In this particular process, my interest in starting from the outside arose from an observation that much of my dance experience has been concerned with the cultivation of movement vocabulary inside the studio. In this process, I wanted my perceptual responses to be led by the landscape and to weave the inside and outside movement dialogues afforded to me by the rich and supportive environment of Pen Pyn Farch. While working at Pen Pyn Farch, I became interested in how the studio and theatre seemed to manifest a fourth wall in my perceptions that delineated differential responses inside and outside. I experienced the walls of the studio like a membrane through which the more external perceptions gleaned in the outside environment blurred with and interchanged with the more internal bodily perceptions gleaned in the studio. Below, Eeva-Maria describes a process in which she worked both outside and inside, where the interchange of studio based somatic research and landscape immersion were integral to her creative process.

At the time of the research, Eeva-Maria was involved in making a work for a theatre space with another dancer. She discussed how the duet choreography developed through a process of weaving movement concepts from studio based research with ideas found in the landscape. Eeva-Maria recalls that as part of the process they “came with ideas that we had worked on indoors and took them outdoors and it changed into something else and [then we] took it indoors into the piece” (personal communication, September 3, 2009). In this particular process, Eeva-Maria was interested in how details of somatic knowledge learned in the studio can translate

to the ways in which one works outside. Eeva-Maria discusses how the Skinner Releasing Technique classes that they were taking alongside the creative process influenced them:

For example, in skinner work they talk about the haunches, the big muscle, and we were working from falling and rising and how it affects the foot and how the foot is different on the ground. And because we went by the water – _____ lives by the Baltic Sea – it became an image of duck feet – we went to visit a site with huge granite slabs – and it became this whole crossing of terrain with webbed feet and hands. It developed and we didn't do an authentic response to a site. (personal communication, September 3, 2009)

Eeva-Maria's description reveals how their somatic interest in the action of the foot, which initiated her and her partner's exploration, is sensitively transformed into a response that incorporates being by water. As their process developed into performance, Eeva-Maria describes how the physical qualities of places change the feelings in the body and that these further develop the work. It is these physical sensations and feelings that form part of the performance text where there is, "not necessarily imagining of that place but what the feeling was – the change of breath – a sensory memory" (personal communication, September 3, 2009). Eeva-Maria and her partner were also interested in responding to the sensations of the present moment of performance and such she explains that the work, "definitely has structure but every time it is different and no movement is actually set" (personal communication, September 3, 2009). Eeva-Maria describes how she hopes to invoke a sense of the landscape through the work, "we really feel the spot to the landscape and the wind comes along within us. That's how we feel and hope we communicate" (personal

communication, September 3, 2009). Eeva-Maria's description suggests that landscape comes from the outside in through their embodied experiences where the body is between inside and outside, connected by sensation and movement memories. In this sense, might the theatre be thought of as a fourth wall that creates a membrane of interchange and exchange of information, forms, flows and change?

Re-connective Tissues

Tim and I explore the relationship between inside the theatre and outside in the landscape by beginning with walking, a practice that we both view choreographically and performatively within the landscape. As we work towards knowing that we will present something together in a theatre space, we begin to cement a score that is anchored in our shared experience of walking in the Northumberland landscape together. Through our artistic process we explore the physical experience of navigating moving in the landscape with moving for witnesses in the framed space of the theatre. Neither one of us are particularly interested in replicating or re-presenting our experience but we are interested in developing a series of memories on which we might draw improvisationally in performance. Tim reflects that, "I'm seeking to have memory of what I've done, how I have walked...but I'm never looking to replicate that, to repeat or to bring that experience back to life in the studio" (personal communication, November 9, 2009).

As a performer who works through improvisation, my research process is concerned with creating interesting triggers for a score in performance, a baseline

from which to work but not necessarily follow and depart from if the improvisation develops that way. Tim's approach is to develop a score that is based in rich experiential explorations which creates a resource field from which to draw in the performance. Through walking, we developed memories in muscles and mind of the contours and weather of the land, and of the conversations and journeys between us. Part of my interest in improvisation in performance is to remain open and honest to being able to sense and physically respond to the present moment of the performance. I am interested in working from memory but being open and responsive to the present. Following our performance, Tim and I discussed our experience of working with audience our presence and attention to the choices that we made:

What I do find is that is to be in the presence of an audience, I am charged with being as honest and as present with my work, with my material, with my response and with my responsibility to respond, that I am drawing their attention to something that I have to say with my body. (Tim Rubidge, personal communication, November 9, 2009)

We did address the geography of the Northumberland landscape, through the use of the film and also through our design of the space and also thinking where the audience were, so that was affecting my attention to presence and choice. (researcher's personal communication, November 9, 2009)

Something else was happening there as soon as we came into relation to our audience. When you walk in the landscape you can see the ground underneath your feet. Our eyes are constantly drawn to the horizon, plantations, the shape on a hill, burn - that's all visual information, you like. Here is the audience in very close proximity, not seeing us from distance. (Tim Rubidge, personal communication, November 9, 2009).

It's a nice way of asking for someone's attention. (researcher's personal communication, November 9, 2009)

I know that I am not replicating an experience or repeating a set of circumstances found in the landscape and yet that's what I am working on and endeavoring to embody something without my mind having too much conversation or comment, really just trusting the body to be its own landscape. (Tim Rubidge, personal communication, November 9, 2009)

I like it when I see people making their own choices – making their own geography of watching – like installation. To have the physicality that you traditionally find in the proscenium in an installation and a more participatory way so that the work is like that very physical walk that was part of our process. (researcher's personal communication, November 9, 2009).

I would totally agree with you about the audience – it charges it up. The audience are quietly with what I have – a wonderful treat. (Tim Rubidge, personal communication, November 9, 2009)

Both Tim and I are interested in the audience-performer relationship that the theatre space invites and as earlier stated, Tim has “great respect for the theatre to draw our attention to specific things” (personal communication, April 2, 2009). Moving inside the theatre space, we do think about the translation of the outdoor experience indoors and what might be interesting for an audience to experience. The use of traverse, film and proximity were designed to bring the audience into the environment of the work but not necessarily replicate the feeling of being in the particular landscapes that Tim and I had experienced. Our interest remained with the improvisational imperative to respond to the present moment and work with that as our participatory ecology as defined by the score, the design, the audience, the film and the conditions of situating the work in a black box theatre space. We committed to being in the moment, with our bodies in sensation, in interaction, with awareness of one another, the audience,

the film, our memories and the partial insights offered up in our conscious awareness as we navigated the broader emerging field of knowing that might arise in our sensations, feelings and gestures.

Tim and I discussed this moving between landscape and theatre in terms of improvisation. For Tim, the attention on how the body is inspired to move in the moment is connected to a “truth and integrity of the body” and that he is interested in the performer communicating “some humanity with arms and legs is making sense of itself having had landscape as some sort of early reference” (personal communication, November 9, 2009). Tim describes how in the performance, to be truthful to his embodied experience is to be in attentive relationship to that. He wants to be true to the nature of the body and offer that as an appropriately sensitive response to the theatre space. He reflects that:

Truth is connected with integrity and integrity is connected with nature. So, that’s why I preferred our approach to remain in the realm of embodying because there isn't then any construct. (Tim Rubidge, personal communication, November 9, 2009)

What I experienced in working with Tim was that, by making a series of shared memories, we were able to create the body as a connective tissue between ourselves, ourselves and the landscapes and then ourselves and those we invited to see the work in the theatre. In the theatre, the connective tissues of memory in mind and muscle became resources through which we could re-connect as each moment unfolded. For Tim and I, the fourth wall that might delineate us from the audience was experienced

as a phenomena that knits together participants in shared physicalities of knowing and being. A video of this work maybe found here:

<http://youtu.be/doeaQQsb1ow>

When working with the artists, I noticed that they regarded the fourth wall as a malleable material. I observed how treating the fourth wall as a malleable material allows for a molding of performance experience and a crafting of the participatory experience of all involved. It is not so much that the boundaries between art and life are blurred but that the definitions of art and life are given multiple dimensions and potentials that create a complexity of experience so that roles of performer, audience and maker become interchangeable in relation to one's shifting participatory perspective in the work.

Transitions: Grid to Off-Grid

Not one of the artists is entirely self-sufficient within the place where they live and necessary relationships with other communities help to sustain the artists in terms of support, economy and resources. A common concern was to live in ways that by their definitions were more locally rooted and less reliant on resources brought in from far away. This necessary to-ing and fro-ing between their ideas for living and the actualities of living create a need to negotiate inevitable tensions and paradoxes that test the resilience of the ways of life that they are seeking to live.

Resilience and Resistance

Nala perceives mainstream culture as on the grid and grid reliant on services such as water, electricity and food cultivation managed at trans-local levels. Nala describes how on the grid living supports condensed urban living with high carbon footprints that creates an almost imaginary not real state of being where one resides within the “mirage of the mainstream culture...as reality but it is so sealed off from reality” (personal communication, July 9, 2009). The sealing off from reality to which she refers is a sealing off from direct relationships with resources that sustain life and that in the distancing of such relationships, the use of resources becomes less consequential and therefore less accountable. By creating ubiquitous access of resources the lived in environment starts to embody ‘not reality’ in that the same resources and ‘basics’ might be expected wherever one might go. If this ‘not reality’ is lived through in a more theatrical, textual and more malleably constructed way, can it also be encountered as less consequential as a lived reality, in that some consequences of choices and actions are hidden? Part of Nala’s mission is to unmask some of the hidden consequences of choices made and reveal how resources are used, and perhaps over-used, to support everyday habits such as using the toilet (as seen in the video in the previous chapter), buying industrially farmed food and relying on a seeming abundance of energy for running home appliances and cars.

