Generating States: Exploring the kinaesthetic and energetic relationship between the moving body-mind and environment, through the lens of a dancer, a choreographer and a performer

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ABSTRACT

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My dance practice research examines and reflects on what I experience as a deep symbiotic relationship between the body-mind and environment, through the creation of two original choreographic works. This mixed-mode heuristic, consists of a studio-based and a text-based strand of enquiry, through which I reflect the multiple perspectives and states of awareness traversed as a dancer, choreographer and performer.

The studio-based strand revolves around two creative processes I entered into, which resulted in the choreographic works at the core of this research – a three-screen video dance installation called TerrainSkin and a live collaborative multi-disciplinary (dance, video and visual art) performance installation called TerrainSkin:FourDimensionalFlow (TerrainSkin:4DFlow).

The text-based strand aims to reflect the intimate nature of my moving experience in site-specific environments, the two creative processes that I entered into, and the performance of the two choreographic works. In both the studio and text-based strand, as ‘thematic strands’ or ‘theoretical insights’ emerge directly out of my dance and choreographic enquiry, I simultaneously engage with the canon of Western contemporary dance and the field of site-specific dance. I also engage with theoretical fields of Philosophy, Psychology and Science/Physics to deepen my investigation into specific aspects of these thematic strands.

The first thematic strand reflects what I experienced as a deep reciprocal interconnectedness between my moving body and environment where notions of separate, fragmented, polarised, dualistic ideologies are diminished and experienced as re-integrated continuums. The other two thematic strands are conceptualised as ‘the energetic body’ and ‘the kinaesthetic body’. It is through these two bodies, generated within my dance practice as states of heightened kinaesthetic and energetic awareness, that directly support my experience of a symbiotic interconnectedness between my body-mind and environment. As part of this research I created an experiential psyschosomatic dance, choreographic and performance method/practice called
Generating States which supports me to frame, illuminate and deepen my investigation into all three thematic strands.

Through my choreographic work, I aim to provide insight into a particular way of being in the world – through the intimate lens of an immersive moving experience. I trace the multi-disciplinary nature of my practice through my engagement with video and performance installation, to support me in constructing immersive performance environments that might generate an embodied kinaesthetic and/or energetic response.
DECLARATION

--------------------------------------------------------

I hereby declare that this is my own work and has not been submitted for the award of any Degree in any other University or Third Level Institution.

Researcher: Mairéad Vaughan

Signed: ________________________________ Date: ________________

Supervisor: Mary Nunan

Signed: ________________________________ Date: ________________
I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who have supported and sustained me through this research undertaking. My sincere gratitude to my supervisor dance artist, choreographer and performer Dr. Mary Nunan, (Irish World Academy of Music and Dance) for her continued support, patience, artistic vision and depth of practice, which carried me to the finishing line of this marathon! Her dedication and commitment to dance continues to influence and inspire me to deepen into my own practice. Thanks also to Dr. Helen Phelan for her ongoing positive support, guidance and generous nature.

Thanks to all the dance and multidisciplinary artists I collaborated with to create the two choreographic works at the centre of this research and also all of the artists I have engaged with over the past twenty-five years within the framework of Shakram Dance Company (1999 – 2013). Their insights, creativity and open nature reside within these pages and inspire the body of this thesis. In addition, I would like to thank the Arts Council of Ireland for providing funding (Bursary Awards) for four consecutive years, in support of this research. And finally thanks to the sky, which held me in my frequent distracted upward gazes, and reflected back to me the infinite nature of the work involved in writing a PhD!

This thesis is written for all of those dance artists who continue to dedicate their lives to movement. I hope this work will inspire recognition of the dynamic creative force that moves through us all.
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USB OF CHOREOGRAPHIC WORK

TerrainSkin

TerrainSkin:4DFlow
INTRODUCTION

GENERATING INITIATIONS

Generating stillness, emptying to breath and wind circling in, out, through to dissolving bone to stone, limb to branch, eye to crevice, lip to moss, container of mixed material composition. No beginning, no end, underlying openness. Layers of rock and bone, folds of fissure and skin, surfaces leaking, one pouring into another, brow to blanket spongy softness. Above, a puffy sky with tracing ink jet slowly evaporating into bulging inner arm vein. Below, spine softens into vertebrae holding ground. Skull support, melting scalp to hair rib of grass blade, entwining, submerging, green brown foliage. Drawn down into sinking earth core, unfolding in dark spaces of unimaginable rot. A cold, still, frozen, timelessness .... sudden whip of erratic bolt sends flashes of life to re-generating cells, sparked out of white shock. Disorientation, circling around and around itself in continuous reeling patterns of how, what, which, where. Drifting, then pulling and sucking up out of hollow depth to lightness of swift birdsong, shifting from remoteness to ease, the sinking emerging, the emerging vibrating, the vibrating resounding to ever present invincible earth – still alive inside of her. Her core melts into mine to solidify our full years frozen pause .... the unifying eruption of generating dance, the formlessness reforming.

Figure 1: TerrainSkin (2014)
My dance practice-based research examines and reflects on what I experience as a deep symbiotic relationship between body-mind and environment, through the creation of two original choreographic works. It comprises of two strands of enquiry, a studio-based strand, and a text-based strand. They each hold equal epistemic status (Knorr Cetina 2001) within the overall frame.

The studio-based strand is comprised of an experiential dance, choreographic and performance enquiry. It revolves around two phases of creative processes, which resulted in the production of the two choreographic works which sit at the centre of this research enquiry. The outcome of phase one was the creation of a three-screen video dance installation, TerrainSkin. It is a choreographic reflection on what I experienced as a reciprocal and interconnected relationship between my moving body and my surrounding environment. Phase two resulted in the creation of TerrainSkin:FourDimensionalFlow (TerrainSkin:4DFlow), a live collaborative multi-disciplinary (dance, video and visual art) performance installation. Each work is part of a continuum, mirroring the nature of my dance practice research as one that is in a process of continuous flow, evolution and refinement. These two choreographic works reflect a particular point in time within an on-going enquiry: a mirror and, at times, also a window onto the broader dance field or landscape that nourishes them.

The aim of the text-based strand of research is to translate and simultaneously deepen my studio-based enquiry into the nature of my moving experience in site-specific environments, the creative process that I entered into and the performance of the two choreographic works I created. It is important to note that up to embarking on this current research, all of my research was practice-based, undertaken through a direct embodied movement enquiry and through the creation and performance of my choreographic work. Therefore, rather than writing through a more traditional, analytical lens, this body of writing serves to evoke a felt sensation of my dance practice enquiry and the creative process I entered into. It aims to reflect the multiple perspectives and states of heightened awareness that I embody in my practice as a dancer, a choreographer, and a performer.

I did not set out with a pre-determined question within this research enquiry, rather, I was interested in examining and reflecting on what I experienced as a symbiotic relationship between my moving body-mind and the environments I engaged with. Out
of the specifics of my direct movement enquiry, multiple questions emerged simultaneously. The process of writing allowed me to clarify these emergent questions and to trace their relationship with the methods/modes of enquiry underlying my studio-based practice. It also supported me to deepen and extend my understanding of the thematic strands (Massumi 2002) or theoretical insights, that emerged directly out of the creative process I entered into for TerrainSkin and TerrainSkin:4DFlow. Simultaneously, it served to locate my work within the broader landscape of site-specific and environmental dance. In this regard, the text-based strand supported both my enquiry into my direct moving experience and simultaneously situated it within the broader field. I also set out within this strand to give an account of my creative process as a choreographer, which in this current undertaking also includes consideration of my aim in TerrainSkin and TerrainSkin:4DFlow, to provide for audiences to have a direct, embodied felt and/or sensed experience of these works through the creation of immersive installation environments.

At times the writing may appear to be repetitive as I return to particular aspects or insights that emerge and look at them from a slightly different perspective each time. This circularity is reflective of the fluid nature of the moving experience and the creative process. It created a momentum that became the driving force of my written component, as I return to the multiple aspects, perspectives and dimensions, to further articulate them and deepen my enquiry into them simultaneously. I do not rest for long in any particular formulation, which is reflective of the subtleties and physicality of my practice as each new understanding arises and dissolves into the next.

As part of this research enquiry, I created a multi-disciplinary mixed-mode heuristic framework (Nunan 2011), which serves as a container for the two strands of this research, while also providing for me to deepen my enquiry into them simultaneously. It holds the text-based strand, which consists of a body of writing (thesis) punctuated with photographic images and drawings, alongside the studio-based strand, which consists of the two choreographic outcomes of this research, TerrainSkin and TerrainSkin4DFlow.

In both the studio and text-based strand, I engaged with research conducted by artists and scholars in the broader field of site-specific and environmental dance, which I have identified my work as being part of. I specifically selected sources or references that

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1 I use the term environmental dance to describe the practices of contemporary dance artists, whose work

Throughout the text-based strand, I also engage with theories and concepts drawn from a range of academic fields of enquiry: Dance Studies, Science, Physics, Philosophy, and Psychology. I make relationships between specific theories drawn from these fields and, what social theorist and philosopher Massumi (2002) defines as, ‘thematic strands’, which emerged out of my dance, choreographic and performance research. Concepts or theories from these academic fields did not precede my choreographic work, rather, they have supported me to deepen and extend my research into the specifics of my practice-based enquiry. I am aware that the convention is to discuss and to argue through writing, these perspectives from the canon of the fields I selected, but it is important to note that much of my argument and theoretical thinking was processed experientially in my studio-based strand. This theoretical thinking manifests through my original findings and choreographic outputs, TerrainSkin and TerrainSkin: 4DFlow.

Through borrowing selectively from other disciplinary fields, the sources I selected, allowed me to always refer back to my practice and from there, to deepen my enquiry into the specifics of it. These sources serve as pillars within the text, to light and guide the way and provide the reader with insight into the depth and breadth of the broad research landscape within which my work sits. They supported me in my attempt to translate the subtle sensory aspects of my movement experience through writing and to further illuminate the thematic strands, which emerged out of my research undertaking.
While at times my movement enquiry seemed intimate and personal, the more I deepened into it, the more I became aware that my experiences were shared, intersubjective or universal as they were reflected back to me through writers from the various theoretical fields mentioned.

The first thematic strand is what I experienced as a deep reciprocal interconnectedness between my moving body and environment (natural, man-made and installation environments) where notions of separate, fragmented, polarised, dualistic ideologies are diminished and experienced as re-integrated continuums within the movement experience. In order to deepen my enquiry into this experience, I refer to the work of environmental scientist, Lovelock (1982), and his theory of Gaia; ecologist and philosopher, Abram (1997); and American physicists, Capra (2014, 1996, 1975) and Bohm (1980), who all enquire into the nature of reality and support the notion that the world is not a collection of separate static objects but rather one unified whole in perpetual dynamic flow. I was drawn to scientists and physicists who specifically aligned themselves with an Eastern philosophical or spiritual influence as my dance practice reflects a non-dualistic perspective. Their research findings circle around three fundamental principles that directly resonate with my practice. These are: the absence of foundational matter (physical substance), the interrelation of all things and that process is primary. Their findings reflect the body as a microcosm within a larger macrocosm, which is in a state of continuous movement, interconnectedness and evolution. These are all foundational commonalities with Eastern spiritual ideologies, which all resonate with my moving experience in site-specific environments, my creative process and the thematic strands or theoretical insights that arose out of my enquiry.

The other two main thematic strands that emerged within my dance practice and choreographic work are conceptualised and experienced as ‘the energetic body’ (Dale 2009, Motoyama cited in Dale 2009, Pond 1999, Park 2004, Zarilli and Yuasa Yuso cited in Banes, Lepeki (eds) 2007, Iyengar 1966, Rama, Ballentine and Ajaya 2010, Hunt 2009) and ‘the kinaesthetic body’ (Whitehouse in Hanlon Johnson 1995, Fraleigh 2000, Debenham 2009, Sheets Johnson 2010). It is through these two bodies, generated within my dance practice as states of heightened kinaesthetic and energetic awareness, that directly support my experience of interconnectedness between my body-mind and environment.
In writing the text-based strand, I was continuously aware of the inherent challenges of finding a language to give expression to the complexities of the ‘living body experience’ (Shusterman 2000, 2008) and avoiding what Dewey describes as the convenience of separation, polarisation and theorizing in an oversimplified and convenient manner (cited in Shusterman 2000). I encountered challenges within the process of attempting to frame and to, specifically reflect through writing, the subtle sensory nature of the moving experience, as well as the ineffable nature of the creative process (Bannerman et al 2006, Nimkulrat 2007, Di Benedetto 2007, Rubridge 2003). According to dramaturge and academic Cools, “Certain forms of artistic research, such as a more conceptual practice, lend themselves better to a written form of reporting, while others, such as somatic practices, don’t” (Cools 2014, p.10). To this end, I explore a variety of writing registers that might best reflect particular aspects of my moving experience and the creative process, through both formal (academic) and informal (experiential, somatic and/or creative) writing (Bannerman et al 2006). Informal writing appears in two fonts – one is in italics which comes directly out of journals that documented my studio-based strand and the other is in apple chancery and reflects a more somatic and creative perspective which is both from journals and evolved in parallel with the writing of this text-based strand.

I aim to discover a language that might give voice to the lived body’s sensuous relationship with its surrounding environment from “our experienced situation within” (Abram 1996 p.47), rather than limit it to what ecologist/philosopher Abram, describes as another conceptual philosophical system that separates us from our environment. Pushing against Merleau-Ponty’s definition of the ‘lived perceptual experience’, I make a distinction between the terms ‘perception’ and ‘experience’. My research is predicated on what I define as my living ‘moving experience’, which is not synonymous with my ‘perception’ of it. I turn to American philosopher and psychotherapist Gendlin, to clarify the difference,

What the word "perception" says does not usually include how the living body consists of interactions with the world. "Perception" is usually something that appears before or to - a body. But the body is an interaction also in that it breathes,

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2 American philosophers and psychologists Dewey (1859 – 1952), and James (1842 -1910) were founders of pragmatism, alongside Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), and are commonly known as classical pragmatists, a philosophy which originated in America around 1870.