Nala’s choice to live off-grid positions her in more direct and accountable relationships with her resource use. Her commitment to this way of life is resilient in

her depth of understanding in how to sustainably accomplish an off-grid approach.

Her need to communicate and mediate between the two worlds is rooted in a perception that mainstream culture threatens the viability of her own choices to live in ways that she considers ecologically sound:

What happens now is that the mainstream society is so ravenous for land, timber and mining, that it is not enough for a tribe to just go off on its own and say we're just going to live our way, our traditional way over here, because eventually, mainstream culture has exploded to such a size that it will totally over run the tribe. It's unfair, really, because the mainstream consumptive society sets the rule of the game. So now that native tribe, or even that hermit, if they have the forest mowed down from under them, or the desert or wherever it is, they have to learn to speak the language of the mainstream tribe in order to get to stop their madness. (personal communication, July 9, 2009)

From Nala's perspective, minority communities that choose to live in their own ways outside of the mainstream might find a fortified wall of separation helpful in the sustainability of their own practice. But it is in this difference of values and practices between minority and majority cultures that some of the work of transition resides.

From a planetary perspective, multiple points of view and choices co-exist. What is of interest to ecologically concerned individuals, such as Nala, is to consider the ecological impact of choices on the sustainable health of the planet and its ability to continue to support particular choices. In Nala's experience, because the mainstream and enfranchised on-grid culture is so vast and expanding it reaches through the boundaries of the minority off-grid practice that she is seeking to establish and in its potential to undermine what she is seeking to achieve, demands critical and active engagement. For example, in her garden, Nala does not make distinctions between

weeds and other plants, partly because some weeds are excellent nitrogen fixers, while others have healing properties. However, local authority regulations make prescriptions on what can and can not be grown. Nala explains:

The noxious weed control board in this county has the authority to pull out plants on my land if I'm growing something that is on their list. For example, St John's Wort is a medicinal herb; not only would I not pull it out, I would cultivate that in my garden. And that's on their noxious weed list and they legally can come to the land and herbicide my land without my permission and make me pay for it. (Nala Walla, personal communication, July 9, 2009)

Nala's encounters with such regulations highlight how relationships between public and private space, individuals and communities, can be harnessed for conversations about practice, transitions and change. From her perspective, moving from grid to off-grid needs to be a larger movement than a few individuals if ecologically just relations with the earth are to be cultivated. In other words, greater resistance to non-sustainable practices is needed if the earth is to continue to be resilient in supporting life. Nala strongly believes that, "If we don't use our art to sculpt and vision, we won't be here much longer" (personal communication, July 11, 2009).

Ecology to Economy to Ecology

In holding a vision for rural movement practice Eeva describes the investment and commitment to Pen Pyn Farch as being like a "public body yourself" (personal communication, September 2, 2009). The courses and residencies at Pen Pyn Farch support the development of artists. Courses and workshops offer learning about movement and the environment, while residencies offer space for making. Pricing is

considered with great care so as to make the work accessible to artists but also to enable the family to break even, as Eeva comments, “there is a reality check, you do have to think about all the investment, the family” (personal communication, September 2, 2009). The economics of living in an earthbound ecological way are delicate and precarious. Eeva-Maria discusses how the relationship with the broader dance community can also be sensitive in that they are working with people who are themselves living hand to mouth or on subsistence incomes. She reflects that the “field of dance; it is so underfunded” and in relation to her own work at Pen Pyn Farch is concerned that “in the dance community, it is almost a dirty word to say that it is our business” (personal communication, September 2, 2009). Many artists are assisted in visiting Pen Pyn Farch through Arts Council or other state funded grants, as I was in my visit. The economics of visiting are entirely different from the economics of living in the place and making it work.

Eeva-Maria feels that “just visiting [Pen Pyn Farch] is like renting, you are passing through”(personal communication, September 2, 2009). Most visitors to Pen Pyn Farch are temporary and are on a form of respite from their everyday lives. Eeva-Maria recognizes her role in holding a space in which others can engage in a creative process and that to hold this space requires “time, space and attention” (personal communication, September 2, 2009). I perceive this action of holding a space as devotional in that it serves others in supporting their processes of creativity and healing. Visiting becomes an act of renting a space in which these processes can

take place. That such a space that values integrated ecological practices needs to be created and cared for is paradoxical in its complicity with a culture that fails to sufficiently provide such resources within the rhythms of daily life. But a visit, even if it is as a renter, has the potential to trigger a deep appreciation of embodied movement work and ecological awareness. Eeva-Maria is committed to developing longer-term relationships that enable her to work in more integrated and ecological ways with a community. She explains that “I love it to be like a hamlet” and she feels that if she can work with people to enable them to making a living at Pen Pyn Farch “it would feel right for them to put their love and energy into this place because that is the thing” (personal communication, September 2, 2009).

At the time of writing most of the business at Pen Pyn Farch came from workshops, residencies and renting of the cottage and apartment. Eeva-Maria’s experience of Pen Pyn Farch is vastly different from most of the visitors who come for workshops or research. Eeva-Maria has found it difficult to participate in the program that she has developed because she finds that “its just too many hats to hold and we do it to be able to stay here and to keep providing the resource and it is kind of our income” (personal communication, September 3, 2009). Eeva-Maria explains how she and her partner have sought to balance their economic and ecological concerns:

There is a lot of unspoken pressure in the countryside, that if you own fields then you must stock them with animals. There are things that we have started to understand in hindsight – there are certain things that you feel like you have

to do it. But now I feel its ok, to take a year out, and maybe just reduce to the polytunnel. (personal communication, September 2, 2009)

This process of moving between sustainable economy and sustainable ecology is of interest to Eeva-Maria who expressed that, “it would feel right to find a balance of care-taking and light management” (personal communication, September 2, 2009). Open and responsive to the needs of the people and environment around her, Eeva-Maria is comfortable with exploring and trying things out to discover the ways that work for those involved. In discussion she reflected that she has been interested in seeding and supporting the development of work she talks energetically about the things that grow at Pen Pyn Farch, “that’s been my territory- the growing business” (personal communication, September 3, 2009). What is also apparent is that the growing business embodies fragility. Each year, Eeva-Maria and her partner seem to have confronted challenges, such as the need to build a road due to access laws (described in Chapter III), that cause them to constantly assess and re-assess the financial viability of their project. It is this continual to-ing and fro-ing between economy and ecology that embodies the evolution of life at Pen Pyn Farch.

Grounded Business

There has been a community at Burnlaw since the 1970s. All over the land, there is evidence of various experiments in permaculture practice, gardening and farming. The community embraces on going experimentation in sustainable and ethical approaches to living. During my visit, two young couples committed to

lowering their carbon footprint were living in yurts. The property is situated between the valley floor and upland moor. No crops are cultivated. Today, the community keeps a herd of cows, some chickens and there is a small herb garden. The poor quality acidic soils in the upland moor location means that it is very difficult for the community to cultivate enough food to realistically sustain themselves. Some income at Burnlaw does come from the workshop program and events but most people at Burnlaw have jobs or sources of income that come from outside of the community. The majority of Tim's work comes from his independent dance practice.

Tim feels that at Burnlaw there is a “sense of rich ground [that] forms a fantastic base for working” and that the community ethos, the landscape and the use of the studio are all important to his practice (personal communication, April 2, 2009). Tim explains that Burnlaw is “the locus of my life” and he is enthusiastic about the opportunity to live with “like minded people” (personal communication, April 2, 2009). Being able to use the studio and be resourced by the landscape has shaped his practice so that it weaves movement work with ecological concern. Tim explained that he had also decided to focus his work entirely in the local region in order to “see what would come from that investment here in the north east” (personal communication, April 2, 2009). Over the past few years he has developed several large-scale site-specific projects in the region and contributed to the arts program at Burnlaw. Even so, Tim finds that the business of being an artist means that he does travel a great deal because Burnlaw is away from most centres of activity and he finds

himself making regular trips into the Newcastle for meetings and planning. Tim explains:

to work as an independent practitioner requires a relationship of looking after business – making the work and then the business of getting it out there. This is a really good place to do that but that is because I have developed a productive relationship with the business. (personal communication, April 2, 2009)

As an independent dance practitioner, Tim reflects on how much other work needs to be done in order to support the practice:

You can't just be a dancer, there is much else that one is challenged to do. Especially in independent dance practice, where there is not a schedule to get up in the morning and be at rehearsal. So there are good days and bad days. Its not life threatening to have seven meetings in a day – but still I am essentially a dancer and those meetings are part of that activity. (personal communication, April 2, 2009)

Tim also explained that, in his career as an artist, he has enjoyed “living by his wits” and sometimes trusting that he will figure out a way to survive, even if when there was little work or income around (personal communication, April 2, 2009). Living by one’s wits is how improvisers approach performance and Tim continues to be interested in this principle as a ground for the business of dancing. Now more settled and financially secure Tim is keen that his work remains “playful” and that he has “a responsibility to ensure that the randomness and comings and goings of it” (personal communication, April 2, 2009). It is this improvisational approach that acts as a ground for creativity and for moving between the diverse worlds that he encounters as an artist, on-grid, off-grid and the variations that are found in-between.