3 Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 – 1961) was a well-known French phenomenological philosopher who promoted the body as a primary site for knowing and the role of perception in understanding our world.
not only in that it senses the cold of the air. It feeds; it does not only see and smell food.

(Gendlin, 1992 p.2)

Gendlin’s description of, “the living body is an ongoing interaction with its environment” (1992, p.5) resonates with my experience. Importantly, Gendlin does not say that the body is in an interaction with the environment, but rather that the body actually is that interaction.4

The text-based strand aims to evoke this experiential position – it traces my moving encounters, through generated states of heightened awareness, to a non-dualistic kinaesthetic and energetic experience of merging with my surrounding environment. The writings of somatically influenced dance artists and philosophers, provided a lens through which I could deepen and expand my own understandings. They felt at times like companions, whose language spoke directly to my experience. I returned to them again and again throughout my journey – and, as a result, they flow through each chapter, as they accompany me through the landscape of this enquiry: touchstones which I could push against, as I strove to articulate my experience through writing. In this regard, it could be said that my literature review is punctuated throughout the text rather than being contained in one specific chapter.

Chapters one and two are written in a chronological and linear manner, as they traced a retrospective journey of my past professional dance training, the disciplinary practices I engaged with, my choreographic trajectory to my arrival at my current area of research. As I was writing reflectively about past choreographic work that I had already created, the resulting structure and content of these chapters is different to the other chapters. This also facilitated a process through which I could clearly locate and contextualise my dance practice and choreographic journey within the broader field of Western Contemporary Dance.

Chapters three, four and five required a very different writing approach - one that is reflective of the more complex, fluid, less linear, emergent nature of the creative

4 Gendlin is an American philosopher and psychotherapist whose work is concerned with the relationship between experiential knowing and conceptual thought. His work asserts that our interaction with environment is a type of deep inner knowing that is prior to our logical or conceptual understanding of it.
These Chapters reflect the many dimensions (of the creative process) and perspectives (as a dancer, choreographer and performer) that I tried to address, all simultaneously. To this end, I include an exploration of formal (academic) and informal (creative/somatic) styles of writing that spiral around the ephemerality of the moving experience and the ineffable nature of the creative process.

Chapter one broadly contextualises my professional contemporary dance training within the wider field of Western contemporary dance and performance (Foster 1992, Claid 2006, Green 1992, Erskine 2009, Smith 2014, Lewis 1984, Bales and Nettl Foil 2008). I define my dance practice research as an ‘epistemic practice’ (Knor Cetina 2001) which is strongly informed by my “expert-disciplinary mastery” (Melrose 2003) of the disciplinary practices and methods/modes of enquiry that support me in my dance practice and creative process. The disciplinary practices that are at the core of my studio-based strand, are: Release-based contemporary dance techniques and Post-Modern practices, Iyengar yoga and selected principles from Somatic practices. My objective is not to present a comparative study of my disciplinary practices, but rather to introduce and contextualise them before further investigating how the particular principles that I have selectively drawn from each discipline inform my dance practice in Chapter three.

In this Chapter, I also introduce what I experience and conceptualise as the multiple body-mind perspectives that arose out of my dance training and the disciplinary practices I engage with (Reeve 2011, Foster 1992). Although it does not continue to directly influence my current dance practice research in an obvious manner, I briefly discuss my training in Bharatanatyam, due to its strong impact on my earlier choreographic signature, through the influence of the art of mudra (gesture) and nritta (rhythm) (Chatterjea 2004, Schwartz 2004, Hirschi 2000). In Chapter five, I return to the influence of Bharatanatyam and the concept of rasa and its indirect influence on my choreographic sensibilities through my relationship with my audience (Albright cited in Cools 2004, Schechner cited in Banes and Lepecki 2006).5

Chapter two retrospectively traces my evolving creative process and choreographic work over the past twenty years. I contextualise my choreographic practice through

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5 Rasa, is a term or theory defined in the Natyasastra (Sanskrit sacred ancient manual/text for Indian Performing Arts) which reflects the embodied mood or resonance of a work.
discussing four selected choreographic works, which I created with Shakram Dance Company between 1999 and 2013.\textsuperscript{6} My choreography has been created and performed in traditional proscenium arch theatre settings, urban inner city spaces, site-specific environments, such as castles, ancient ruins, a Martello Tower, man-made derelict sites, and natural environments. All of these locations inspire very different choreographic approaches, intentions and responses, which I attempt to elucidate in this chapter. I trace the evolution of my choreographic journey, through theatre-based works called \textit{Matra} (2001/2), \textit{Turbulence} (2005) and site-specific films called \textit{Frozen} (2007/8) and \textit{Stone and Form} (2011). I detail my shift from what I define as ‘the gestural body’ to ‘the energetic body’, while also discussing my transition from the theatre to site-specific environments, and the impact this had on my choreographic work.

Chapter three introduces a psychosomatic dance, choreographic and performance practice-based method of working, called \textit{Generating States}, which I devised within the studio-based strand. This method is also a state of heightened awareness that is generated within my practice, out of which I create work. This chapter frames and documents \textit{Generating States} as a method used specifically within the context of creating \textit{TerrainSkin}. This method supported me both experientially (in the studio-based strand) and conceptually (in the text based strand), by providing a framework through which I could deepen my enquiry into the symbiotic relationship between my moving body and environment, which begins in the realm of my senses - my active kinaesthetic and energetic engagement with site.

It is important to note that I did not set out with a pre-determined choreographic method. This emergent method was created alongside and in direct response to the decision-making process within the creation of my choreographic work. Of course, I retrospectively wrote about this method to some degree, but I wanted to honour and evoke the fluidity of the method as it emerged within my practice to support my choreographic intentions.

\textsuperscript{6} I co-founded Shakram Music and Dance Company on my return from India in 1999, alongside musician, composer, Dara O’Brien (1999-2013). The name Shakram combines two Hindu aspects, ‘Shakti’ and ‘Ram’. Shakti represents the female principle of divine cosmic or creative energy and Ram reflects the male deity Lord Ramayama, the principle of integrity, power and strength. Shakram provided a framework for a collaborative practice with a wide variety of multi-disciplinary artists for which I choreographed a body of work, with influences ranging from dance video art, film, live voice/sound, visual art and site-specific performance. Please refer to www.shakramdance.com for more information.
In order to discuss *Generating States*, I conceptualise and separate out three spaces—‘inner space’ refers to my somatic ‘living body’ experience, ‘outer space’ refers to my surrounding environment, and ‘third space’ refers to what I experience as a creative state or space of heightened awareness within my practice. This ‘third space’ experience integrates both inner and outer spaces and expands beyond their boundaries. Through the process of writing I attempt to articulate the experiential perspective where polarities do not exist, but I am inevitably presented with the challenge of language which automatically categorises and polarises. To resolve this challenge, I include a third space. The framework of these spaces (inner, outer and third) gradually expands out to encompass my entire research enquiry as I find myself returning to these spaces again and again.

I lay out a series of five attunements, which make up the practice and inform my direct moving encounters within the creation of *TerrainSkin*. These attunements highlight the principles, ideologies and sensibilities that support my moving engagement in site-specific environments. Within this framework of attunements, I document my own immersive moving experiences in site-specific environments and I deepen into the subtleties of my practice through continuously referring to somatic based dance artists and writers who hold a strong ecological approach. This method supported me to deepen into the subtleties of my practice out of which the kinaesthetic and energetic body emerged. My years of training and embodiment of the principles that make up *Generating States* facilitated the deeply sensed experiences that emerged as thematic strands including my non-dualistic experience of interconnectedness between my moving body-mind and environment. The other two primary methods of my studio-based strand, filming and editing, are detailed as an active part of the creative process I entered into for *TerrainSkin*, within Chapter 3.

Chapter four introduces the first creative process of this enquiry, which resulted in a three-screen video dance installation called *TerrainSkin*. The primary questions that informed the creative process are identified, alongside my choreographic intentions. It is important to note that I am not setting out to reduce these questions to a single answer, rather, these questions guided me within the decision-making process of my creative process. They informed both the process of creating the work, as well as the process of writing about it and allowed questions to be further clarified rather than answered.
This chapter is layered with bodies of creative and experiential writing taken from studio-based journals, to provide insight into the experiential, sensory nature of the movement experience and creative aspects that cannot be fully translated through formal or academic language. I give an account of the moving and filming processes in direct relation to each other and detail my journey to explore and discover methods of filming that might illuminate the kinaesthetic and energetic aspects of my moving interactions. I trace the three primary thematic strands that emerged out of the creative process, which I reflect on directly through the dance and choreographic method Generating States. I discuss these three thematic strands under the titles: ‘Generating Body As Environment’, ‘Generating The Energetic Body’, and ‘Generating The Kinaesthetic Body’.

The first thematic strand is what I experienced as a deep reciprocal interconnectedness between my moving body and environment, through states of heightened kinaesthetic and energetic awareness. The second thematic strand is what I define as ‘the energetic body’. This body emerges from both my dance and yoga practice and reflects what is commonly defined as ‘the subtle body’ within yogic philosophy and in the Ayurvedic medical system. ‘The subtle body’, is predicated on the flow of energy or prana through channels or nadis in the body. The Western scientific world defines this energy as a ‘bioelectrical field’, similar to an electrical current flowing throughout the body (Hunt 2009). The third thematic strand is what I define as ‘the kinaesthetic body’. The Greek etymology of the word is kinein, meaning motion and aesthesis (Fabius in Butterworth and Wildschut 2009, p.331) which translates as the ‘sensation of movement’. Within my enquiry, I define the kinaesthetic body as similar to Whitehouse’s Authentic Movement perspective, as a knowing or intelligence of feeling and sensing one’s body move, navigate, understand and experience the surrounding environment fully (Whitehouse in Hanlon Johnson, 1995). Dancer and philosopher, Sheets Johnson, whose research is grounded in the ‘tactile kinaesthetic body’ describes it as an alive sense that is felt continuously through “postural attitudes and bodily tensions” but remains primarily unconscious in most people’s everyday experiences (Sheets Johnson 2010, p.120).

Although quite a lot of research into the kinaesthetic sense has been accomplished within the fields of dance and Somatic practices, there is little research into the energetic nature of the body, how it is generated within a dance practice, how it relates
to its surrounding environment and, finally, how it might be expressed within a choreographic and performance practice. I extend my research into this field; on one hand deepening my enquiry into the nature of the energetic body experientially, while also exploring and discovering ways to reflect these experiences through language.


Chapter five introduces the second creative process of this enquiry, which resulted in a live collaborative performance installation of dance, video (TerrainSkin) and visual arts, called TerrainSkin:4Dflow. This chapter is written and structured somewhat differently from the rest of the chapters, due to the challenge of trying to account for so many layers and dimensions of the not always visible, or the ineffible aspects explored and generated within the creative process and performance of TerrainSkin:4Dflow.

Through this work, I deepen my investigation into the relationship between my creative process and what I experience and conceptualise as a third space. My choreographic intention was to construct an immersive and inclusive installation environment that might reflect aspects of this third space experience. I simultaneously enquire into specific qualities of this third space experience such as timelessness and simultaneity, including the role of intuition within the creative process.

This chapter contains large bodies of somatic based, creative and experiential writing, some taken directly out of my studio-based journals, some written within the process of constructing the overall heuristic framework, and some written within the live performance context. My aim in this regard is to transmit through writing, aspects of the creative process that could not be evoked through the video documentation of the live
performance of this work. This work was created fundamentally to be experienced as a live installation environment and unlike TerrainSkin, the video recording was not created purposefully to facilitate an immersive experience of the installation. It simply serves to reflect moments of the experience through an edited documentation of the live (three hour) performance. Many factors contributed to the difficulties encountered in the recording of this work, including: the circular dimensions of the installation space, dark lighting necessary to project TerrainSkin (screened as part of the installation), and the nature of the three-hour durational performance. These challenges directly informed my approach to writing this chapter.

I document our collaborative creative process, and how Generating States supported me as a method in the construction of the overall improvisational performance framework. I deepen my enquiry into ‘the energetic body’ through examining how it is generated, experienced and expressed within the creative process and the performance installation. I give an account of the relationship between inner intuitive energetic responses and how they were expressed within the outer construction of the surrounding installation space.

My overall performance approach is discussed and my decisions around presenting the work within a three-hour durational performance modal, with the intention of providing for a more inclusive and responsive witnessing performer-audience relationship (Walla, 2009, Cools citing Albright 2014). I also give an intimate account of the varying states of heightened awareness I move through within the installation environment and the live performance of Generating States. Finally, I reflect on the underlying influence of rasa which I discuss in reference to both a ‘witnessing experience’ and as a ‘channel’ through which an embodied experience of interconnectedness may be transmitted between audience and performer.
CHAPTER 1

TRACES AND TRANSITIONS

What interests me, when I explore, is the human condition and the world we inhabit both temporal and earthly, both subtle and tangible. I relish the connection between the subtle unseen body and the flesh of bones of our mass: the known and the unknown, the visible and the invisible. The threshold between these is that creative space I want to linger in.

(Rosemary Lee cited in Bannerman, Sofaer and Watt 2006, p.183)

This chapter sets out to contextualise and introduce my professional contemporary dance training and the disciplinary practices I have engaged with over the last twenty years, all of which intrinsically inform my current dance practice. I start by tracing what I experienced as a more outer, primarily shape oriented, technical dance training, which over the years has matured and deepened into a more inner, reflective, somatic, sensory experience of movement. I document my quest within my dance practice, to find what Lee defines in the above quote as a ‘threshold’ between polarities. I define this threshold within this research paradigm, as a point of integration, a mid-point or the space in between these outer and inner perspectives within my dance practice.

My current dance practice research reflects a non-dualistic, somatic approach to the body-mind (directly informed by Iyengar yoga and Somatic practices). I use Hartley’s Body Mind Centering perspective to make the distinction between the commonly perceived ‘mind’, as information gained through mental and cognitive processes, and the somatic perspective of ‘mind’, as a “function of awareness that can move among, encompass, and pervade all processes and contents of cognition” (Hartley 1994 p.xxvii-xxviii). I refer to the term ‘body’ from now on, with an assumed inclusivity of mind.

This chapter introduces my dance practice as a knowledge producing or an ‘epistemic practice’, which sociologist, Knorr Cetina, defines as one through which one “continually reinvents their own practices of acquiring knowledge” rather than relying on “the habitual and rule-governed features of the practice” (Knorr Cetina 2001, p.175).
An epistemic practice is knowledge driven, maintains a constant state of wanting, of needing to discover more, always evolving, changing and searching for new methods and modes of enquiry. My dance practice is driven by a passion to discover new ways of moving through an exploration of the boundaries of my body-mind and space/environment and simultaneously through expanding into collaborative practices within multi-disciplinary fields. It reflects a state of continuous evolution through the refinement of the disciplinary practices that inform my studio-based strand, alongside my search for new modes of enquiry and choreographic methods within my creative process.

I briefly introduce the disciplinary practices of: Release-based contemporary dance technique and Post-Modern practices, Iyengar yoga, and Somatic practices which have informed my professional dance practice. All of these have supported me to conduct my current studio-based research. I examine and reflect on my “expert-disciplinary mastery” (Melrose 2003) of these practices and modes of enquiry, focusing specifically on how they support me in generating a particular body-mind state through which I can begin to create work. This research supports me in further developing aspects of my studio-based ‘mixed-mode meta practice’, which Melrose defines as a multidisciplinary practice, which maintains the conventions of a specific discipline while challenging or interrogating certain aspects of its practice (Melrose 2002).

For the purpose of this heuristic research framework, and in order to investigate the specifics of my practice more deeply, as I discuss my dance training and my engagement with various disciplinary practices, I also introduce what I experience and conceptualise as the multiple body-mind perspectives that arose out of them. I refer to Susan Foster’s (1992) writings on the cultivation of multiple body perspectives within dance training and the professional dance field, such as ‘the ideal body’, ‘the neutral body’, and ‘the hired body’. Multiple body perspectives are also explored within the work of artist and movement therapist, Sandra Reeve (2011), who frames multiple lenses through which the moving body can be viewed, felt and experienced, including ‘the environmental body’ and ‘the ecological body’. I aim to highlight the bodies that arise out of my practice, to gain a more clear understanding of their role within my dance practice and, in turn, my choreographic work. My objective is to identify the

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7 I discuss the terms bricolage and deconstruction in reference to my dance practice in more detail in Chapter three.
disciplinary practice out of which each body perspective emerged and more specifically to trace how I arrived at the two perspectives I examine and reflect on within this research paradigm – ‘the energetic body’ and ‘the kinaesthetic body’.

**Dance Training - Seeking The Neutral Body**

At nineteen years of age, I began my dance training on a foundational two-year Diploma in Modern Dance in Cork, and then travelled to the U.K., graduating from Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NCAD) in 1997. I completed my training with an MA in Contemporary Dance Performance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance (IWAMD), graduating in 2000. In total, I trained over a six-year period in a variety of contemporary dance techniques, choreographic and performance practices. Fundamentally, I set out to pursue conservatoire training as a professional dancer in order to facilitate my underlying passion - to become a choreographer. This training, while it provided for an embodiment of a variety of codified dance techniques, approaches and movement principles, also, in my view, contributed to a temporary loss of my creative identity as a choreographer, in its privileging of technique and athletic training over artistic development. We worked directly with and toured choreographic work created by professional choreographers in the UK at that time. And, while I was exposed to a wide variety of their respective choreographic sensibilities, approaches, methods and philosophies, this training fundamentally privileged a particular approach to technique, which still exists at the core of most conservatoire training systems today (Foster 1992).

Conservatoire training privileges what Foster terms the ‘cultivation’ of the body through pre-existing techniques or signature practices, rather than supporting the discovery and expression of individual movement styles (Foster 1992). Claud documents the process of cultivating or training the body within a particular technique, as a trajectory that moves from an outer form based image to an inner sensory and/or kinaesthetic understanding. She describes certain dance techniques as “… mirror-reflected languages, working from the external images to the internal kinaesthetic” (Claud 2006, p.80). I can relate to this description, which begins by attempting to shape, copy or mimic the external musculature of the teacher’s body into a replication of the external moving image. Eventually, as the external shape of the movement is executed, the movement filters and disperses more deeply into the body, as an inner felt sensation
of the movement, which in turn deepens the movement quality. As a student, while I had a great eagerness to embody the movement principles within various techniques, I remember a deep sense of unease, as I felt I could never replicate exactly what was seen. This led to a deep frustration, unrest and resistance. Claid describes a similar experience in the following passage,

This is the ‘Yes’ story of my childhood, typical stories of many young ballet hopefuls. But the ‘Yes’ of obedience and submission to the conventions of Western dance training is snagged by the possibility that perhaps not all is perfect here. The willingness to obey holds a tentative questioning. The question mark that follows ‘Yes’ indicates a rebellion that is lurking. The ‘Yes’ has a ‘No’ within.

(Claid 2006, p.5)

I became lost in the ultimate quest and my intense desire to discover and push against the limitations of my body’s moving/physical potential, as well as slowly succumbing (over the five year period) to the powerfully cultural conditioning of an ‘ideal’ dancing body image. I became consumed by the ultimate goal of perfecting my technique and in attaining what teachers often describe as a ‘neutral body’. The goal of this ideology is to empty the body of individual habitual movement patterns and/or misalignments. This is understood to allow the body to become a vessel through which any movement style can be assimilated or articulated. The ideology of this ideal neutral body is that it is emptied of its own idiosyncratic nature. The ultimate goal of attaining a neutral body is thought to facilitate the dancer’s execution of any style of movement and would free her from bodily imperfections (Foster 1992). In hindsight, what I realise now, is that this neutral body is comprised of a lot of assumptions, particular codified principles, aesthetic values and approaches that are all based on what I now describe as the conditioned body and the objectified body. In my experience the cultivation of this body contributes to a deep sense of loss of identity and in turn creativity in its eradication of authentic expression. The neutral body seems to represent an imagined, generic or homogenised ideal, that I eventually realised (after many years of forcing my body to comply with this ideal) was an impossible aspiration to attain.

The primary technique I encountered at NCAD was Graham, but I also studied Limon and Cunningham techniques. All of these techniques provided for a training that had a deep impact and made an everlasting imprint on my body. They all facilitated varying
degrees of technical virtuosity, flexibility, strength, control, body awareness of alignment, anatomical, and physiological systems. These styles all aspire to what Foster (1992) describes as the cultivation of the ‘ideal body’, which, she posits, has deeply ingrained political, cultural values that reflect the particular choreographer’s concerns.

Dance lecturer, Jill Green (1999), surveyed dance students’ experiences within the traditional Western dance training system and their relationship between the ideal body and the mirror. A dancer explained,

We as dancers spend so much time in front of the mirror…. an ominous and powerful presence that contributed to physical self-evaluation, behaviour regulation, body objectification, and competition. … [you are] encouraged to correct, correct, correct, pull up, pull in, suck, tuck. You're getting all that all day. So, [the mirror] it's kind of a re-enforcer....

(Dancer cited in Green 1999, p.88)

I suggest that dance techniques have the potential to foster a deep somatic awareness of the anatomical, physiological, sensory and kinaesthetic aspects of the body, if taught in the right manner and environment - an environment that provides space and time for inner reflection. It was this somatic aspect that, now, in hindsight, I can acknowledge was severely lacking in my training and, even though I was very conscious of this at the time, I can only now find the language to articulate it in this manner. I maintained my own daily personal Hatha yoga practice during this period, which provided me with a more introspective and reflective practice that I did not receive in my dance training. Erskine (2009, p.2) posits the importance of a somatic inner reflection in dance training which supports ‘thinking’ movers rather than ‘conditioned’ movers, “to achieve knowledge of themselves as moving thinkers, rather than being conditioned into the principles of technique based traditions”.

I will now give an account of the three main contemporary dance techniques I studied as part of my training as a dancer. These were Graham, Limón, and Cunningham techniques. These techniques all impacted directly and indirectly on my development as a dance artist through the principles I embodied as part of my training process.
Martha Graham began to identify a new system of movement alongside the principles of her choreographic work in the 1930’s. Her technique is based fundamentally around the muscular actions of contraction and release, consisting of sharp, angular, dramatic movements that reflect Graham’s interest in exploring the intensity of human emotion through her work. The technique produces an ‘ideal body’ type that is strong, muscular and dynamic which was reflective of her company – with dancers described as strong and athletic. Graham’s “... ideal body, [then], even as it manifests an agile responsiveness, also shows in the strained quality and definition of its musculature the ordeal of expression” (Foster 1992, p.486).

Although Graham was known for her advocacy of individuality within her choreographic work, my training in Graham technique certainly did not support individuality, although it was probably more the manner in which it was taught and how I practiced it, rather than the technique itself. This technique produced an enormous accumulation of chronic tension within my body. In the ultimate pursuit of attaining a certain level of mastery, I entered into a training regime of daily classes that consisted of repetitive floor and standing exercises that I often practiced incorrectly. I executed the exercises forcefully due to the required contraction of the muscle within the codified exercises, moulding my body into shapes and configurations that felt extremely alien. Simultaneously, Graham technique, particularly the floor work, facilitated a deep physical opening or increased flexibility in the pelvis region and the hip joints, as well as the hamstrings, which supported a greater range of movement and articulation. In addition, it produced a visible all over body strength in a very short period of time (for me, this happened within the first term of training). By forcing and contracting the muscles instead of lengthening and releasing them, I developed unconscious deeply ingrained habitual movement patterns, which resulted in severe tension that took years to dissolve. I would spend the following years after my dance training trying to debrief my body of some of the bad habits I developed from forcing and pushing my body beyond its physical capacity.

Jose Limón founded the Limon dance company in 1946 after studying with Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. His choreographic work has been described as having dramatic expression through technical mastery. According to the Limón Institute, the technique “emphasizes the natural rhythms of fall and recovery and the interplay between weight and weightlessness to provide dancers with an organic
approach to movement that easily adapts to a range of choreographic styles”. Limon was interested in the expressive nature of individual movement and he encouraged his students to move with simplicity and clarity, without using superfluous energy or tension that might hinder the original intention. The basic concepts or principles that inform Limon technique are: “alignment, succession, opposition, potential and kinetic energy, fall, weight, rebound, recovery rebound and suspension” (Lewis 1984, p.36).

‘Kinetic energy’ is defined as potential energy in motion ‘fall’, which is a complete release of muscles as the body gives into gravity and drops, ‘weight’ which allows a body part to succumb to gravity while maintaining a suspension in the rest of the body. ‘Recovery and rebound’ is the recovery of energy at the end of the fall and the natural pull back of the muscles in the rebound just like a spring or momentum in terms of the fall and recover within the Limon dance technique training system (ibid 1984). I still find myself relating to and further discovering and exploring the effects of many of these principles within my studio practice today. The principles directly draw my awareness to my inner felt sensations of movements such as weight, rebound, fall and recover.

Merce Cunningham created a dance technique that is still an important part of the modern dance canon and widely used within today’s dance training systems. Cunningham technique promotes a strong sense of one’s spine as an integral part of movement. It explores how the movement of the spine relates in opposition or in unison with the legs. Space and direction are also important elements within both his choreography and his technique. Cunningham developed a system of referencing “front” so that dancers don’t think about movement in terms of moving toward a point in space which would normally be facing an audience, but rather in terms of where each individual body is facing at a specific time. Cunningham technique challenges the dancer to explore an internal sense of direction within space, to promote a strong sense of self in relationship to the surrounding space.

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8 See http://limon.org
Release-Based Technique - Releasing The Neutral Body

When I finished my training in 1997, I moved to Dublin and continued daily classes, run by the Association of Professional Dancers in Ireland (APDI), now known as Dance Ireland.9 It was through these classes that I was exposed to Release-based contemporary dance technique for the first time, primarily from visiting international teachers including Christine Devaney and Sean Curran, as there were few Irish dance artists teaching this technique.10 As there is no professional level undergraduate dance training in Ireland, dancers have to leave the country to train abroad, primarily in Britain but also in Europe and USA, which has affected the numbers of dance artists that return to

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9 These classes were founded by APDI to support professional dancers to maintain their daily contemporary dance technique, which continues to be facilitated by Dance Ireland in Dance House, Dublin. Dance Ireland is a representative body for dance in Ireland and supports dance artists by providing services such as continued training and choreographic development programs which support professional development. This resource organisation has had a huge impact on the exposure and development of contemporary dance in Ireland.

10 Christine Devaney is founding member of Dundee Rep Dance Company (now Scottish Dance Theatre) and for nine years performed with V-tol Dance Company where she became Associate Director. Sean Curran is an American dancer, choreographer and artistic director of the Sean Curran Dance Company, based in New York.
Ireland to teach and work professionally. In the 1970’s Joan Davis, a pioneer in developing contemporary dance in Ireland, trained with American dancer Terez Nelson who taught Graham technique in Dublin. Davis also travelled to study dance in London School of Contemporary Dance (Mulrooney, 2006). In 1979, she founded Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre and some of the original members of this company went on to found their own companies, including, Mary Nunan (Daghdha Dance Company) and Robert Connor and Loretta Yurick (Dance Theatre of Ireland).