From Site-Sensitive to Ecological Performance

Previous chapters explored expansive definitions of dance and performance that, in their durational and participatory intentions, dissolve the fourth wall of time and space that traditionally delimits performance from other social and cultural activity. Using the definition of the fourth wall as that which separates art from everyday life, and as the boundary of performance activity, creates a theoretical pivot around which the complex propositions of the artists to expand and re-define definitions of performance can be considered. In this chapter, I have explored how each of the artists encounters the broader cultural convention of the theatre and the roles that it has played in their work and how the artists situate their ecological practices within economic realities. Being committed to performance making means that some engagement with the broader performance world in terms of presentation, credibility and income is a significant part of the activity for each of the artists. I discussed how each of the artists deals with the fourth wall as a malleable material in order to create critically aware invitations of engagement and participation to audiences in conventional theatre spaces. In these invitations, one might reflect that they parallel the kinds of engagement that are needed when cultivating a garden or embarking on a long and challenging walk. In this sense, the theatre might be viewed as a tool for preparing audiences for deeper ecological engagement; a tool of transition that opens awareness of how they might be in relation to one another and the earth.

A sustainable practice is an economically viable practice. Each of the artists has a mortgage and each one of them must generate income to support themselves financially. The work of the artists in the study suggests transitional economic models that have been arrived at through experimentation and necessity. The economies of the artists are transitional because they are earth bound in vision but currently represent a compromise with the broader cultural practice of property ownership, rights and control. This compromise and participation in the practice of property ownership is a participation in a practice that creates concrete delineations of space through boundaries and walls in the lived theatre of the earth. Dealing with the fourth wall that separates owned from not owned might be a task that enables a transition from site-sensitive performance, bounded by culturally specified spaces and times, to ecological performance, that is open and responsive to the bounds of the earth. It is in the next chapter that the cultural proposition of the artists' practices will be considered in terms of performance and it's potential to ground an ethical life.

CHAPTER VI

PERFORMANCE AS A GROUND FOR AN ETHICAL LIFE

In the preceding chapter, I suggested that the theatre might be viewed as a tool for preparing audiences for deeper ecological engagement: a tool of transition that invites reflection upon relationships to one another and the earth. I discussed how performance is bounded by culturally specified spaces and times that manifest the fourth wall in performance terminology: defining real from not real and the consequential from the inconsequential. I examined how each of the artists dealt with the fourth wall to design ecologically tuned performances, responsive to the bounds of the earth and fully implicated in life and evolving in place with the earth as score. This integration of performance into life, as part of a proposition within the places where they live, blurs and disrupts the traditional delineation of the fourth wall. When performative actions are acknowledged as integral to, and not separate from, the on going flow of life, the consequences of these actions affects the evolving quality of life. When such blurring of definitions occurs, does the term performance even matter anymore?

That there is an idea that there is an imaginary fourth wall that delineates performer and audience from one another, whether a malleable imaginary construct or a screen interface, indicates that there are various responsibilities and expectations that create these delineations of performers from audiences. The responsibilities and

expectations of performers and audiences are sometimes described as the contract with the audience. Any contract sets out terms and conditions of relationships. Performers propose contracts with audiences through their gestures and actions in the space and the ways in which they engage, participate with or disengage the audience. Each of the artists in the study self-identifies as a performer, performance maker or performance artist and, as discussed in Chapter V, they demonstrate commitment to engaging audiences through their work. In this respect, I would argue that the contract with the audience is integral to their work and it is through the negotiation of that contract in terms of their roles as artists that is of concern to each one of them. The ways in which the artists deal with the relationships that manifest through their contracts with the audience point towards an ethics of their practices in that what matters is worked out in the contract. The contract with the audience forms an ethical basis of a relationship between artists and audience.

Throughout the preceding chapters, I have discussed how Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim integrate performance and life in various different ways. For each one of them, performance is part of the ongoing-ness of life in an ecology of participatory experiences. In short, performance is a ground for their lives. If the materials of the performance are body and earth in participation, as proposed in Chapter IV, then what is emphasized in performance are the site-sensitive, person-sensitive and contingent qualities of the work. Where what is found in each individual experience of body,

earth and community is diverse and idiosyncratic, what are the responsibilities of the performer in the fulfillment of a contract with the audience?

The Contract with the Audience: A Matter of Performance

The idea of a contract established with the audience at the start of a contemporary performance is an attempt to describe how we might find common ground in a field of broken convention. (Burrows, 2010, p. 64)

As Burrows notes, in contemporary dance, audiences are often prepared to expect the unexpected. Incidental performances, for example, willingly participate in the flow of life creating mischief and disruption or offering gestures of goodwill. Other forms, such as durational performance, create extended imaginary episodes in which the boundaries between the real and the not real become less certain. When the boundaries between the imagined and the real become less certain, then so does the contract with the audience. Durational performance is particularly interesting to consider in the context of asking whether performance can be a ground for life because the practice purposefully occurs in a liminal space between the real and imaginary. Below I reflect on my own and others' experiences of durational performance, as discussed in the Introduction, in order to discuss some of the artistic questions that arise when participating in the practice. These artistic questions frame an ethical perspective in which one might ask what is it that matters in performance and why does it matter that an activity is framed as a performance?

Duration Matters: Ethics of Sustainability

In a durational performance, the decision to extend performance time beyond the confines of leisure time offers audience and performers opportunities to experience time outside the norms of daily life in the majority of Western societies. Such experiences offer opportunity to question taken for granted and experiential understandings of time. Extending performance time beyond the length of an afternoon or an evening serves to disrupt presentational conventions. Often in durational performances, audience are not expected to view the whole performance; they may come and go as they please and interact with work for as long as they wish. Several conventions are disrupted – the collective experience of the audience, the container of the auditorium, the fourth wall and often the detailed rehearsal of pre-determined designs in order to allow a real time unfolding of events. In the real time unfolding of events the immanence and perceptual attentiveness of the performers and participants in the present moment is emphasized. One might observe these qualities and features in the work in Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim, whose work is characterized by experimentation and finding out along the way.

In task-based durational performance, the living through of events as actual invites attention to the how of engagement and brings forward ethical concerns of how we all come to make meaning and share a space of action together. Living through the event as actual, also heightens awareness of the purpose of each and every action and its relationship to the performance. Is the action readable,

meaningful or purposeful? What is it that matters about the choices made in the performance? For what is the performer accountable? What is the purpose of the performance? When the temporal and spatial frames are pushed to breaking point, or to a place where the frames dissolve and do not matter anymore, ideas of performance as an event, a spectacle, a contained experience, a condition in time or an object are unhinged. The roles of performer, audience, author, participant, producer are open to change, re-definition and renewal.

It is within such conditions of complexity, where the roles of performance, audience and maker are in flux that the context of the work of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim might also be reflected upon. Might one think of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim as approaching their lives as a durational performance that integrates the cultivation of ecologically sustainable relations between body, earth and community? The cultivation of awareness of each gesture was a practice to which Simone and I committed in our performance of the Pennine Way and it was a practice that I also perceived to be present in the day-to-day work of the artists. I observed how each one of them were mindful of choices and actions in relation to developing the earth as score and in their participation as performers embedded within the ecosystems of their environmental field, that included body and earth, as well as family and community. To think of the artist's practices in terms of durational performance gives value to the ongoing mindfulness, research and consciousness raising activities of their daily lives in the cultivation of the earth as score.

The practice of living off-grid, or in low impact ways, involves endurance and stamina. In my experience of durational performance, such as in the *Performing the Pennine Way* project, I have experienced limits of my physical capabilities. When working at the edge of my limits of physical endurance, what mattered in the performance was a mindful cultivation of sustainability of the body as an ecological system of support, movement and energy. This mindful cultivation of sustaining the body involved paying attention to sensations and making intuitive in the moment decisions, where a matter of the performance was the ecological health of the body itself. The epic proposition of our performance in terms of physical endurance, scale and duration informed our contract with the audience. One of our propositions for engagement was the enduring quality of the work. We invited audience to join us at various points along the way, to follow us on a blog and to witness our progress along the way. Many of our encounters were with extremely supportive people who offered us stories of inspiration, songs and supplies. Encountering Eeva-Maria's, Nala's and Tim's approaches to cultivating the earth as score, I find that I am drawn to supporting them in the work that they do. There is an epic proposition in striving to live off-grid and developing the systems through which to do so. There is always a bucket to be carried, wood to be chopped, harvesting to be done and conversations to be had.

To dissolve the temporal frames of the performance so that it becomes bounded by the duration of life raises further ethical questions that concern the

sustainability of the performance. It is clear that the kinds of performance practices engaged in by the artists have much to contribute to discourses of ecological sustainability. Through the on going durational dimension of their work, where the earth is a score for practice, Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim are concerned with creating a sustainable and enduring relationship between themselves and the earth. It is useful to refer back to Braidotti who, as discussed in the Introduction, locates questions of ethics in the limits and endurance of phenomena. As discussed, Braidotti asks how much can one take, and, what is the quality of endurance as limits are negotiated? What is it that enables the performance to endure and what is the quality of that performance? As I have asserted that performance is bounded by a contract between artist and audience, I am going to further explore these questions through discussing the encounter between artist and audience.