In 1999-2000, I studied Hawkins technique with course director, dance artist and performer Dr Mary Nunan, as part of an MA in Contemporary Dance Performance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance (University of Limerick). Hawkins’ distinctive technique is widely recognised by many professional dancers as being revolutionary, not least because of his values of ‘ease’ and ‘effortlessness’, which would later become central to development of Post-Modern Release-based techniques. Hawkins technique is informed by ideokinesis (the study of movement imagery that supports a shift in habitual movement patterns) and kinesiology (the science of movement) (Hawkins 1992). It was one of the first techniques designed to support an alternative to traditional Western contemporary dance techniques that were predicated on force and muscular effort. It promotes and supports the release of superficial muscular effort while moving, by bringing attention to the inner sensation of the articulation of a movement. This inner attention supports a process of developing and deepening into an awareness of the kinaesthetic sense which through practice supports a more released/relaxed way of moving. Nunan’s teaching and knowledge of this technique, facilitated an introspective process through an inward journey of sensing, feeling and experiencing the deeper aspects of movement such as the “neural and motor mechanisms underlying dance skills” rather than relying on the external influence of a mirror image for feedback (Erskine 2009, p.1).

Release-based technique is a Post-Modern dance technique whose principles are appropriated from a number of somatic and movement practices, with the broad emphasis being on movement efficiency (Bales and Nettl Foil 2008). It is not attributed

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11 There is no undergraduate professional dance training in Ireland, only foundation courses and an MA in Contemporary Dance Performance The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance. Dr Mary Nunan is course director of this programme and is a well-established dance artist, choreographer and performer in the field of Contemporary Dance. She was a founder member and Artistic Director of Daghdha Dance Company from 1988-1999. Please refer to: www.marynunan.com.
to an individual choreographer and does not have an identifiable signature, shape or form like codified techniques. It is based on the utilization of breath, alignment and the use of gravity and momentum to facilitate movement, rather than external muscular effort or force. It draws from principles from somatic movement practices that advocate the use of imagery and sensation such as Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, Body-Mind Centering, Klien Technique, as well as eastern psychophysical practices, such as Hatha yoga, Tai Chi and martial arts. Terms such as “acting without forcing”, “alive in passivity”, “getting out of the way”, “letting it happen” (Bales, Nettl Fiol 2008, pp.157-8) are commonly used to describe the philosophy behind the movement.

What I now describe as ‘the kinaesthetic body’ within this research paradigm, emerged out of my training in this technique (as well as other disciplinary practices that I worked with simultaneously). This is not to say that I did not develop kinaesthetically within my formal dance training, it is that I only became fully conscious of this sense through the practice of Release-based technique. Kinaesthetically, over the years of practice developing and deepening into my own movement enquiry, I began to become increasingly aware of how the spaces I moved in deeply impacted my movement responses. This kinaesthetic awareness was developed through a process of deepening beyond the density of muscle and bone, to the lightness of tissue and cell and beyond into the surrounding space. I would describe this process as a softening inwards that simultaneously extends outwards, through a deeply felt embodied sense of moving as a continuum within a much larger whole.

Somatic Practice – Inner, Outer Relationship

Through studying Release-based technique I was also simultaneously exposed to the field of somatic practices which led me to deepen my enquiry into a variety of different practices at different stages of my professional development. The term somatics covers a wide range of practices and approaches that all offer a very particular point of view which comes directly from the first person perception of ‘the living body’ as subject, as perceived from within, rather than the third person perspective of the body as object, as perceived from outside (Hanna 1980). This perspective builds on a non-dualistic or holistic approach to the body and the mind - with the overall intention of creating psycho-physical (and in some practices spiritual) wellbeing (Davis 2007, Bainbridge-

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12 Soma is a Greek term, which translates as ‘the living body’ (Hanna 1988, p.20).

Somatics gained momentum in the dance world, both as a remedial therapy and as a tool in injury prevention. The late 20th Century saw developments in dance technique training, choreography and performance, which introduced the use of somatic principles and practices (Bales and Nettl-Fiol 2008, Franklin 1996, Tufnell 2004, Olsen 1991, Bainbridge Cohen 1993). Many contemporary dance artists include disciplines such as Authentic Movement, Body-Mind Centring, Tai Chi Chuan, Chi Kung, Aikido, Yoga, Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais, to support them in their practice, to cultivate somatic or kinaesthetic body awareness. Somatic practices support a search for a more ‘authentic’, ‘natural’ or ‘normative’ movement that originate from an inner impulse or expression rather than relying on prescribed or codified dance languages taken from formal dance training techniques (Bales, Nettl-Fiol 2008, p.2). Similar to Release-Based technique, the use of terms like ‘letting go’, ‘paring down’, ‘listening’, ‘releasing’, ‘use of functional movement’, are common and are all indicative of the process of a particular subjective viewpoint similar to that of Post-Modern dance.

I have engaged with a large variety of both Eastern and Western movement and somatic practices (some briefly and some more intensively) throughout my dance career including: Tai Chi, Chi Gong, Authentic Movement, Amerta Movement, Body-Mind Centring, Feldenkrais, Hanna Somatics and Cranio-Sacral therapy. All of these practices vary in their ideologies and approaches, but they all contributed to fostering an awareness of a somatic inner lived experience, or a deep inner listening, attunement and receptivity that has had a profound impact on my dance practice. I have explored and appropriated many principles from somatic practices that supported me to shed what could be described as an institutionalised way of moving, reflective of the codified techniques and habitual movement patterns embodied within my dance training. A somatically orientated dance practice supports my evolving search for what might be described as a more authentic impulse or expression. My explorations revolve and evolve through various processes of what I term as ‘attunements’. These attunements support a moving impulse initiated from an inner space sensed inside the body, which extend out in a direct co-creative embodied relationship with my surrounding environment. My developing awareness of this ‘inner’, ‘outer’ relationship affects my movement quality and sensitivity as a dancer, influences the type of choreography I am
interested in creating, deepens my relationship with my surrounding environment, and my relationship with an audience.

![Figure 3: The Gestural Body (2002), Mairéad Vaughan](Image)

**Bharatanatyam - The Gestural Body**

It was through my yoga practice that I was drawn to Eastern philosophy and, in turn, Indian Classical Dance. After my dance training, I experienced a great sense of loss of my creative identity, yet I had a felt sense that there must be something more that was fuelling my drive. This instigated a continued search and, in 1999 and 2001, I received Arts Council Travel Awards to study Bharatanatyam and Iyengar yoga in Northern India. My experience of India resonates with a Jungian quote, “... India did not pass me by without a trace: it left tracks which lead me from one infinity to another infinity”.


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13The word *Hatha* is derived from two roots, *ha* means sun and *tha* means moon. Hatha yoga is a physical system of yoga, which includes a series of postures (asana) and breathing techniques (pranayama). It is a term that refers to physical yoga practices such as Ashtanga yoga, Bikram yoga and Iyengar yoga.
Indian temple complexes as a form of embodied worship. It is among the oldest classical dance forms of India, with origins predating the Natyashastra, but the dance in its present form is no more than two hundred years old. Bharatanatyam is a revival of Cathir, the ancient art of temple dancers, called devadasis, and has a strong ritual and spiritual heritage as a devotional dance form. It has three distinct elements to it: Nritta represents the rhythmic dance movements, Natya the mime, or movements with a dramatic aspect and Nritya, which is a combination of Nritta and Natya. The British political dominance over India in the nineteenth century had a significant impact on the arts and the devadasis practice was outlawed. An arts cultural revivalist movement, supported by the Orientalist scholars of the nineteenth century, re-introduced the art form in the 1940’s and the dance form was re-invented as a classical art form, dislodged from the devadassi temple culture and presented on the stage (Chatterjea 2004, Ramaswamy 2014). According to Chatterjea, this transformation from the temple to the stage, from a sensual, embodied, ritual and spiritual way of life, to an hour-long vigorous and competitive concert dance form has remained unaddressed.

It marks the site of a disjunction between temple court dance forms, predicated on an articulation of the sensual-spiritual and part of the lifestyle that received royal patronage, and concert dance forms based on a performance of religiosity and its packaging as a consumer item, a commercially viable mode of entertainment as well as high culture.

(Chatterjea 2004, p.152)

This commercialisation of Bharatanatyam and this presentational approach is not where my interest lies, rather, I resonate with the core energies of the spiritual, ritual and philosophical nature that were alive in the ancient foundations of the devadasi tradition.

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14 The word Bharatanatyam is composed of the terms, bhava, which means expression, raga, which stands for melody, tala, which means rhythm and natya, signifying dance.

15 The Natyashastra is an ancient Sanskrit manual that is still considered the seminal foundational text for the Indian classical arts. Written between the 6th century B.C.E. and the 2nd century C.E., and attributed to the sage Bharata. It is part practical manual, part philosophy of aesthetics, part mythological history, and part theology.

16 Cathir originated in temple complexes, where ‘karanas’ (postures) were carved as inscriptions and sculptures into the walls of temples. These detailed reliefs reflect the traditional prominence of temple dancers known as ‘devadasis’ (‘servants of God’), who are thought to have incorporated elements of yogic practice into their art (Venkataraman, Pasricha 2002). These women were trained in the arts from a young age, lived in the temples and were considered to be married to the male deities which they worshiped through the ritual of song and dance. However, they were perceived as living on the fringes of society due to the sexual freedom granted to them. They were thrown out of the temples onto the streets where most were forced to make a living through prostitution as they were left without any income (Chatterjea 2004).
According to dance writer David, aspects of the devadasi tradition “...are being replicated in the contemporary Hindu diaspora in a creative, transplanted and perhaps unconscious manner” (David 2007, p.3).

Those who learn physically learn differently, and experience knowledge differently as well. It becomes ingested, becomes like food part of ones cell structure. When the guru shows rather than tells absorption by the student is of a different quality altogether.

(Schwartz 2004, p.5)

I participated in one-on-one tuition, reflecting the guru-student relationship in traditional Indian culture, in Varanassi, North India. Bharatanatyam is a strictly codified classical technique, requiring a particular physical skill set, including strength, flexibility, rhythmical expertise, a clear awareness of weight transference and a strong connection with the floor through the use of the pelvis, legs, and feet. Some of the movement principles I had mastered as part of my contemporary dance training facilitated my embodiment of the form, but the practice of mudra (hand gestures) - which required discipline and determination to increase flexibility in the fingers, hands and wrists, presented me with a new set of challenges. The simultaneous execution of the rhythm of the feet (nritta), alongside the gestural articulation of the hands (mudra) was technically demanding on a number of levels and it was the discipline that my professional training had fostered, kept me inspired, focused and motivated. I was drawn to the dynamic connection between the soles of the feet and the earth, the groundedness of the basic positions within the form that resonated with the yoga postures I had practiced.17

The physical contact of the foot against the ground is sacred, for it precipitates existence. What is lifeless and dormant is animated by the touch of a foot; hence the soles of the dancers’ feet are painted red, the auspicious colour associated with growth and fertility.

(Schwartz 2004, p.31)

17An example of how yoga, Bharatanatyam and Indian philosophy are interconnected is through the use of symbolic hand gestures or ‘mudras’. According to Hirschl (2000), mudras can vividly depict certain states of consciousness within the dance nexus or conversely specific gestures can also lead to the states of consciousness they symbolize within the practice of yoga. In Hatha Yoga there are twenty-five mudras used during the body postures or asanas to intensify their effect. In classical dance there are fifty-one and they are primarily used as a narrative devise.
Iyengar Yoga - The Energetic Body

While training in Bharatanatyam I also trained in Iyengar yoga. The word yoga originates from a Sanskrit term, ‘yuj’ which translates as ‘union’, reflecting the inherent non-dualistic tradition of Hindu philosophy, which is considered to be the true nature of existence and core principle of yogic philosophy (Iyengar 1966, p.19). The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (compiled by the sage Patanjali, third century B.C.E.), form the basis of the first codified, comprehensive system detailing the spiritual, philosophical, and theoretical aspects of yoga (Bryant 2009, Stone 2008). The Yoga Sutras exemplify many esoteric concepts that are commonly found within all traditions of Indian philosophy and thought. These are indicated within a system called the eight-fold path or the eight limb path, which is comprised of steps that are said to lead to an ultimate goal - to quiet one’s mind in order to attain a supreme state of liberation, self-realisation, or a state of absolute consciousness (Bryant 2009).

Iyengar yoga is a form of Hatha yoga created by BKS Iyengar (1936). Iyengar was a student of yoga teacher/guru, ayurvedic healer and scholar Krishnamacharya (1888-1989), one of the most influential yoga teachers of the 20th century. Krishnamacharya was a well-known guru to many yoga teachers (including K. Pattabhi Jois) who brought the practice of yoga to the Western world. He is primarily known in India for his devotional dedication and commitment to the revival of Hatha yoga in India. Within the Hatha yoga system, asanas (physical postures), named after natural landscapes (the mountain or the tree posture), natural processes (the sun and moon salutations) and animals, (the cobra posture, the cat posture), are thought to have originated directly out

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18 BKS Iyengar suffered from tuberculosis as a young man and sought yoga as a way of rehabilitation. He was considered one of the most influential yoga teachers/practitioners in the world due to his development of a technique that was adaptable to each individual practitioner. His ethos was to make yoga inclusive for all through the use of props such as cushions, benches, blocks, straps and sand bags, which he invented. These props function as aids that are used within asanas to support diverse body types and ranges. Iyengar systematised over 200 classical yoga asanas (postures) and fourteen different types of pranayama (breath control) ranging from basic to advanced.

19 The term yoga appears in the ancient texts of c.500-200 B.C.E., such as the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. Yoga asanas (postures) were transmitted or passed down from ancient sages within the traditional guru, disciple pedagogy, still commonly found in India today (Byrant 2009).

20 The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali are a collection of 196 aphorisms, which are foundational to yoga practice compiled by a sage known as Patanjali.

21 The eight limbs comprise of, “yama, self-restraint, niyama, self-observances, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, disassociation of consciousness from the outside environment, dharana, concentration, dhyana, meditation and samadhi, identification with pure consciousness” (Swami Satyananda Saraswati 1996, p.4).
of an active witnessing of the natural environment and the cycles of nature (Satyananda Saraswati 1996, Hewitt 1988). As a young seventeen year old, I was intuitively drawn to yoga (before dance), which I practiced from a book. The practice stimulated a strong sense of physical, emotional, mental, spiritual wellbeing, which kept me sustained within it. I was deeply inspired by the respect and reverence for the natural environment resonant within the practice.

Iyengar yoga consists of a refined system of asanas (postures), practiced with great attention to technical precision and in a very specific order with the simultaneous practice of pranayama (breath control). These asanas evolve around strengthening, increasing flexibility and bringing awareness to the spine and its connection to the nervous system. The spine is considered similar to the trunk of a tree whose branches, which reflect the nervous system, extend out to connect with the entire anatomical, physiological, kinaesthetic and energetic system.

Pranayama introduces practitioners to the respiratory system and its direct effect on both the nervous system and the energetic system (Iyengar 1966, Hewit 1988, Devereux 1999). Through the practice of breath control, through regulating and slowing the breath down consciously, the mind is also regulated and quietened (Bryant 2009, Stone 2008, Swami Rama, Ballentine, Swami Ajaya 2010) and the energetic system or flow in the body is activated. The practice of pranayama supports practitioners to develop present moment or conscious awareness of the deep connection of breath to energy flow. Prana is a subtle energy life force, which flows throughout the body through channels called nadis. The nadis or channels in which the prana flows meet and connect at intensive energy points of spinning spheres in the body called chakras (Iyengar 1966, Rama,

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22 Hatha yoga is the most common form of yoga practiced in the west due to its physical nature and health benefits. At its most basic, it is a system based on asana and pranayama. Asana is a bodily posture in which one is guided to remain physically and mentally steady, calm, quiet and comfortable. Pranayama is composed of two Sanskrit words, Prana meaning life force, vital energy or breath and ayama meaning to extend or draw out. Hatha yoga is an ancient discipline that can be traced back to the Indus Valley at Harappa and Mohenjodaro once part of Northern India but now in modern Pakistan. Archaeological digs in this area have discovered many seals or statues dating back to approximately four and a half thousand years. They depict figures in postures similar to yoga asanas and meditation poses. These suggest a practice that may be a precursor to yoga.


24 There are five types of prana commonly known in yoga as the ‘five vital forces’. These are Prana (located in the head, heart, lungs and throat), Apana (located in the colon), Samana (located in the navel and small intestine), Udana (located in the head and throat) and Vayana (located in the entire body). The word nadi comes from the Sanskrit word nad which means “movement” ‘channel’, ‘flow’ or ‘stream’. Nadis are similar to the meridians in Chinese medicine. They transport and distribute subtle energy to each chakra throughout the body.
There are seven primary *chakras* in the body. They are not a physical manifestation but interact with the physical body through two major networks - the endocrine system and the nervous system and thus each of the *chakras* are associated with particular functions of the endocrine system within the body. Dr Motayama, a Japanese scientist and Shinto priest, investigates the role of the *chakras* in obtaining heightened states of consciousness and how they relate to the nervous system and the meridian system of the body. He considers the “chakras as superimposed upon these two systems rather than occupying the same physical space” and concluded that the energetic system was “… physical but invisible system of physiological control located within connective tissue” (cited in Dale 2009, p.250).

Iyengar yoga is practiced with the intention of bringing present moment awareness to what is often described as a unifying force of the body, mind and spirit, “…the first word in the Yoga-Sutra – *atha* – literally means ‘now’ ‘what is here in this moment’. Yoga begins in the present moment. Yoga *is* the present moment” (Stone 2008, p.7). Within Iyengar yoga, the focus is on maintaining two levels of awareness simultaneously – one is of being fully present in the moment, while the other is witnessing the precision of the structural alignment, inner sensations, feelings, thoughts and/or emotions that arise within the practice of *asana* and *pranayama*. These qualities (being present and witnessing) do not exist separately, but, in fact, support each other and develop a solid ground for “a way of being and a mode of existing” within the yoga practice. According to yoga practitioner and philosopher Stone (2008), it extends out of our personal practice to contribute to a feeling of interconnectedness with our surrounding environment.

The inherent interconnectedness of existence reveals what in philosophical terms we call “non-dualism” – the collapse of separation between subject and object. When we experience relaxed openness and attentive awareness, the world reveals its inherent completeness.

(Stone 2008, p.8)

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25 *Chakras* are described as spinning spheres of energetic activity and are seen as powerhouses that generate and store energy in the body. Four are located in the trunk, two in the head and one in the neck.
Through maintaining present moment awareness, while simultaneously witnessing one’s self, a non-dualistic experiential mode of being is cultivated through the practice. Within my yogic training, the relationship and interconnectedness between each body part was explored in detail, particularly the relationship between the feet and the hands and the top of the head and the coccyx. This relationship was informed by drawing awareness to the sensation of the energy flow between body parts. We were asked to have an awareness of the flow of energy distributing through the soles of the feet rooting down into the earth and, at the same time, extending in the opposite direction out through the top of the head towards the sky.

It is through my practice of *asana* alongside *prananyama*, and a simultaneous focus of a witnessing presence, that I eventually cultivated and generated a strong awareness of what I now describe and experience as ‘the energetic body’. Within my current dance practice, this energetic body has developed into what I experience as an expansive energetic field that extends far beyond the boundaries of my physical body, to relate and merge with my surrounding environment.

Post-Modern Dance – The Experimental Body

In 1999, I worked as a professional dancer with Daghdha Dance Company, while simultaneously undertaking an MA in Contemporary Dance Performance. Under the guidance of course director, dance artist, choreographer and performer, Dr Mary Nunan, I was exposed to the questioning, experimental ideologies of Post-Modern dance, which challenged my pre-conceived ideas about what contemporary dance was and simultaneously expanded my awareness into a field that had huge influence on me as a dance artist.

Post-Modern dance re-defined dance, and the post-modern era of the sixties and seventies, is commonly defined as a turning point in the history of dance (Banes 1987, 1993, 2003, Carter 1998). The Judson Dance Theatre, a collective of avant-garde dance artists in Greenwich Village in the early 1960’s, questioned the codified techniques of ballet and modern dance of its time. Questions around the meaning, the definition of dance and the nature of technique were examined through performances and workshops. Conventionally held assumptions towards technical proficiency, virtuosity and the refinement of a particular aesthetic were all challenged. Key historical choreographers, such as Steve Paxton, Deborah Hay and Yvonne Rainer (all original members of the Judson Theatre) participated in a search for new approaches through collaborative and experimental practices. All were strongly influenced by a variety of Eastern psychophysical movement based practices such as Yoga, Tai Chi Chuan and Aikido (Bales and Nettl Fiol 2008). They invented new choreographic and performance structures and devices, which supported ‘natural’, ‘functional’ and ‘pedestrian’ movements. Performances included structured or more open-ended live improvisations in a variety of unconventional spaces outside of theatre settings, such as art galleries and outdoor public spaces using both trained and untrained dancers in performances. Performances became more about the individuality or idiosyncratic nature of the performer rather than about technical or aesthetic proficiency, which all contributed to blurring the boundaries between training and performance, and choreographer and dancer (Lepecki 2004). Prior to the Post-Modern era, dance artists Halprin and Cunningham were building the blocks that would eventually support this new approach to dance.

26 Daghdha Dance Company (1988 – 2011) was a Limerick based professional dance company founded and directed by Dr Mary Nunan from 1988 - 1999. See http://www.daghdha.org/archive/005/003.htm for more information.
In the 1950’s Anna Halprin in collaboration with her architect husband (Lauterer) built what was to become an influential dance space at their home - the ‘Dance Deck’, a floating wooden dance structure/floor suspended above a forest location (Halprin, 1995). Halprin describes this space as having no boundaries and therefore no limitations which had a profound impact on her movement practice. This non-traditional dance space supported her to move beyond the limits of her habitual ways of moving as she became interested in kinaesthetic awareness through her study of the sensory impact of the surrounding landscape on her movement. In 1955 Halprin founded the San Francisco Dancers’ Workshop as a response to her growing unease with what she described as the stereotypical, stylised responses of the codified dance language of the major companies at that time, which she believed impeded creativity. This workshop was a collective of multi-disciplinary artists including Post-Modern dance artists Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, and composer John Cage. Halprin led improvised explorations to discover new approaches, based on the ideology that all bodies are different and therefore move and create in different ways. This ideology is reflected in the work of the Judson Dance Theatre artists.

At Black Mountain College (liberal arts education college influenced by the philosophy and progressive principles of John Dewey, North Carolina, USA), Cunningham and Cage created their first ‘happening’ called Untitled Event (1952), where a number of random performances without narrative or causal relation to each other, took place within a choreographic structure. The Merce Cunningham dance company (1953-2012) evolved out of this event with Cunningham as choreographer, Cage as composer and artist and Rauschenberg as designer. Cunningham and Cage’s work drew from Oriental philosophies of Zen Buddhism and the I Ching exploring ‘chance’ and ‘indeterminacy’ in their compositional work. They collaborated on compositions that were performed together in the same space and time, but conceived of independently. This kind of approach went on to have a huge impact on the Post-Modern dance era and their compositional work, continues to inform the wider art world today, including fields of digital arts, performance art, electronic/experimental music.

I worked with numerous Post-Modern dance artists (while studying on the MA programme and also dancing with Daghdha), who had all spent years developing their

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27 American painter Allan Kaprow coined the term ‘happening’ in the 1960’s to describe performance art without the pre-conceived structure of a beginning, middle or end and with no hierarchy between performer and audience which allowed each ‘happening’ to be a unique and interactive experience.
own individual approaches, ideologies, and sensibilities. They all contributed to planting creative seeds that would nourish and inspire me to take my own individual journey as a dance artist and develop my dance practice over the years to follow.\textsuperscript{28} I was highly influenced, in particular, by two dance artists, Joan Davis and Steve Paxton.

The first time I worked in a site-specific environment, was with Irish dance artist, choreographer, psychotherapist, movement therapist and writer, Joan Davis. Having studied Authentic Movement with Janet Adler, she formed a dance collective called \textit{Maya Lila} (1999-present), for the purpose of researching how Authentic Movement might be brought into a performance context.\textsuperscript{29} Davis also studied Body-Mind Centering with Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen and her interdisciplinary approach influenced by many years of a wide variety of dance, somatic and therapeutic disciplinary practices, all interrelate and reflect the depth of her practice. A practice which she describes as the exploration and expression of an authentic ‘self’ (Davis 2007).

davis facilitated Authentic Movement workshops (layered with her own dance practice) in a forest environment, which is an experience that still resonates with me strongly today. Her workshops were based on the expression of an authentic ‘self’ and how it relates to ‘other’, which is a core principal of Authentic Movement. They were also informed by her experience in Body-Mind Centering. Davis describes how, through the immediacy of an embodied experience within a moving encounter, a particular knowing can arise which she defines as a ‘cellular knowing’.

\textsuperscript{28} As part of my MA, I worked directly with Post-Modern dance artists, Mary Nunan (IRE), Yoshiko Chuma (Japan), and K.J Holmes (USA), as well as renowned choreographers, Mark Baldwin (U.K.), Wendy Houston (U.K.), and Joan Davis (Ireland). All of these artists had a huge impact on my development, through their wide range of individual choreographic and performance perspectives, approaches, sensibilities and all contributed to one of the richest experiences of my dance career.

\textsuperscript{29} Authentic movement was founded by Mary Starks Whitehouse (1911-1979). Having trained as a professional dancer with Mary Wigman and Martha Graham, she went on to train as a psychotherapist. She developed this experiential practice by integrating principles from dance, movement therapy and Jungian studies. It was codified as a technique by Janet Adler who was a student of Whitehouse. Adler describes Authentic Movement as a Western awareness practice where the mover moves from present moment awareness of a felt sensation or feeling and is observed by a witness. The witness is an active participant who observes the movement without judgment, projection or interpretation. The witness tunes into their own sensory response, while observing the mover. This relationship between mover and witness evolves out of the study into what is defined as three bodies: the Individual body, the Collective body and the Conscious body (Adler 2002, Davis 2006).
When a concept arises from an embodied experience, there is often a knowing of that truth very immediately. In my experience, it is not that I know intellectually what that truth is at the moment of it arising, but rather I experience a deeper knowing, which I now call “cellular knowing”.

(Davis 2007, p.150)

Within Body-Mind Centering it is understood that each cell has its own living intelligence and memory, which is defined as a ‘cellular consciousness’ (Hartley 1995). Many dance artists, including Post-Modern choreographer, Deborah Hay, use this premise as a foundation for their movement explorations. In my current dance practice, I examine the reciprocal relationship between my moving body and environment, through the immediacy of my own direct authentic moving encounters. I can now trace my current enquiry right back to these initial workshops with Davis which had a profound effect on my approach.

I continued working with Daghdha Dance Company after my MA studies were completed and I had the privilege of working with Post-Modern choreographer, Steve Paxton (as well as Lisa Nelson).\(^30\) Paxton created a voice and movement improvisational choreographic study with the company, based on the motion of walking.\(^31\) Many of Paxton’s early works including Proxy (1961), Transit (1962), English (1963) and Satisfyin Lover (1967) were all concerned with the action of walking. As a dancer Paxton worked with the Cunningham and Limon dance companies and went on to become a founder member of the Judson Theatre Group. Paxton throughout his career advocates keeping the search through movement alive in a culture where it is not a priority.

In 1986, he developed a movement practice called ‘Material for the Spine’, which was directly inspired and influenced by contact improvisation as well as his observations on

\(^{30}\) Steve Paxton is a pioneer in the field of Post-Modern dance. He is a founding member of the Judson Theatre (a group of seminal artists who performed in the Judson church in New York in the 1960’s) and Grand Union (an improvisational dance group in the 1970’s). He is best known for founding contact improvisation in 1972 (Banes 1993). Lisa Nelson is a Post-Modern dance artist who has been researching the role of the senses in performance since the early 1970’s. I discuss Lisa Nelson’s work in Chapter 3 and her influence on my dance practice, Generating States. Paxton and Nelson led workshops in improvisation as part of a project run by Daghdha Dance Company and I.W.A.M.D. called “The White Space”. White Space was a project created to reflect on post-modern practices through creative process and performance. This project facilitated and supported the interaction between prestigious international guest choreographers and Irish dance artists.