Between Artist and Audience: Ethics of Encounter

If one accepts that Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim are, in their respective ways, engaged in an open-ended durational performance with the earth as score, what relationships between artist and audience might emerge? If the idea of performance is sustained by the encounters between artist and audience, how is the audience conceptualised? Already out of the theatre and in the landscape, and beyond the temporal limits of an event, how are the artists conceptualising their audience? For whom are their gestures and choreographies intended? Although I created performances for video, the Internet and the theatre in my research process with the

artists, each of the artist's concepts of the audience were broader than those people who might only encounter and interact with these crafted compositions. Tim and I thought of ourselves as performing for each other, for example. Of course, in the design of each particular composition, the relationship with audience was integral to the work but each of the artists viewed these compositions as part of the ongoing dialogue of their practice, not as ends in themselves. One might recall Eeva-Maria's integrated perspective on the practice of improvisation including making the soup and cleaning out the chickens as well as moving together. Nala describes how dancing without witnesses in the military bunkers near her home contributes to "transforming the energy, not only in this place, which is really important to do but sending a larger message that ripples out" (personal communication, July 11, 2009).

Just as an extended definition of performance has been proposed through this research, might an extended definition of audience also be considered? Nala's idea of performance creating an energetic transformation that might affect through its resonance reflects her integrated view on performance as a practice that includes sentience, matter and energy as potential audience. If audience is conceived of as matter and energy that may or may not be in living organisms, the responsibility of the performer might be seen to extend to making meaningful their gestures towards matter and energy. Such a view proposes that all species, micro and macro-organisms, energetic flows, climate, and biodynamic processes are situated in a web of participation affected by the performative gesture. This web of participation

includes the individual body, to which one might think of the gesture being in ethical relation to, in that the gesture affects and changes the body from which it is formed.

To begin to think through these very broad definitions of audience, it is helpful to return to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *becoming*, previously discussed in the Introduction, where a subject in a process of becoming is immersed in a partially known field of qualitative multiplicities. Examples of multiplicities might include the body, the weather, the way one feels, the time of day and a conversation within hearing range. A multiplicity might manifest from the microorganisms that inhabit one's body. If one thinks that the artist, audience and performance are in continual states of becoming, then in Deleuzian terms, each one is defined by "the number of dimensions it has; it is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension *without changing its nature*" (1987, p. 275). Moreover, artist, audience and performance will consist within them differing dimensions that shift and change in their own trajectories of becoming. Intersections, such as the moments of encounter between artist and audience offer opportunities for change, or in Deleuzian terms, for forming further qualitative multiplicities and differentials. However, the dimension, quality and nature of these changes are particular to the boundaries and limits of the subject - artist, audience or performance. In other words, the artist does not come to know what the audience comes to know and neither of them comes to fully know the performance.

Significant to note is that while the performance might embody ecologically activist intentions, Deleuze and Guattari's non-linear dynamic of knowledge formation suggests that gestures that would seek pre-determined transformations of subjects in the encounters between artist and audience do not have causal *effect*. Of course, through empathy and rapport, one can come to appreciate the knowledge positions of others and invite others to appreciate one's individual position, as I have tried to do so in this research, but it is not possible to know what another subject knows. However, gestures might be seen to have an *affect*, where a change does occur for subjects and that change is affective in that a state of being is changed – which might be experienced sensually, physically, intellectually, and, unconsciously. The qualitative multiplicities that comprise fields of becoming might not give rise to a configuration of knowing that comes to be known consciously. In this context, to actively transform another subject to a pre-determined condition or point of view is not, from a philosophical perspective, possible.

In such a context, artist and audience meet in encounters and are both are changed but neither can be held accountable for the changes in one another. An ethics of encounter becomes concerned with the changes that are experienced and perceived by each ecological subject. For example, an ethical engagement with audience might seek to affect rather than effect. When performative gestures can affect, but not effect, audiences, the activist dimension of the artists discussed in this research is brought into a new perspective. When activism is re-contextualized along

an axis of becoming, it too *becomes* and the search for ecological justice is concerned with the limits of becoming; the point at which becoming diminishes the potential of a subject or ecological system.

As an ecological subject becomes, the geography of its becoming might be understood of as a traverse in that qualitative multiplicities can co-exist but are not co-dependent. If the subject in a process of becoming is also understood to be traversing qualitative multiplicities, an ethics of encounter concerned with the actualizing of potentials for ecological subjects calls for a transversal knowledge making process. In their own ways, each of the artists has approached knowledge making as a transversal process. Each of the artists recognizes in his or her own way that we are both in and of the environment and in a continual dialogue of material exchange through the air we breathe, the movements we make, the ways in which we cultivate the ground and the food we eat: a participatory ecology. This is an extended definition of embodiment, where embodied experience is made up of a field of perception that includes the felt sensations of the body *and* the felt sensations of the environment. Choreographic gestures, as consciously designed actions, are made to the earth through gardening, walking and cultivating. Gestures are made to the body by physicalizing the relationships between body and earth in a somatic dialogue that seeks to take care of body and earth in integration – a transversal movement. Visitors come in and out of their lives and assist with these actions as audience members might participate in an incidental performance where there is opportunity to make

meaningful gestures together, to create community and connections with one another. That not all of the artists' gestures are directed at human audiences is significant because it creates a contract of engagement with an audience that includes the earth and the life that is found where each of the artists cultivates the earth as score. By including gestures to the land and to the earth, each one of the artists acknowledges the ways in which they move across, through and between various multiplicities of movement, body, earth, health and sustainability. The contract between artist and audience creates an ethics of encounter between person to person and between person to planet.

While Deleuze and Guattari articulate the subject as a self-organizing assemblage of forces, they also note the need for consistency in organization and recognition – to know the limits of oneself – in order to function. So, while they argue for a dynamics of change within an immanent paradigm, they encourage a slowing of certain processes in that change in order that one can survive, “staying stratified – organized, signified, subjected – is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse” (1987, p. 178). So, what is it that enables ethical change to occur? Deleuze and Guattari advise you to “lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it” (1987, p. 178). In fact, a major aim of their philosophical enterprise is to destabilize that which is organized, controlled and given hierarchical structure in order to open new ways of being. Articulating a

dynamics of change and bringing their readers closer to immanence and impermanence enables Deleuze and Guattari to put forward a metaphysical point of view that offers consistency in its immanence but also destabilizes the very strata and structures that give day to day meaning and that allow us to function. Their project encourages one to question processes of sedimentation, processes of ossification and calcification, how one engages with pre-configured representational systems, such as the law, religion, and any other prescriptive modes of being, and to consider the movement in all things. It is this affirmation of the forces and energy of life itself that point towards an ethics of change. In this immanent paradigm, it is an ethics that enables one to assess the health and sustainable dynamics of a system.

Throughout the preceding chapters, contemplative practices of observation, paying attention to sensation and first person perceptual experiences have been discussed as core practices of the artists. The valuing of tacit knowledge, intuition and that which cannot be intellectually rationalized creates an immanent perspective, one that is in and of the body, which shape the performative propositions of each of the artists. For each one of them, the question of what matters and what might be considered to be ethical, ecological and sustainable begins in sensation and is a *feeling in the bones*. In other words, to assess the health and sustainable dynamics of a system, the artists privilege their own first person perspectives and intuition.

In the Bones: Returning to the Subject as Ecological and Ethical Entity

Ethics, first and foremost, is a feeling in the bones. (Abram, 2003, §23)

As discussed in Chapter IV, each of the artists articulated how paying attention to the feeling and sensations in the body, and trusting intuition and first person perceptual experiences of events is important to the ways in which they make sense of and make choices the world. Nala explained how feeling the movement come up from the earth through her feet into her body was “profound and really essential for development as an artist, a performer, everything” (personal communication, July 11, 2009). Growing up in New York, Nala explains how her understanding of dance until this experience had been “through going to clubs” and was “very urban and very mediated” (personal communication, July 11, 2009). As discussed in Chapter III, in trusting the body to be its own landscape, Tim explains that he cannot always know what is going on in his mind, or intellectually, where he works without, “the mind having too much conversation or comment” (personal communication, April 2, 2009) and as such parallels the partial, incomplete and emerging nature of knowledge articulated in Deleuzian epistemology. Eeva-Maria describes how her relationship with the landscape at Pen Pyn Farch “is a direct experience”. Eeva-Maria discussed how her creative impulses are deeply connected “to my living with the valley” (personal communication, September 2, 2009) without her need to search for a meaning in the valley. For these artists, it is the feeling of what happens in embodied

experiences that grounds and guides each one of their on going relationships with nature in terms of performance making and everyday life.

That the body is a reliable guide, to be trusted and intuitively followed is a core belief of each of the artists in the ways in which they approach their work. To trust intuition is to accept that conscious mind is situated within a broader field of knowing, both conscious and unconscious. As previously stated, each of the artists recognizes in his or her own way that we are both in and of the environment and in a continual dialogue of material exchange through the air we breathe, the movements we make, the ways in which we cultivate the ground and the food we eat: a participatory ecology. This is an extended definition of embodiment, where embodied experience is made up of a field of perception that includes the felt sensations of the body *and* the felt sensations of the environment. So, while tuning to and listening to the body is a way of beginning a dialogue with nature, it is the situating of that process within broader ecosystems of support and relationship that gives that dialogue with nature ecological and ethical dimensions. Thus the cultivation of a sensual sensitivity that integrates body, earth and community might be articulated as an ethical imperative for right relations with the earth and one another.