\(^{31}\) This programme was called Sioscarnach’ (2000) was comprised of choreographic work created by Dr Mary Nunan, Mark Baldwin and Steve Paxton.
the relationship between walking and the movement of the spine. The overall objective of this particular movement practice he developed was to,

.... bring to consciousness the subtle sensation, the moments when usage reveals operations of the skeleton, the muscular connections available between pelvis and fingertips, the soft energetic support of leverage which I take to be chi or ki... It is all to bring movement to consciousness.

(Paxton 2005)

I am struck by Paxton’s description of a ‘soft energetic support’ which he indicates through his use of the terms chi or ki as he engagement with Aikido and Tai Chi Chun which went on to inform his own practice. I am drawn to the above statement as I am exploring what I define as ‘the energetic body’ within my practice and how I might evoke the subtle nature of its presence through my choreographic work.

Paxton’s choreographic study with Daghdha, enquired into the nature of walking from an improvisational, kinetic and somatic perspective. Each morning, Paxton facilitated an improvised movement practice of attuning to the sensation of movement through ideokinetic imagery and visualisations. This developed into an improvised enquiry into the locomotive action of walking in pairs. One person verbalised their somatic experience of walking with their eyes closed, while the other led the walking exploration through the space. We engaged in a practice of deep listening to, sensing and feeling the motion of the spine and its relationship to the shoulder blades, the pelvis, the hips and the head while walking through space. We also engaged in basic principles of contact improvisation that evolved around the spine as a core focus through its role in supporting, receiving, and distributing the weight of both my own and my partner’s body through a direct moving encounter. Even though I had studied the spine intensively through my yoga practice, it was within the range of a set prescribed series of asanas, which felt very different to the range of movement potential discovered through the practice of improvisation.

I remember many in depth discussions about our personal practices and experiences of this movement enquiry which extended out to include debates on Post-Modern dance and American culture. It was a highly stimulating environment and Paxton’s depth of knowledge and intelligence, alongside his revolutionary, unconventional and individual approach, was ever present. Paxton’s extensive knowledge of the kinetics of movement
and his choreographic approach is something I hold as a very rich experience within my
dance career. His movement reflected his experience, which could be directly sensed
through his engagement with us. Paxton simply witnessed our individual explorations
and sometimes withheld the extent of his knowledge so that we could interrogate and
investigate our own movement potential. The resulting theatre performance was a
replication of our daily studio practice, a structured improvisation within a live
performance context. Paxton’s approach promotes process rather than the fixity of a
final end point. This reflects the fluid nature of movement itself as a never-ending
journey through space and time. The work remained ever-changing, fresh and exciting
as infinite possibilities and choices were presented within each ‘live’ moment of the
performance.

Figure 6: Daghdha Dance Company (2002), Steve Paxton, Mairéad Vaughan, Miriam
Ribon and Jane Kellagahan.
From 2003 – 2016, I developed my own dance practice, which was highly influenced by the above Post-Modern artists. This practice was sustained by twelve Arts Council of Ireland dance bursaries, which supported intensive research periods of enquiry into improvisational, collaborative and multidisciplinary practices. I participated in the Dublin based Genesis Project over a period of five years which was conceived and directed by dance artists, Ella Clarke and Julie Lockett, under the mentorship of Deborah Hay. This project offered free daily research space to what we described as a collaborative ‘family’ of autonomously practicing artists, working within a variety of media including dance, music/sound, voice, visual arts and film. Within the support of this framework, I explored the relationship between live sound and movement through a variety of improvisatory practices and structures. Each month we had monthly ‘informal sharings’, which were purposefully designed to support the artist/performer. The invited audience (which were primarily artists) would give direct feedback to the dance artist. This feedback was received through various artistic mediums including drawing, creative writing, photography and post-performance discussions. The following is an extract of feedback, which I include to highlight the somatic nature of my improvised movement practice that is suggested by a witnessing audience member, twelve years ago.

*The immediacy of feeling that anything might happen in the moment,*

*Ancient Grecian hieroglyphics, circles, straight lines collide, lightness, grace,*

*gentle face,*

*Gestures to stomach – connection with self, universe, core strength,*

*Expansive journey,*

*Almost like the inside of her body is on the outside...*

CHAPTER 2

FORM AND FORMLESSNESS

Theatre Work

The period between 2000 and 2007 was the genesis of what I describe as the ‘gestural body’ within my choreographic work. My main aim during this period was to explore, develop and refine my own personal idiosyncratic movement vocabulary and/or choreographic signature. My explorations included a conscious and intuitive dialogue between Bharatanatyam, yoga, and contemporary dance, together with a range of other related multi-disciplinary practices that supported me to evolve an interdisciplinary approach to my creative process. I did not interpret Bharatanatyam in a representational manner, but rather allowed specific principles to influence my movement, which were consciously absorbed through a process of ‘bricolage’ and ‘deconstruction’ (Bales and Nettl Fiol 2008). This process set up a distinctive working framework through which I could also enter into states of fluid, spontaneous and instinctual, intuitive response. This is, in turn, reflected within the emergent choreographic works of that period including Matra (2002), The Anima and Animus (2003), Turbulence (2006), and Frozen (2007). My movement vocabulary was described in the following review.

Oppositional movement within the body, revealed Vaughan’s experience in Bharatanatyam, but it is the metrical discipline of the Indian dance form that enables her to craft seductive contrapuntal quartets that I could have watched all night. This clear grasp of form, a growing vocabulary of movement and her willingness to avoid the obvious has been a revelation.

(Seaver, The Irish Times, 2003)

While this review of the choreographic work, The Anima and Animus (2003), acknowledged my growing vocabulary at that time, I am struck by what I eventually experienced years later, as an underlying discomfort and dissatisfaction with this

32 Susan Melrose (2007) defines ‘signature practices’ as recognisable imprints or markings created by the artist across a body of artistic work.
33 I define and detail the processes involved in ‘deconstruction’ and ‘bricolage’ in relation to my movement practice, Generating States in Chapter three.
‘oppositional’ movement. I entered into a seven-year, primarily studio-based dance practice (2000 – 2007), which separated out and dissected the movement potential of each body part. This process purposely placed the body in states of tension through oppositional gestures and movement pathways. I set tasks up that forced me out of my habitual movement patterns or kinetic habits, to negotiate and discover new pathways and new way of moving. This process would eventually result in phrases of gestural movement, through which each isolated limb moved in oppositional relation to the other. This extended into spontaneous, dynamic, rhythmical explorations that journeyed out into space in linear and geometric pathways in quite an intuitive manner. At this time, my manner of working was quite distinctive due to its gestural and rhythmical style, as most choreographers were working with Release-based contemporary dance styles. Also, in Ireland, at that time, there was limited exposure to cultural diversity, thus my Bharatanatyam influence was quite unique. I was invited to give introductory presentations and teach the basic principles of this rigorous, codified, classical repertoire within many contexts, including third-level education. I contextualised my practice within the broader field, discussing the historical work of American choreographer, dancer Ruth St. Denis who was highly influenced by Indian classical dance and Post-Modern choreographer Yvonne Rainer who travelled to India in 1971 and drew from Indian epics to inspire her earlier work (Chatterjea 2004), to current British choreographers of Indian diaspora, Akram Khan and Shobana Jeyasingh.

Working with this oppositional style would eventually begin to create what I experienced as a sense of separation and isolation from my core, or the mid-line of my body (which runs from my tail bone up to the top of my spine). I can now retrospectively trace this pattern of moving, back to my dance technique training, which was predicated on attempting to control any excessive movement in the mid-line area of the body. I was trained to hold this area strongly in place so that it would not be impacted by the articulation of my arms and legs, with the intention to allow movement ‘look’ effortless. This had detrimental long-term results, as this area was held in a contracted state for many years, which led to a blocking of a flow of energy from the centre of the body outwards towards my limbs and extremities of my body. Conforming to this way of working facilitated what I began to experience as a sense of being trapped in a habitual pattern of opposition or polarity within my movement enquiry. This would eventually instigate my search for the underlying unit or wholeness behind these oppositional gestures, or what I would describe as a search for integration or the
movement in-between each percussive beginning and end. Simultaneously, this instigated a strong intuitive desire to work outside of the studio environment and to explore site-specific locations. I became aware of a strong inner impulse in the core of my body that wanted to relate and interact directly with my surrounding environment.

Matra - The Gestural Body

*Matra* (2002) was a collaboration between music and dance, choreographed specifically for a proscenium arch theatre setting. I performed, as a solo dancer, alongside a live sound score created by composer and musician, Dara O’Brien.\(^{34}\) I gained recognition as a young Irish emerging choreographer through this work.\(^{35}\) The movement vocabulary in *Matra* was highly influenced by the gestural (*mudra*) and rhythmical (*nritta*) nature of *Bharatatanatyam* as well as yoga. Within the creative process, I drew from the rich pool of *mudra* as a source that informed my own individual instinctual response. I explored through the practice of improvisation, the timing and phrasing possibilities of particular *mudras*, while simultaneously creating new responses to them, with different body parts, dynamics, variations of levels and spatial relationships, in an abstract, intuitive manner. Out of these improvisations, I began to devise a movement vocabulary through which the gestural body began to emerge.

An example of how *yoga*, *Bharatanatyam* and Indian philosophy are connected is in the use of symbolic hand gestures or *mudras*. Scientific research has found minor chakras in the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet (Dale 2009). According to Hirschi (2000), *mudras* can vividly enhance or lead to particular states of consciousness within the dance nexus and within the practice of *Hatha yoga*. Within *Hatha yoga*, *mudras* are expressed within the *asanas* to intensify their effect. In Indian classical dance, they are primarily used as a narrative device but are also recognised for their energetic and embodied effect. This effect is described as a process of sealing energetic circuits within the body,

\(^{34}\) *Matra* was created within the framework of the APDI (Association of Professional Dancers in Ireland) ‘New Works Platform’. This facilitated dancers and choreographers to develop new work through the support of professional mentorship by Scottish dance artist Christine Devany and free studio space. Christine guided me to meticulously question and continuously clarify my choreographic intentions, throughout this creative process.

\(^{35}\) *Matra* is a Sanskrit term used in Indian music to refer to a short rhythm or beat.
The human has five fingers and five toes on each side of his body because he has five flows of Pranic energy, which terminates in each of the digits... Bringing these various diverse flows of Pranic energy into closed circuits (“sealing” the energy flow) is one of the methods by which Mudra achieves its purpose.

(Balayogi Bhavanani and Devasena Bhavanani 2001, p.16)

Within my dance practice, I was aware that the articulation of a non-narrative abstract movement or gesture could contain within it and reflect a particular sensation, energy, feeling or indeed a particular state of consciousness. Bharatanatyam supported me to explore very different impulses, rhythms and gestures than any movement style or technique I had studied previously. The precise articulation that this form required, particularly within the hand gestures (mudras), initiated an intuitive flow of abstract embodied responses. The gestural body within Matra created a geometric, angular form. The angularity of the arms fed down into the legs and into the feet, creating an oppositional dynamic that extended out into precise pathways or patterns through space.

According to tradition, Bharatanatyam is inspired by Mandalas, mystical patterns associated with the seven chakras of the body. These patterns are said to energise the body as it moves through direct patterns in space,

Bharatanatyam..... conceives of movement in space mostly along either straight lines or in triangles or in circles, by which we gain a lot of energy. These movements are in actual fact, moving lines, which come together in discernible patterns. These patterns reflect or mirror the Mandalas (mystical shapes or forms), which are associated with the seven Chakras of the human psychic energy body.

(Bhavanan Balayogi and Bhavanani 2001, p.17)

I was intuitively drawn to choreographing phrases of movement that travelled through dynamic straight lines or very specific geometrical patterns in space. Each pathway reflected a specific state (an energy, sensation, feeling or particular focus), which continuously evolved to relate to particular points in space. I did not set out with the intention to work directly with the spatial influence of mandalas. I was not consciously aware of their energetic influence at this time, rather, I can now identify that this aspect seems to have been expressed in an intuitive manner through what I experienced as spontaneous imagined states and journeys through space at that time.
Figures 7-9: *Matra* (2002), Mairéad Vaughan, photography Mark Dixon
Looking back as a choreographer, I have always had a great unease about the transition of my work from the studio environment to the theatre. I experienced this particularly strongly within the production period for *Matra*. I hope that through this investigation and the process of writing, I might further clarify how my unease manifested. I sensed a sudden change from a personal authentic expression to a pressure to present the work in a particular manner. I felt I lost the essence and intimacy of the work. The pressure I felt was reflected through what I describe as an additional layer of intensity that emerged while I performed the work - an intensity that seemed superfluous and for me, radically changed the underlying nature of the work.

Another contributing factor that added to this intensity when I entered into the theatre environment was the complexity and severity of the lighting design. My connection to the surrounding space was compromised, as I could not see clearly while moving, which was extremely disorientating. I had created the work in direct relation to precisely measured pathways in space, which informed constantly evolving body-mind states or responses to particular points in space. The spatial relationship was seriously compromised, due to the disorientation caused by the lighting design. The lighting also had a detrimental effect on my relationship with the audience, as I could not see them while performing. I felt a strong sense of separation and disconnection. As I was already engrossed and engaged with multiple dialogues within the performance itself, such as the articulation of the detail and range of movement qualities, my interaction with the live sound score, my relationship with the specific points in space, I felt overwhelmed by these additional aspects that I was not prepared for. At that time, I did not have the experience (or the confidence) to identify, express and negotiate the problem with the lighting design.