While to *feel it in the bones* might be a matter for individuals, it does not mean that ethical action arises from naïve intuition. Given that each and every body is different, it follows that ethical choices and engagements come to be known individually. One might propose that an ethics of becoming is guided by what is felt

inside from the synthesis of sensory information available to us from the environment, from memory and from our histories of experiences. Throughout the preceding chapters, I have explained how the artists cultivate their perceptions, embodied experiences and relationships with the environment in intentionally purposeful ways. The choices that they have made in rendering the earth as a score, in developing participatory ecological relationships and in developing ecologically sustainable practices might be grounded in intuition but they are informed by research and applied knowledge, such as permaculture and contemplative practices, for example, that enables them to continually evolve their knowledge and the ground of their intuitive perceptions.

It is through the cultivation of sensual sensitivity that the work of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim proposes an ecological ethic, where informed intuitive knowing can ground decisions for what matters in the world. The in depth practices of paying attention to sensation and cultivating embodied knowledge through mindfulness, witnessing, moving, listening and immersing oneself in particular environments offers tools for developing ecological awareness. Such tools might be of use to audiences who are interested in coming to know themselves and environments through their own open-ended and contemplative explorations.

These tools might be thought of as the stratum when referenced to Deleuzian thought. When Deleuze and Guattari advise one to lodge onto a stratum, what they mean is play with the dynamics of a system of knowing found in that stratum and

from that play, develop new potentialities. It is important to point out that Deleuze and Guattari are not advocating transcendence of the representational and signification systems on which so much social and cultural interaction is predicated, rather they offer tools to mobilize the agency of individuals to continually redefine their subjectivity within the social and cultural milieu. One can only do this if one views oneself as open, unfinished and changing, which is the predisposition aimed at by improvisers. Given that the scores of the artists do suggest ways of interacting in the world, I will now examine how they evolve and adapt their systems of knowing through improvisation.

Improvisation: An Ethics of Leading and Following

While an ethics of encounter might be concerned with navigating change as the encounter triggers qualitative affects for each subject, the advice of Deleuze and Guattari to “lodge yourself on a stratum” (1987, p. 178) should be further explored. Deleuze and Guattari recognize that subjects are not a continual vortex of change, which would manifest as a chaotic mess in which a subject might implode, as they are unable to contain the intensity and speed of forces that traverse them. Instead, they explain that becoming consists of different speeds and intensities in the continually adaptive process of configuring knowledge. The stratum offers a place of recognition: a launch pad of inquiry, creativity and exploration. It is also a place from which one can lead and to which one can follow another, as the cartographies of encounter are mapped out.

Tim and I were particularly sensitive to co-evolving a process together and we engaged in activities of leading and following to come to know one another's ways of moving, walking and thinking about dance. The dialogue between leading and following often informs the ways in which partnerships develop. Sometimes, the leading and following roles interchange easily and sometimes people can find themselves following when they would rather be leading and leading when they would rather be following. Navigating dynamics of leading and following occur in moment-to-moment choices as a dance unfolds and in the research process as key decisions are made. What dynamics of leading and following enable an ethical co-evolution of a partnership between dancers and between humans and the earth?

In our working process, Tim and I endeavored to create what might be articulated as an eco-system of understanding between us. As discussed, our process commenced with extensive observations of one another moving with purposeful structures of leading and following that were designed to facilitate equity in coming to understand one another as artists. We then allowed a structure to emerge through extended open-ended dancing in and out of touch, inside and outside. We moved as explorers of two complex entities coming together, molding, forming and beginning to create flows of shared information.

Our understanding of moving together is only partially translatable to language. Much of our knowledge resides in our sensory memory, which manifests in sensory non-verbal articulations of image, gesture, response and physicality. The

non-verbal sensory and tacit knowledge that we created directly informs our own development and experiences as human beings in the world but further dissemination of that knowledge is partial and incomplete, as it is limited by modes of communication such as language. This partiality of knowledge has an ethical dimension in that it locates the knowledge developed as site-sensitive, person-sensitive and contingent and therefore not immediately applicable as a solution to a similar situation in another context. The partial quality of the knowledge developed includes the experiences of Tim and myself in that we can only consciously comprehend what we can perceive and communicate to others what we can articulate. In other words, our ability to lead others into our world, which is only partially understood by ourselves, is limited. What we offer to an audience is a fragmented partial view, albeit designed, that might perhaps trigger and inspire their own investigation. Our ethic was to share our own knowledge, to reveal and share insights into our perspectives in order to inspire.

Where an ecology of knowing includes intuition, sensation and tacit knowledge, it is not only site-sensitive, person-sensitive and contingent, it is also not repeatable. Both site and person are in a continual process of change as they participate in the processes of life: accumulating, weathering and eroding. Positioning performance as improvisation makes this process of change a matter for the performance, where it is the in the moment crafting of moving on, moving through and moving with that is of concern. This is the ethical dimension of

improvisation where one responds to the present moment in the best ways that they can or with “kindness and light” in the words of Eeva-Maria (personal communication, September 2, 2009).

With Eeva-Maria our relationship begins with a walk in the landscape and witnessing of one another in the studio: a witnessing of one another’s natures and the nature within and with out. Eeva-Maria and I attend to what comes in the moment and from my presence in her familiar environment. In both movement and conversation, there are spaces and gaps, as described in Chapter IV. These spaces have an invitational quality where reflecting, pausing and taking one’s time are positively acknowledged to be part of the process of being. These gaps, spaces and silences seem to reflect Eeva-Maria’s belief that, “you need a lot of time, time and space to let things develop and processes go on” (personal communication, September 3, 2009). I think of Eeva-Maria moving through her body with clarity and asking herself if she is ready to move on, listening to the impulses within and the environment with out.

Eeva-Maria’s deep attention on the present, where she speaks in terms of “perhaps, one day” or “it will be fortunate if” (personal communication, September 2, 2009), gives rise to an evolutionary practice characterized by unfolding events that are nurtured and supported in their development. Attending to the full qualitative dimensions of the present enables the assertion of presence by nature in humans, animals, plants, water, earth and rock and for the complexity of multiple presences to

be acknowledged. When to lead and when to follow, as well as where to lead and follow, becomes clear by attending to the present. When Eeva-Maria describes the valley as “rumbling away”, she acknowledges its animate presence: a presence that very strongly asserted itself in a landslip that destroyed the track (personal communication, September 2, 2009).

The purpose of Eeva-Maria’s cultivation of deep attention on the present might be further understood through the lens of Nancy Stark Smith’s concept of *synchronization*. When working with Nancy Stark Smith in a workshop in 2005, she introduced an exercise where we would try to synchronize with our partners through attending to their breathing and physical structure in two to three minutes of stillness before moving on into a contact duet dance. For me, this meant tuning to weight, support, structure, rhythm of breath and energetic impulses of both my partner and myself. Through the exercise, I came to understand more deeply how establishing rapport, trust and insight can greatly support dancers in their moving together through partnering practices of leading and following. This concept of *synchronization* has often supported me in improvisations when I am struggling to relate to what is happening, where I can re-focus and pay attention to what is there through cultivating a rapport where my moving starts to feel right in the dance. Eeva-Maria listens and pays attention in similar ways, taking her time to synchronize and sense the myriad of phenomena informing the configuration of the present, developing rapport and cultivating what feels right to her in her moving relationship with the earth.

Nala's work, that articulates the nested relationships between the three levels of body – the personal, the social and the gaian bodies – calls for a co-evolution of beings that is integrated through matrices of relationships. The agency of nature is immanent to these bodies and matrices of relationships and relationships of leading and following are transversal moving between the needs of plants, people, animals and community, for example. How do social choices simultaneously affect the sustainability of the gaian body and the sustainability of the personal body, for example? While gardening, Nala develops somatic awareness to sustain her personal body while cultivating foods that nourish a small community while trying to contribute to the overall health of the gaian body through the application of gardening methods that seek to enhance the biodiversity and sustainability of a place.

The explicit and systematic ways in which she cultivates relationships between personal, social and gaian is like choreography in that Nala designs with a performative quality. Definitions of personal, social and gaian are not confined to human experience. Nala recognizes the plants in her garden as a social community and in working with members of the human community she describes it as analogous to gardening (personal communication, July 11, 2009). For Nala, leading and following is concerned with developing and supporting healthy systems of evolution and adaptation. In conversation, Nala explained that when she first started working on the garden it needed a lot of work. More recently, with plants more mature and

resilient, the garden can maintain itself with less support and the plants enable Nala to follow with her attentive nurturing.

The dynamics of leading and following also suggest ways in which the contract with the audience might be further understood. In their work, Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim engage in encounters with audiences whom they define as the earth, the landscape and other constituents in their fields of perception. This is a definition of audience that extends the contract from the more conventional encounter that might occur in a theatre. Here, the performance proposition manifests as qualities, states of being, and intentional design of encounters by artists that invite audience to follow and participate, so that perhaps, like the wind on the hillside at Burnlaw, or the water at Pen Pyn Farch, to which the artists offer their gestures, these places may also come to lead. In the realm of human to human, the intentionally cultivated spaces created by the artists in their performance scores can be understood as contributions to public dialogue on sustainability. They also provide examples of lives lived through the principles of improvisation and ecologically sustainable intention.