This pressure and intensity may have been caused by what Post-Modern dance artists described as the conventions of the proscenium arch. The hierarchical and political structures of the theatre and the preconceived expectations of the conventional performer-audience relationship, were all aspects that these artists revolted against (Banes 1987, 1993, 1994, Dempster 2002). Phelan’s (1993, 1998) and Bolt’s (2004) writings reflect on the live moment of a performance as a process of experiencing rather than interpretation. They discuss performativity as a process whereby the performing body becomes a language in itself, rather than the body being inscribed with meaning or
interpreted. They reify experiencing performance as process, rather than purely focusing on narrative meaning or content. Phelan (1993) discusses performance as an art of dissapearance or an active vanishing within a live moment, which can never be recreated. These more inclusive approaches to audience-performer relationship and performance, resonate with my interest in providing for an open, shared, active, embodied dialogue and understanding of performance.

*Matra* toured Ireland and was performed in Harstaad, Norway, as part of the Illios Festival, where it was reviewed;

Mairead and Dara complemented each other and created a wholeness. The contemporary sounds combined with a distinctive movement style is something we look forward to seeing again.

(Bente-Lill Dankertsen, Harstad Tidende, January, 2003)

While we may have created a wholeness through the carefully constructed and refined intensity and complexity of our live dance and music collaboration, this gestural movement style began to create huge tension in my body due to the dynamic nature of its gestural and rhythmical quality. As time went on, I became aware that the influence of *Bharatanatyam* was of great interest to audiences, programmers and artists within the dance field, in part due to the limited exposure to cultural diversity in Ireland at that time. I began to feel a gentle pressure from theatre venues and festivals that wanted to programme the work, to publicise and promote it through the lens of my *Bharatanatyam* influence, which I eventually began to push against. I was worried that I would remain stuck in a one-dimensional way of working and I did not like to feel the force of external structures impeeding on my artistic expression.

**Turbulence - The Sculptural Body**

*Turbulence* (2005) was a collaboration between dance and live sound. Four dancers: Olwen Grindley, Avril Murphy, Jennifer Fleenor, and Tom Butler, worked alongside two musicians: Dara O’Brien (sitar, guitar and effect pedals), and David Lacey (drums). The theatre space was designed with stringed musical instruments suspended from the ceiling by invisible wire, giving the impression that they were floating within the space.
Above the heads of the dancers, four carefully positioned microphones hung from the ceiling. These microphones picked up live sounds, such as the breath and footfalls of the dancers while moving, as well as verbal interactions between dancers within the performance. The aim was to present a highly energised, dynamic, at times purposefully chaotic, performance space. Michael Seaver in his review described the space as “…strikingly memorable...a space humming with vibrations” (The Irish Times 2005).

*Turbulence* consisted of a series of ‘worlds’ or changing ‘states’. Each state centered on varying movement qualities, dynamics and movement and sound interactions. Dancers worked with extended vocal techniques that emerged out of their movement, to interact and respond to the sound score. The musicians changed their positions in space in response to the dancers, creating webs of sounds that drove the dancers down and across particular linear pathways. Although both the choreography and the sound composition was set, at moments, dancers and musicians were given space within the structure to interact in real time. O’Brien’s overall sound-score was responsive to these improvised moments and within the live performance dancers voices were sampled, looped and absorbed into the layered sound-score and played back during other sections of the live performance.

Figure 10: *Turbulence* (2005) Shakram Dance Company, Thomas Butler, Rebecca Reily, Olwen Grindley, Mairéad Vaughan, photograph Soilse Lundberg
A major discovery within the process of creating *Turbulence* was the evolution from the solo gestural body of *Matra*, into a sculptural form, as this gestural movement was performed by four dancers moving, in close proximity, through space. Due to the nature of the geometric lines within the form, and the dancers moving in a relational, interactive, dynamic manner down and across linear spatial pathways, strong images of moving sculpture began to manifest. As I witnessed the evolving work, the space in between the dancers became highlighted due to their close proximity. The boundaries of their bodies seemed porous while the notion of sculpting the space around the body emerged. This brought my awareness to how the space around the dancers held strong energetic resonances or traces, which seemed visible to me.

A question I explored within *Turbulence* was, how I might communicate the inner experience of the dancer while moving - the intimate, authentic or now what I define as the somatic experience of the moving dancer to an audience. Dance artist, Dyson (2009), posits that as an authentic self we are aware of our limits, our experiences as a living being, including the decisions, the choices we make – these make us authentic and unique which he describes as “the art of existing” and a deep knowing of the ‘self’. Dyson (2009) defines authenticity as when the ‘real’ or the ‘authentic’ dancer is able to connect via immediacy, “engaging their audience not by illusion, but through a visceral connection of the everyday” (2009, p.3). I examined how I might attempt to break down the sense of separation generated between performer and audience that I experienced in *Matra*. I wanted the audience to be moved beyond the purely physical articulations of the dancer on stage. To this end, the use of the dancers voice was a tool in which the audience could hear the sounds, such as the breath, of the performer within the live performance. I decided to keep sudden improvised moments of verbal expressions and conversations that evolved naturally between dancers within the creative process, in the performance of the work. I wanted to reflect the underlying embodied experience and the depth of movement enquiry that takes place within the studio environment to an audience.

Leigh Foster (2010, 2011) explores the concept of kinaesthetic empathy as a direct psychophysical relationship between dancer and audience, in which she unpacks the terms ‘choreography’, ‘kinaesthesia’ and ‘empathy’. She examines how these terms have evolved through political, social and cultural concepts of the body and asserts that these concepts are historically implicated and are continuously evolving. She indicates
that this is currently reflected through the developing relationship between technology and the moving body.\textsuperscript{36} In neuroscience, the role of mirror neurons can also be linked to this concept of kinaesthetic empathy. Research findings discovered that through the process of mapping mirror neurons in the cortex region of the brain, a direct simulated experience can be facilitated through simple observation from one person to another (Fabius in Butterworth and Wildschut 2009, Hagendoon 2004, Fogel 2009, Keysers 2011). It was found that observing an outside action facilitates a firing of mirror neurons, which can stimulate a feeling, emotion and/or sensory response in the observer. This discovery has had implications on the professional dance field through studies into the impact of dance on the dance spectator/audience.

As a choreographer I am now aware through the process of writing about my work that I may have been trying to connect with my audience through kinaesthetic empathy or through a direct, embodied, responsive engagement. In hindsight, although Turbulence was a truly layered, intensive and rewarding collaborative creative process, the performance felt over-emotive and melodramatic at times and did not live up to the authenticity I set out to search for. Turbulence clarified for me that I was not interested in dramatic statements but rather the authenticity I was looking for, may simply be what I would now define as a more somatic responsive relationship between the work and an audience. I was not consciously aware at this time, that the connection I was searching for could be one that might be transmitted through a direct sensory response.

\textsuperscript{36}A research project called ‘Watching Dance: Kinaesthetic Empathy’ (2008-2011) enquired into how dance spectators observe, respond and identify with dance through neuroscience and audience research. It was a U.K. based multidisciplinary collaborative project between neuroscience and dance across four universities: University of Manchester, University of Glasgow, York St John University, and Imperial College London. See http://www.watchingdance.org
Site-Specific Film

Frozen – Merging Sites

Frozen (2007/8) is a site-specific dance film set in two contrasting sites - the streets of inner city Dublin and a memorial park called ‘The Garden of Remembrance’. I initially chose these two sites, as I was drawn to their seemingly contrasting and juxtaposing energies, yet both were situated beside each other in inner city Dublin. The streets of the inner city - a chaotic, energised space, seemingly drowned by consumerism and ‘The Garden’ - a contemplative, reflective, predominantly empty, memorial space. This work was created in collaboration with dance artists, Olwen Grindley, Rebecca Riley and Eloy Casanova, composer, Dara O’Brien, camera-man, Dara Mc Cluskey and film editor, Ronan O’Mhuirgeasa.

At this time, I had a strong desire to get out of what I experienced as a contained, isolated and increasingly restrictive studio space, in an attempt to relate to and interact with my surrounding environment. Working in site-specific environments might provide me with a set of new challenges that might help to break through my movement and choreographic patterns. As a dancer, I was primarily interested in investigating how the physical, architectural and energetic aspects of the two contrasting environments would inform my movement vocabulary. I was interested in how the oppositional nature of these sites might impact the oppositional nature of my movement vocabulary.

My initial decision to work with film was reflective of my continued interest in multi-disciplinary practice. Film might provide me with an opportunity to expand into new areas of exploration and discover new working methods within new creative paradigms. Creating choreography for camera was a natural progression for me as a dance artist and choreographer, due to my inherent skills in the commonly shared elements of motion, space and time. From English photographer, Muybridge’s motion studies to Russian film director and theorist, Eisenstein’s groundbreaking cinematic language, bodies in motion have been explored, through the media of photography, cinema, video, and digital technologies. During the middle of the twentieth century, artists that specialise in moving image (including dance artists) have developed a hybrid-practice that is now

37 The Garden of Remembrance is a memorial garden in inner city Dublin, dedicated to the Irish soldiers who fought for Irish freedom in the 1916 Rising.
commonly defined under the umbrella term of ‘screendance’ (Rosenberg and Kappenberg 2010). Renowned experimental film artist, choreographer, dancer and writer in the 1940’s and 1950’s, Maya Deren, was interested in ultimately creating a new way of perceiving movement through her avant-garde film work. She believed that her dances could only exist on film and argued that the medium of film, …can serve, not only as an instrument for conveying the artist’s vision, but it can itself contribute a view of the world created by the intelligence inherent in its own mechanism. When this is achieved it creates a reality, an experience that, as a whole, can only exist on film. (Deren 1945, p.346)

Many Post-Modern choreographers such as Paxton, Nelson and Rainer turned to film to further explore and develop their art form in the 1970’s. Yvonne Rainer “…understood her films to be an extension of the questions she had been working on as a movement performer. Like dance, films move across space and unfold in time” (Rainer cited in Phelan1998, p.10).

An evocative sculpture, by well-known sculptor, Oisin Kelly, called ‘The Children Of Lir’, an ancient Irish myth is located at the far end of the Garden of Remembrance, beyond a long corridor of water in the shape of a crucifix. The figures of children emerging out of a swan are reflective of Ireland’s struggle and eventual freedom from British rule. It was this explosive, energetic movement of release, encapsulated within the sculpture that intrigued me. This sculpture captures a dynamic, explosive moment of movement that resonates within its still metallic form, frozen in time – a moment of shedding, chrysalis or metamorphosis. Whenever I walked by the busy gates of the park, I would experience an energetic sensation in my body and would stop in stillness, allowing my eyes to travel down the long watery symbolic corridor, to land on the sculpture and sense a liberating moment in my own body.

Within the creative process for Frozen, we interacted directly with this sculpture. We slowly climbed up into the sculpture, with a careful intensity and reverent silence and lay down within its large rusty freezing cold limbs (it was November and the cold was piercing). As I lay within the sculpture, I sensed and experienced the held resonance of intense symbolism merging through my skin surface. The close proximity to the
bumpy, cold, metallic, erosive texture of the bronze surface, evoked a strong sense of memory and time, as my hands, feet and spine tingled and felt absorbed by the sculpture. Drawn to the fluidity of the water underneath me in a circular pool, its translucency reflected back to me fractals of my moving relationship with the sculpture. These sensorial and energetic aspects of the moving experience brought about a deep embodied connectivity that is a felt sense, which still resonates strongly with me as I write this eight years later. I am now drawn to examine and reflect on these particular aspects of my movement experience more closely – my kinaesthetic and energetic relationship with my surroundings and the sensation of merging with what I am relating to. To unpack this sensation of merging a little further, I would describe the experience as one of expansion where, my breathing, sensory, fluid nature is progressively enhanced to the point that it becomes difficult to discern where my body begins and where it ends. Through amplified sensorial awareness and through remaining open and present to a process of ever-changing attunement with environment, I become a shape-shifting being, existing entirely within the vast inexhaustible present moment where infinite possibilities and choices pass through to move as one large energetic mass.
As part of the creative process, we observed pedestrian habitual movement patterns and conversational gestures in city streets of inner city Dublin, which became initiations for our movement enquiry. Simultaneously we explored oppositional, syncopated and idiosyncratic phrases of gestural movement phrases in a studio environment, which seemed reflective of what we observed on the streets. In hindsight, I now see that I was still caught in my habitual movement pattern when working in the studio environment, although this time I began to set structured improvisations that deconstructed the phrases, yet, I was still working within a very stylised movement vocabulary. The gestural body was alive and vibrant during the creation of Frozen, but, in parallel, there was also an unfolding of a more subtle sensory and kinaesthetic response, inspired by our direct interactions with the Garden site. The studio environment still seemed to produce a habitual response, but these also deepened through improvised deconstructions. Connecting physically through the haptic sense within outdoor environments, triggered a deeper layer of kinaesthetic and sensory stimulation that produced a very different response.

Towards the middle of this creative process, I began to notice that the gestural movement vocabulary seemed to blend or integrate with both sites. It reflected the sculptural aspect in the park and the gestural or conversational aspect of pedestrians on the city streets. Surprisingly, through our moving interactions, a strong relational dynamic began to emerge between the two sites. Through my moving experience, I became aware that the two sites had more similarities than I initially realised. For example, when in the park, the loud incessant noise spill of inner city traffic juxtaposed with its inherent reflective nature as it echoed throughout the space. On the other hand, while exploring the city, we were physically drawn to the stillness and memories reflected through the many historical sculptures or monuments that were in ‘The Garden’. The initial preconceived oppositional nature of each site began to slowly dissolve within the creative process and within the moving experiences. The boundaries of both the body and site began to dissolve and become more permeable through the moving experience.

Turner (2004) discusses the process of generating dance vocabulary directly from site where the layers of meaning inform the choreography so that both site and movement become co-creative. The site and the choreography can allow for new experiences that blur boundaries of how normative movement and behaviours can be studied within a
performance context to reveal more information about site, bodies and cultural practices. An example of this can be seen through Michael Seaver’s passage of writing, where he describes the dancer’s body being a site for cultural reflection in Frozen in an article commissioned by Dance Ireland in 2009:

In her dance film Frozen, choreographer Mairead Vaughan places her dancers beside iconic sculptures loaded with nationalistic resonance: Oisin Kelly’s The Children of Lir in the Garden of Remembrance and Rowan Gillispies’s Famine on Custom House Quay. Against the inert state-sanctioned commemorations of seminal moments in Irish history, Vaughan’s dancers suggest a deep connection to the past through embodied memories – what Bourdieu calls habitus or embodied history.