One might argue that the matters of performance as art are for the human community and that the planet might not care one way or another what gestures are offered to it as an audience. But perhaps there is value in considering that performing for the earth is a responsibility of participating in the habitable ecosystem of which we are a part and that the creation of artful living is a gesture that matters, and is of ethical concern, if a good quality of life is to be achieved. One might not find their

meaning of a good quality of life or performance in the work of the artists but the endeavor to situate their lives as a durational performance does open up a space of questioning in which others can ask: what might my own life look like as a durational performance? What is a mindful life and what gestures do I offer in my participation with the world? Moreover, their improvisational propositions do pose particular questions for the manifestations of subjectivity that suggest the valuing of finding out along the way.

Such questions bring attention back to the role of artists and performers in society. Maxine Greene offers a clear purpose for art's role in human development:

the arts provide new perspectives on the lived world. As I view them and feel them, informed encounters with works of art often lead to a startling defamiliarization of the ordinary...I find myself moving from discovery to discovery; I find myself revising, and now and then renewing, the terms of my life. (1995, p. 4-5)

Greene is interested in how encounters with works of art trigger change and learning, sometimes to the extent where the terms of one's life are rewritten. The spaces opened up by practices that are out of the ordinary, epic and challenging in their propositions are opportunities to reflect on who and where we are as individuals and as participants in social and ecological realms. In their artistic propositions, Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim create opportunities to encounter lives that in their epic mindfulness are out of the ordinary and are opening spaces for reflection that might trigger change for individuals and societies. Eeva-Maria reflects on her work, where

similar to Nala, she feels that the undertaking the work itself will affect others in its gesture to the world:

I feel a real need to look at a whole different kind of performance idea...I find it important that there are artists like ourselves asking these questions and are engaged in a process almost it radiates into the world the importance of questioning and of creativity. (personal communication, September 2, 2009)

In the practices of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim, to encounter the earth as score means visiting places not in the public space. The longitudinal parts of their practice occur on land that they own. It might be interesting to figure out how possible it would be to cultivate such practices in the public space. My month long performance along the Pennine Way is an example of a publicly funded durational performance that occurred mostly in the public space. Would it be considered to be a good use of public money and space if an artist proposed to engage in a performance that was several years in duration? In the work of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim, there are ways of knowing that might benefit public knowledge as social and ecological issues are dealt with.

Reflecting on their work in relation to the work of environmental philosopher Kate Soper reveals how the work of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim can make a contribution to the public discourse on issues such as climate change and the ecological crisis.

The Pleasure Principle: Creating Alternative Hedonisms as Ethical Response to the Ecological Crisis

Kate Soper is convinced that society is driven by urges for pleasure. She proposes that the dominant association of consumerism with pleasure is due for revision on eco-political grounds because of the current forecasts on resource depletion and climate change. Assuming that people are motivated by their self interest, Soper proposes a theory of *alternative hedonism* where, “the concept of alternative hedonism identifies self-interested motivations for less environmentally destructive practices, as well as the altruistic motives more commonly associated with green and ethical consumption” (Soper and Thomas, no page, 2006, unpublished working paper, cited with permission).

Soper identifies increasing dissatisfaction with consumer culture with a simultaneous development of nostalgia for the rustic, slower, more rural and local ways of living. Interestingly, Soper argues that the dominant representation of a citizen is as a consumer and that too choose an alternative role to that of consumer is not only difficult but it is denied in the current capitalist context,

the ‘other pleasure’ to consumerist pleasure, is currently so marginalized, occluded and denied its own advertisement and representation that any choice and decision in the matter has been more or less eradicated. The ‘choice’ *not* to be identified and exhorted as a ‘consumer’ is precisely what is denied in the current era of ‘choice’. (Soper and Thomas, no page, 2006, unpublished working paper, cited with permission)

Soper describes a world where everything is commodified and where consumerism has eradicated citizenship. Advocating for the re-assertion of actively engaged and sustainable communities Soper calls on the elites in developed Western countries to begin to change their priorities and behaviors in such ways that pleasure is redefined away from consumerism. Her work echoes that of many others who believe that there must be radical changes to institutions, communities and society in to develop a more socially and ecologically just world.

Developing their work in the private space, Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim have constructed ways of life that diverge from consumerist values and that place emphasis on localism, self-reliance and sustainability. Pleasure in their places is found in the joys of moving together, in digging into the earth, harvesting berries or enjoying a fire from wood chopped by one's own hands. What Soper is calling for is for more people to find pleasure in ways of life such as these. Might the practices of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim promote enjoyment in non-consumerist activities and in so doing contribute to the facilitation of the transition of values to which Soper refers? That people visit Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim on retreat also poses questions. In Chapter V, I discussed how Eeva-Maria viewed visitors as renters and that in their passing through, these visitors were not fully implicated in the ethics of maintaining an ongoing relationship with place. However, these visitors, who might also be regarded as audience, might take away with them visions of alternative ways of living

that are pleasurable, healthy and fulfilling that stimulate changes in their own habits of worldly participation.

Hedonism is not usually thought of as an ethical practice in that it involves self-indulgence and the seeking of pleasure over all other concerns. In her dissertation, *Contact Improvisation and the Commodification of Touch*, Karen Schaffman describes a particular sub-culture of the improvisation community that exists in alternative hedonistic spaces. Karen Schaffman discusses the importance of these hedonistic retreat spaces in offering enclosed spaces where dancers can feel more 'natural'. Schaffman gives a fascinating account for the *rhetoric of the natural* in Contact Improvisation, where:

Contact improvisers seek refuge with like-minded touch devotees. Furthermore, counterculture status is maintained through healthy retreats and vitalist theories of body. Hot tubs and natural foods contribute to the environment in order to satiate hedonistic desires and provide recuperative benefits. Gathering as a Contact Improvisation community in a natural setting summons the possibility for bacchanalian release and therapeutic healing. (Schaffman, 2001, p. 199-200)

In a world where relationships with nature are limited, intensive immersion in natural surroundings might contribute to feelings of pleasure and provide recuperative benefits. Such alternative spaces, like those of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim, do serve to offer experiences of pleasure that are concerned with deepening connections with nature, good food and good company. Such spaces might pose the question, could

life be better and what is it that is pleasurable in life? Nala reflects on how the arts inform a pleasurable working process:

In the arts, you get work done through fun...it is always centered around food and enjoyment and not everything being a chore...when you do it with other people it is fun. What else is life about other than to have good food and conversation? (personal communication, July 9, 2009)

The ethical dimension of creating or engaging in an alternative hedonism is established by the role that it plays in the social re-definition of pleasure. Part of the concern of the artists and of Soper is that if alternatives are not developed and not taken up, the ability to find pleasure in consumer society will diminish as the resources that support it also diminish.

Choreography as Civic Gesture

That Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim are creating spaces of action in which alternatives can be envisaged, might the work of the artists be thought of choreographies of civic gesture; designing of bodies and places in movement that contributes to enlivening the public space? When considering their work as civic gesture, one can read and interact with their practices as contribution to public discourse. While choices made in private spaces are not normally considered part of public life, the choice of the artists to position their work as performative situates them in a public role and invites reflection upon their work as propositions to the development of civic and social organization. In articulating their practice as performance, each one of the artists creates gestures that matter to themselves, to the

earth, to the public and any other that they deem to be participating in their contract with audiences that might include microorganisms, plants, animals and people.

Civic gestures point towards the future and the evolution of civic society.

Gestures that propose alternative ways of conceptualizing life, performance, art and social organization offer trajectories that can expand the qualitative multiplicities of becoming and that situate in critical relation to the cultures of which they are a part. The improvisational propositions offered by the artists also offer an ethical view of the individual, where because the subject can only partially know his or herself in an unfolding process, responsibility and calls for change begin in individual actions. Much of the work of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim is concerned with the cultivation of their own micro-relations of participation as embedded in their lived locales. These micro-relations manifest as mindful actions in the detailed cultivation of the earth as score, where the artists are concerned with the relational dimensions of their actions in terms of sustainability. There is a daily-ness in the quality of the artists' actions that defines a person-sensitive, place-sensitive and time-sensitive ethical orientation. This notion of finding out along the way while holding particular intentions in mind, all be they intentions that could vary, suggest an approach to ecological activism that is responsive, open-ended and inclusive. By using the work of Braidotti, Deleuze and Guattari to locate the relationships of ethics in affect, the changing subject can *become* as an ecological entity, without predetermined design but with desire to move to that which is more sustainable and enhancing of their potentials.

By moving with the earth, Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim move away from consumerist habits and participation in the capitalist economy. The failure of the banking system in 2008, and the recent deepwater oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, might be read as indicators that capitalism is failing to provide sustainable levels of health and well being for individuals and the earth. To become with our potentials in tact, and perhaps enhanced, alternative models are needed. The earthbound intentions of the artist's work offer ways of knowing that, along with contributions from many others working on issues of ecological sustainability, might enable an ethical, and peaceful, transition of civic society.

Performance as a Ground for an Ethical Life

In this chapter, I have considered why the work of the artists matters as performance and have considered the potential of their work as contributions to the development of an ethical ecological perspective. Where the ground of performance is the contract with the audience, I have explained how the ethics of that contract manifests in encounters of *becoming* between performer and audience. The Deleuzian notion of *becoming* offers an ethics of change and non-linear processes of meaning making, which create encounters of qualitative affect, rather than casual effect. To situate one's life as a durational performance is to commit to the creation of gestures that matter and affect the on-goingness of life itself. The reflexivity of performance practice in that gestures are usually offered to an audience, who might include the human and broader ecological community of living organisms and gaian processes,

calls for mindfulness in the cultivation of choreographic gestures. I have discussed how many of these mindful choreographic gestures integrate body and earth processes in their movement designs. This mindfulness is cultivated in relation to the ways in which each of the artists regards the earth as a score for their practices and shapes the overall design of their lived through choreographic practices.

I have discussed ethical practices that are *felt in the bones* and that develop through the improvisational values of emergence, rapport and leading and following. The partiality of knowledge and unfolding qualities of improvisational approaches invite an ethical stance of finding out for oneself, which synchronizes with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas about *becoming*. I have also discussed how durational performance re-contextualizes the contract between artists and audiences and calls for more participatory and longitudinal engagements in contexts that might not usually be recognized as performance. The cultivation of mindfulness and explicit intention of each and every gesture as a contribution to the cultivation of the earth as score is where the ethical work of the artists resides. In their cultivation of alternative ways of knowing that diverge from mainstream consumerist culture, one might consider their work to propose a choreography of civic gesture; a contribution to the public discourse through a life long durational cultivation of an improvised choreographic score.

CHAPTER VII

MOVING WITH THE EARTH IN TRANSITION: ECOLOGICAL CHOREOGRAPHIC PRACTICES

We watch the land carefully and learn from it. We follow the many good traditions of our foremothers and from the fires of our imaginations we kindle new strong traditions of our own. And this we sing to the deep land and the silent herds and the old, old mothers:

*ma ema
you have shaped my very soul,
each bone in my body carved by your life*

(Hillyer, 2010, p. 266)

In watching the land and moving with it intentionally throughout the dissertation research, I have experienced a deepening awareness of embodying relationships between my body and the earth. What I have learnt from working with each of the artists through the dissertation research is that body (and bodies) and earth move in integration, where the potential of the earth is harnessed as much as possible in the shaping of movement and lived experience. Experiencing the change of mood and physical response as the weather and landscapes of the North Pennines shifts reminds me of this implicit and on going dialogue between body and environment as it manifests in physical qualities, feeling and physiological response. Practicing composting processes with Nala reminds me that labels of waste are contingent and contextual and that the body's natural processes can very easily partner with nature when situated in appropriate systems. In coming to understand the body as part of the

earth, I experience the movements and processes of my body to be participating in the larger ecosystems within which I am situated. Acknowledging that body and earth are connected in integrated participatory relationships grounds the artists' approaches to their work and ways of life.

Such experience makes more explicit the relationships between body and earth in terms of awareness of how much a body needs from the earth to sustain it, which brings forward ethical questions concerned with practices of sustainability. Each of the artists is intent on moving through sustainable cycles of creating, learning and being. By practicing permaculture, small scale farming and small holding, each one of the artists attempts to localize and bring within their personal physical practices the cultivation of resources to sustain them. This push for self-reliance and resourcing needs from within the capabilities of self more intensely localizes embodied relationships between body and earth. While bounded by material limits, I also discussed how the body, as an open ecological system, makes meaning and is resourced by the environment in which it is embedded through a participatory ecology. Through exploring the work of the artists, I put forward an extended definition of the body that included both the body and earth processes in which one participates. In summary, ecology begins with the body in motion, where each gesture reaches into self and out to the broader world for resource and sustenance. Clay, seaweed, wood, water, mud and rocks, for example, becomes as much choreographic materials as the body itself. For each of the artists and myself, I would

assert that it is the primacy of movement and the choreographic impulse that gives ground to our ecologically concerned participations in the world. Further research might document and analyze the potential of dance and movement practices to develop ecological and environmental understanding.

It was discussed how each of the artists works in various ways to acknowledge and participate with her or his lived in environment in ecologically sound ways as performers in her or his respective ecosystems. I reflected on how each of the artists fosters a participatory relationship with her or his lived in environment through the cultivation of mindfulness, first-person perception and the application of systems, such as permaculture, that seek to enhance the quality of their participation with the earth. It is such practices that are also indicative of the ways in which the movement and dance knowledge of each of the artists informs a transition from site-sensitive to ecological performance. The transitional proposition of the artists, to move from a place and time bound site-sensitive performance practice to an open ended ecological performance, became evidential when I discussed their work in relation to performance conventions, such as the fourth wall, and in relation to the contract with the audience. The implication of particular responsibilities that one fulfils as performers offered a further ethical dimension to the research. Through the re-defining of the contract with the audience, where choreography might be encountered as civic gesture, the cultural and ethical contributions of the artists to broader civic developments might be appreciated. The civic gesture of choreography, supported by

further examples of practice, is an idea worthy of further research in terms of articulating the ways in which dance has much to contribute to the development of society, and in particular to discourses of environmental change. As has been illustrated through this research, the intimate and deep knowledge that dancers have of embodied practices that integrate expression, health, wellbeing and sustainability opens potential for further trans-disciplinary explorations. The idea of choreography as civic gesture also has value in enabling dance artists to connect more fully their creativity to the social, pedagogical and communal meanings of their artistic work.

The artists' contributions to the disciplines of dance, performance and theatre can also be understood in the context their respective commitments to the cultivation of an evolving score, rather than an art object, as practice. As Performance Studies scholar Philip Auslander writes, "Theatre's complicity with the anti-ecological humanist condition has to be of critical concern to us" (2003, p. 299). Auslander's critique of theatre's complicity in the anti-ecological humanist condition rests upon the fact that art works often stay in the world longer than anything else and, in so doing, they transcend the worldliness of things. The development of ecological performance and ecological choreographies is concerned with aligning the qualities of such endeavors with the immanent, adaptable and evolutionary qualities of nature. The time-sensitive, place-sensitive and person-sensitive dynamics of the artists' practices, on the other hand, create an immanent and continually evolving art making process.

In the twenty-first century, many art works tour nationally and internationally and are hyper-removed from their locations of creation. Art works deemed successful are distributed globally and contribute to the development of an emerging globalized culture that creates a ubiquity of product to transcend geography and national boundaries. For example, in *Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Miwon Kwon proposes that the success of an artist might be “measured by the accumulation of frequent flyer miles” (2002, p. 156). This distribution of art on a global scale requires massive infrastructures of transport and resource that facilitate artists’ participation in a market where their works are desired, or not desired, by presenters and venues globally. Work that is in and of the earth, grounded in the locations in which it is created and particular to its ecological participation is harder to commodify, produce and reproduce in the market. The work of the artists asks if we can find meaning in what is immediate and present in the here and now and be resourced and enriched by what we already have. Their approaches also suggest a transition for the role of the artist in society from one who produces the product to one who harnesses creativity, nurtures processes of expression and stewards the earth in terms of enabling its healthiest expression of being. This emerging definition of the contemporary artist as one who stewards the earth might be further taken up in a future research project that further addresses relationships between artistic practice and environmental change.

The alternative ways of life to the consumerist mainstream that Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim propose participate in a larger trans-disciplinary discourse of ecological

concern and environmental activism in which there is an on-going search for sustainable ways of living. As these sustainable ways of living are sought, the work of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim illustrates how dance and movement practices have much to contribute to mainstream transitions of society. Not only do they offer models of sustainable ways of life but they also offer tools for individuals to manage change and navigate the complexity of an earth in transition. Such tools include the physical partnering exercises, games and communal movement practices that build trust, understanding and rapport among participants. Moreover, art practices offer opportunities for expression of individual and group experiences in forms that can be received and made sense of by others and thus contribute to the evolution of individual, communal and social understandings. The expressive dimension of moving with the earth can be acknowledged and integrated into the cultivation of the earth as a score and in the development of new choreographies.

In such a context, the artists might be understood as mediators of emergence through sensitive working, with sustainable ecological perspectives, as best as they know them in any particular moment, and, through working with others, activating a coming to terms with self-organizing dynamics in the nature of participation. The honoring of first-person perception, intuition, and in the moment response also seems to me to be a valuable contribution of each of the artists to the cultivation of an ethical ecological point of view. By giving time to perceive fully the present and to attend to feeling states, phenomena and qualities that arise as knowledge emerges, the artists

endeavor to encounter their emergent selves as *becoming* more ecological and sustainable. Through depth of reflection and practices of embodied mindfulness, might the partial condition of knowledge making that has been articulated in this dissertation be encountered more knowingly in its fallibility and more compassionately in its potentials for continual change? Such an approach enables the ideals of philosophical and ethical paradigms to be lived through and adapted to the conditions of the unfolding and emergent life.

We are always moving with the earth. It is how we move that creates qualitative and ethical affects, and these are different for each person. In each moment unfolds a moving dialogue with gravity and air, ground and sky; and within that dialogue there are potential for changes, transformations and transitions to new ways of knowing. Our potential to know this dialogue shifts and changes but we can attend to it and cultivate a mindfulness that might contribute to movements with the earth that sustain. How might we support one another and the earth through these continual processes of change and adaptation? The artists offer ways of knowing in which inspiration might be found but if the nature of emergence and becoming articulated in this dissertation is to be taken up, each individual must find out for herself or himself along the way.

Finding out along the way has characterized the approach of each of the artists. It is interesting to me how our shared interests in the practices of improvisation have been formative in the development of ecological approaches to performance;

approaches that blur the boundaries between art and life, performer and participant and that bring people together in meaningful encounters. This is a vision of dance that points towards the full ownership of arts practices and processes by all members of the community and not by a handful of specialists. It is a vision of dance that asserts that we are all in this together and that we might take ownership of the many different parts of ourselves knowing that others are invited to do the same.

Such a vision for dance might be broadly recognized in the contexts of social, folk or indigenous dance, where dances form ritual, ceremonial and community functions that bring people together. That the work of the artists suggests a more folk like approach to dance is not without precedent. In *Sharing the Dance*, Cynthia Novack recognizes folk characteristics within the practice of Contact Improvisation, arguably a dance practice situated within the post-modern, where:

For a part of its history, Contact Improvisation on a small scale resembled dance forms from other cultures of the world, cultures in which people conceive of dance as part of their social identity. For example, in West African societies, everyone participates in dance to some degree, because it constitutes an acknowledged and important part of numerous social occasions...Virtuoso performance and recognition of social values and occasions are not necessarily separated, nor are participation and performance always two different categories. (1990, p. 200-201)

It is the ethic and politic of inclusion that sets up a context of folk culture. Novack points out that in contemporary American culture, separation, hierarchy in the distinguishing of professionals from amateurs and compartmentalization are the norm in art practices. The practice of Contact Improvisation can transgress these cultural

norms and in so doing opens a transitional space where inclusion of the other, the ‘non-professional’, the divergent and the different can occur. As perceptions are opened to other dancers through touch, sensation, sight and sound, so to do perceptions open to the many phenomena that arise in the field of perception. It is by acknowledging and integrating these perceptions of movement and the broader world that enable the practitioner to experience art practice as a way of becoming in the world. That this should be available to everyone who chooses is an implicit assumption of some manifestations of the practice and politics of Contact Improvisation and frames inclusive, democratic and participatory entries into the landscape, where terms such as Braidotti’s *bio-centered egalitarianism* might have resonance. Given that it is in and of our bodies, might the earth be met as an equal and treated as such in the organization of our lives?

When I think of folk cultures, I also think of closer relationships to landscapes and the earth, where dancing, such as some British Country dances or Native American dances, honored the harvest, the cycle of the seasons or significant events in the life of a community. Where the boundaries of artist and audience are blurred in the participatory contexts of Contact Improvisation, so in the practices of the artists are the boundaries blurred between art, sustainability, farming, land management and living. Each of the artists lives ways of life that seek to integrate resourcing of needs within their locales in a self-sufficient and self-sustaining context that is reminiscent of a village or a tribe.

That is not to say that Eeva-Maria, Nala or Tim actively aspire to create a village, although Nala does state this as an aspiration, or tribe but that the scale and ambition of their projects might be understood in parallel to a village or tribe in that they are small scale adaptable and self-sufficient communities. As has been discussed, the manifestations of community that arise in each of the artists' places are sophisticated in that they integrate appropriately chosen technologies, such as the internet, a dance studio, permaculture, and sustainable energy generated on site, with their earthbound and ecological intentions. It is an approach that encounters technological innovation pragmatically in terms of its utility for a sustainable future. Important to note is that the ecological and sustainable practices of the artists are concerned with evolution and adaptation in relation to present conditions, and they are not concerned with recreating a romanticized version of pre-industrial life. While Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim drew parallels with indigenous or historically pastoral cultures, their own visions are looking to the future and unfolding moment by moment as they harness their potentials in all their challenges, difficulties and pleasures.

The practice of improvisation was articulated as one that embodies dynamic, unfolding and emergent qualities. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *becoming* was explored as a theoretical pivot point of resonance in which the idea of a subject as an ecological entity was put forward. Such a subject comes to know through enactments of knowledge that synchronize being and doing in an emergent knowledge making

process that consists of qualitative differentials. The ethical dimension of becoming was situated by the embodied and material limits of the subject and in so doing, I proposed that ethics is inherently a *feeling in the bones*, in and of the body. The work of Eeva-Maria, Nala and Tim illustrate approaches to *becoming* that seek to be sustainable, ecological, ethical and artistic, where what is already there, as resource, waiting to be actualized, is encountered as much as possible with intentions *to become* sustainable, ecological, ethical and artistic. The idea of the subject as an ecological entity might be further explored in terms of philosophical significance, particularly in work that brings together the disciplinary interests of movement, environment, ethics and philosophy.

When reflecting on the work of the artists, I think of the shared histories that the artists and I have as improvisational practitioners and how my work as an improviser has informed my cultivation of more in depth and intentional relationships with the earth. As the body's relationship with the world re-orientes new potentials become available. From my own perspective as an ecologically concerned practitioner, I find myself on the beginning of a journey of coming to know my body as of the earth in a participatory process, of coming to trust more and more my resources, and of creating an embodied earth-sensitive life in a twenty-first century urban culture.

It is in the manifestation of an ecological performance where movement processes integrate body and earth in choreographic gestures that one can encounter a

disjuncture between the experience of living in urban environments and the experience of practicing in the rural locations of each of the artists. In rural locations, one can literally dig into the earth with one's hands, harvest food for the next meal, walk the contours of the land that affect the tone of the muscles in the gradient and texture underfoot, and participate in the composting process. Participation in processes that seek to integrate body and earth are visible, tangible and immediate. To transplant such practices to the urban environment because they are deemed ecologically sustainable in a particular place would not be a particularly sensitive response to the urban environment concerned. While the artists in this dissertation practice in ways that call for a transition in relationships between body and earth, they also develop their individual transitions sensitively to their respective contexts. Throughout the dissertation I have articulated a position that advocates for person-sensitive, site-sensitive and place-sensitive practices. What might constitute an ecologically sensitive movement practice in an urban environment? Thus, an emerging question from this research is to address the work of ecologically concerned movement artists who practice in more urban and suburban environments. Starting from an assumption that ecological practice begins within the individual body, what relationships might be found in the urban environment, which embody the ethical, ecological and sustainable in the development of that ecological practice? More diverse ecologies of choreography might be found in such an investigation, which

might offer further tools and ways of knowing that enhance contemporary art practices and discourses of environmental change.

My own interest in learning from artists practicing in the rural environment delimited the scope of this dissertation. The heuristic mode of inquiry employed in this dissertation has enabled me to pursue a personally relevant learning trajectory from which I have theorized ideas relevant to self and the communities of dance, improvisation, art and those who might be interested from perspectives of environmentalists or ecologists. In part, my interest in focusing on the rural environment was concerned with developing a more in depth understanding of how nature and humans can move together in places where nature is not subsumed to the designs and concrete of the urban environment. As a city dweller, most of my moving takes place on concrete pavements, as I walk to work, and in dance in studios with plastic floors, as I teach, rehearse and perform. I do not participate in the growing of the food that I eat. I rely on institutional infrastructures for electricity, clean water and sanitation and it is some of these infrastructures that are demonstrably contributing to the degrading of environmental conditions. To develop my personal ecological literacy and an ecologically concerned movement practice, immersion in environments alternative to the city seemed imperative.

In the development of this ecological literacy, I have also sought to cultivate a language that brings forward the embodied experience of the dancer, where the ecology of the body is understood as integral, but also, inspired by Abram, brings

forward the embodied experience of the earth. I have been concerned that my writing integrates the embodied knowing of both body and earth in its expressions. I have explored and developed this language throughout the dissertation, most prominently in Chapters III, IV and V, and in the creative art making projects that I undertook with each of the artists. The experience of developing a literacy that found form through the mediums of language, image and movement, particularly, suggests that this research might be further developed through the design of curricular models and artistic/learning experiences that enable the development of both ecological and movement literacy within the contexts of art making, improvisation and choreography.

As I think of *kindling a fire to create a strong tradition of my own*, I remember how the landscape has supported me, has reflected my emotions back to me and arisen in my perception as an active participant in processes that are healing, challenging and enlivening. I experience ecology beginning with my body in motion and that the cultivation of an ecological choreographic practice brings me into relationships with self, with others and with the earth with a concern for the health and sustainability of all. I remember becoming with the earth, again and again, in a continual process of transition and I think of each moment of my life as a gesture that will affect how I move with the earth and in that movement, who I will become.

*I remember my smooth skin after scrubbing my body with seaweed with Nala in the
cool waters of the Pacific Northwest.*

*I remember my burning hamstrings as I ascended the moors behind Burnlaw,
simultaneously exhausted and invigorated by the physical geography of the upland
moors.*

*I remember my damp face after another rainstorm at Pen Pyn Farch while standing
ankle deep in the mud.*

*I remember moss, sheep, twisted trees, boggy ground, riverbeds, rain, horizons,
human contact, conversations, blackberry picking and choreography.*

*I remember costumes from clay, grass inside the theatre, wellies and raincoats,
filming, editing and working with the camera outside.*

*I remember train journeys, plane journeys, jet lag and bus stops, and
I remember boat journeys that smell of salt air, diesel fuel, boiled cabbage
and fried food.*

Off the boat and back on land, the muddy ground once again, shows me the way.

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