(Seaver 2009, Counting Capital)

Seaver develops this article using Bourdieu’s theory of habitus, which posits the body as site, directly reflecting cultural and social practices through its movement response. He describes how cultural conditioning is imprinted on and is continuously evolving through the body reflected through its actions. While it was interesting for me as a choreographer to see that cultural and social aspects of sites were intrinsically reflected through the dancers’ interactions, these inherent cultural aspects were illuminated far beyond my intention within Frozen. I did not set out to engage with the cultural narrative, rather, my intention was to go beyond the narrative and explore the immediate, abstract, pure moving sensory and energetic response to the sites.

In hindsight I am aware that the filming process for Frozen contributed to a strong narrative as a lot of the footage included the full body image of the form based gestural body captured within the frame. The movement was filmed as if documenting the choreography from an outside perspective with a static camera. I was aware during the process that I wanted the work to evolve in a less clichéd, more subtle manner, evoking the inherent expressive nature of the body in moving relationship with site, rather than highlighting and representing further the strong enigmatic and narrative story of the space. I found it extremely difficult to translate my choreographic sensibilities, as I had not worked with film before.
While Irish Times critic and reviewer Michael Seaver described *Frozen* as a dance highlight of 2008, the same sense of unease about the work surfaced yet again. Similar to *Matra* and *Turbulence*, I felt *Frozen* was overly dramatic and lacked the subtle clarity of expression I was searching for. For me, the gestural body was too overpoweringly expressive and this was magnified even further through the camera lens. It felt I was getting further away from what I wanted to express, yet, simultaneously, I was becoming more aware that it was the subtle sensorial moments filmed through the elements of the site, such as the reflections through the water that interested me. Intimate moments captured through the zoom of the camera lens, illuminating interactions such as the bare foot connecting with the bronze textured surface of the sculpture, reflected the kind of kinaesthetic delicacy and fragility I was searching for.

After *Frozen*, I was left questioning how could I avoid the superfluous, the overly expressive dramatic aspects within my choreographic work. How could I refine and distil what really interested me about movement in site-specific environments? What particular movement sensibilities had come to surface and how could I attempt to illuminate these within my choreography? At this time, retrospectively, I had a deep inner sense of what it was I was interested in exploring and expressing, but frustratingly I still was not fully conscious of what that might be. I felt stuck and retreated back into the studio for a period of two years to try to discover what it was I needed to find. After *Frozen* I went on to create a solo work called *Being Nowhere Else* (2008), which was funded by Dance Ireland’s Choreographic Initiative and was performed as part of Dublin Dance Festival (2008) in Dance Ireland and Project Arts Centre. This work was a study of what I would now describe as being stuck between two worlds – one was a deepening sense of a strongly felt inner world and the other was still concerned with an outer expression through gesture and form. Through the creative process, I entered into an experience of deepening into both worlds (inner and outer), in an attempt to find something that spiralled both in and out, or maybe an integration of both.
In 2010, I re-located from an urban environment in Dublin to a rural location in between both Cork and Limerick. Living in a rural environment provided for a different sense of time and space, which would begin to reflect within the choreographic work I created. I received an Arts Council of Ireland bursary award and was supported by a choreographic residency in The Firkin Crane, Cork, out of which I created a short

Stone and Form – A Process of Dissolution

Figure 16: Frozen (2007), Shakram Dance Company, Mairéad Vaughan, photograph Dara O’Brien
experimental dance film, called *Stone and Form*.\(^{38}\) This research period facilitated a return to the medium of film, to define and further explore the movement principles and choreographic sensibilities I felt were lacking in my previous work.\(^{39}\)

I was intuitively drawn to work in the historic ruins of Kanturk Castle and Ballybeg Augustinian Priory, Co. Cork, due to the strong energetic resonance I felt in these sites. I can only describe this energetic resonance as a felt sensation or vibration that passed through my body from the surrounding environment which resulted in intuitive movement responses that seemed to seemingly disperse back into the environment. I set out from a film perspective to explore experimental filming methods that might capture the moving body’s relationship with the architecture and the energy of the sites, through both improvised and devised movement. I worked in collaboration with four dancers: Patric Cashman, Thomas Butler, Inma Moya, Karen Glensen, and long-term collaborator, Dara O’Brien.\(^{40}\) O’Brien and I entered into an experimental filming process with a simple hand-held camcorder.

\(^{38}\) The Firkin Crane is a distinctive heritage building in Cork city dedicated to dance. I participated in a two-week choreographic residency called ‘Blank Canvas’ which provides free studio-space and technical support for professional dance artists in the research period of a new choreographic work. See www.firkincrane.ie.

\(^{39}\) To see *Stone and Form* please visit: http://shakramdance.com/wp/index.php/video-gallery

\(^{40}\) O’Brien had an understanding of my choreographic and artistic sensibilities as co-artistic director of Shakram Dance Company and from our years of dance and sound collaboration.
Figures 17-19: *Stone and Form* (2010), Shakram Dance Company, Olwen Grindley, Patric Cashman, Thomas Butler, Mairéad Vaughan, photography Owen Behan
Within the creative process, we worked with tasks that explored the moving bodies’ capacity, through direct sensory and tactile encounters, to soften and mould into confined spaces and surfaces within selected architectural features of the sites. This close physical connection moving in and out of contained spaces, crevices and stone surfaces, facilitated an immediate softening of the gestural form which still resided in my body. For example, as the vertebrae of my spine connected directly with the stone surface, a listening occurred as bone yielded to stone, at the meeting point of both hard surfaces a softening manifested through the felt sensation of rough, cold, hard, grainy texture. I explored, through a tactile engagement, the erosive layers of the building. Cobwebs, insects, dust, grime from surfaces, merged with my clothes, skin, hair in reciprocity, as I also softened into the hard surfaces of this ancient space it felt like it was resonating through me.

My intention was, through the direct agency of my moving body, to purposefully limit the articulation of my gestural body by placing it within contained small hard spaces and structures of the surrounding architecture. This limitation reflected back to me, my own sense of being trapped in the gestural body. Yet, I was still intrigued by the precision and detail of how I engaged in what I would describe as measuring movements. These movements embodied the specifics (angles, height, density) of the architecture of the site. It was as if specific body parts such as my knee or my elbow were tracing, measuring, interpreting the dimensions of the space kinaesthetically, while at the same time this outer measuring action was setting off another deeper almost cellular layer of sensory exploration. As a choreographer, I was interested in how the sparseness of the thick, cold, unyielding stone, held and framed the warm, sensorial, fluid, human form, a seemingly stark oppositional connection.

In parallel to the more form based gestural explorations, we also entered into structured improvisations which started with the exploration of naturalistic movement like walking, running, climbing, leaning, and sensing the body weight supported by and pouring into the thickness of stone. I witnessed both the dancers’ and my own improvised movement responses in relation to the architectural facets of the building. In the centre of the castle’s derelict, crumbling, vast, open, empty space, I noticed our movement responses were primarily large, slow, sustained, and meditative like, as our limbs seemed to embody the expansiveness of our surroundings with parameter walls towering above and around our bodies. There were long periods of reflective stillness as
we sat in the window frames looking out onto the surrounding landscape. Architectural features such as large fireplaces or arches initiated more idiosyncratic, punctuated, rhythmical responses. An exploration of the walls instigated more naturalistic climbing movement as the body entered into a kinaesthetic exploration, carefully measuring the placement of our body weight and limbs in relation to the cracks and the crevices of the wall surfaces. I was intrigued by the intimacy and immediacy of the dancers improvised responses and as I witnessed their movement, I became deeply aware of the subtle but highly skilled kinaesthetic sense or intelligence held in the body of a dance artist.

Witnessing and actively engaging in improvised explorations began to open up a deep awareness of my energetic body and the strong energetic residues that resonated with me while moving in this ancient site. My energy body became more fully alive and activated within this creative process. I sensed a slow dissolving and what I experienced as almost a dispersing of my limbs into the stonewalls, through spontaneous, immediate, improvised responses. Depending on the physical connection I made with the site, I could feel energy for example from the stone surface of a wall through the palm of my hand, or from the ground flow up through my feet to be absorbed, felt and intuitively responded to through movement. Through these improvised responses I began to realise that the somatic inner moving experience of the dancer that I was attempting to express within my previous choreography, may have been shadowed all along by what had become a conditioned gestural body, which I was now ready to release.

As a choreographer I was interested in approaching the filming from an inside perspective, making it an integral part of the entire creative process from beginning to end. I worked alongside O’Brien, experimenting and discovering the challenges involved in attempting to capture the intimacy and immediacy of the movement interactions within the filming process. I became aware of the two-dimensional camera lens, which seemed to reflect back to me a resounding flatness of both the movement and the site. I began to understand how certain movements ‘read’ differently when recorded on screen than those live on the site, and how particular methods of filming had a huge impact on attempting to overcome these difficulties. Simple examples, such as filming while lying on the ground at a low level, had a very different effect to filming at the same level as the dancers and filming through structures such as grids/fencing or through small stone structures (such as the original gun holes in the castle) helped frame
the movement, revealing the engagement between the movement and the features of the site in a more integrated and layered manner. Filming proximities such as close up and far away were explored to understand the effect, alongside varying camera angles from below, above, moving with, and around the dancers.

This research project played a very important role in clarifying the next stage of my dance and choreographic practice. I had a strong desire to work with the medium of video once again, but this time through the immediacy of improvisation in site-specific environments. I was now fully aware that I had ingrained dance and choreographic patterns, which had become frustratingly restrictive and limiting to my creative expression. I wanted to work with the more subtle aspects of movement, to deepen my exploration into the kinaesthetic aspect of my moving experience. I also wanted to examine and reflect on what I was becoming increasingly aware of - the reciprocal resonance between my energetic body and the felt energetic residues in particular site-specific environments.
CHAPTER 3

GENERATING STATES

This chapter focuses primarily on my psychosomatic dance, choreographic and performance method *Generating States*, which I developed within my studio-based strand to support me within the process of creating *TerrainSkin* and *TerrainSkin*:4Dflow. *Generating States* is both a method and a state of heightened awareness, or a state of receptivity, that is generated within my dance practice, which supports me to create choreographic work.

In this Chapter, I focus on the role of *Generating States* as a method within the creation of *TerrainSkin* primarily. In Chapter 4, the two additional choreographic methods of filming and editing within the creative process for *TerrainSkin* are detailed. In Chapter 5, I discuss how *Generating States* was used as both a choreographic and performance method within the context of the second creative phase of this research for *TerrainSkin*:4DFlow. In this regard, the account of the methods that I used at various stages of my research are discussed more fully in a number of chapters.

Many Post-Modern choreographers have developed their own unique improvised movement practices working from a sensory and/or kinaesthetic based perspective, some of which have directly influenced *Generating States* (Sacro-Thomas 2015, Drobnick 2006). Some of these artists include: Anna Halprin, who created and developed practices called ‘The Five Stages of Healing’ and ‘Movement Rituals’; Deborah Hay, who developed a way of moving that focusses on cellular consciousness; and Lisa Nelson, who created a practice called ‘Tuning Scores’. Nelson advocates that as we become more attuned to our sensations, we develop an awareness of our conditioned or habitual patterns that contribute greatly to how we experience and construct our surrounding environment (Nelson 2006). While *Generating States* aims to

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41 Anna Halprin explored the healing and transformation quality of movement through her practice called ‘The Five Stages of Healing’ after being diagnosed with cancer. Through documenting her experiences, developing and applying her movement practice, she eventually went on to cure herself and share her findings with the community. Deborah Hay is a postmodern choreographer, performer, writer and teacher since the 1960’s. She currently promotes compositional methods that are concerned predominantly with the nature of experience, perception, and attention while moving. Deborah Hay (1994) describes her dance practice as a form of cellular consciousness, which she uses as a stimulus for her improvisational performance structures.
develop kinaesthetic awareness, it also aims to go past the boundaries of the living kinaesthetic bodily experience to recognise and cultivate another level of awareness – energetic awareness. Within the specifics of this current research, I examine and reflect on how the subtle kinaesthetic and energetic aspects of movement might deepen my inner relationship to myself, my outer relationship with my surrounding environment, which extends out to include my relationship with an audience.

Generating States was developed through what Dempster has defined as a process of ‘deconstruction and bricolage’ (Bales, Nettl-Fiol 2008, p.2), which arose out of the Post-Modern era (Banes 1987, 1993, 2003, Carter 1998). Deconstruction is defined as a process of “repatterning, stripping down, getting back to basics, debriefing the body of unwanted habits of movements” (Bales, Nettl-Fiol 2008, p.2). Bricolage describes a layering process or gathering of particular elements, tools or skills from a wide range of related or disparate fields, often described as a “postmodern radical juxtaposition” (ibid, p.3). Through a process of bricolage, I selectively drew from particular principles from the disciplinary fields of Release-based contemporary dance and Post-Modern practices, Iyengar yoga and selected principles from a variety of Somatic practices, while simultaneously entering into a process of deconstruction of certain habits, which I consider to be debilitating, that were embedded in my contemporary dance technique training. Even though my professional dance training and the impact of particular movement principles have left a deep and lasting imprint on my body - all of which both directly and indirectly inform my work - these principles have been deconstructed to the point where some may be barely visible within TerrainSkin and TerrainSkin:4DFlow.

**Studio–Based Strand**

The studio–based strand of this research undertaking involves two creative processes, which I experience as a non-linear cyclical process of mediation between simultaneous worlds, states and thresholds that have been described by many artists as the visible and invisible, the known and the unknown, the tangible and the intangible (Lee, Bannerman 2006). It is a multi-dimensional, tangled up conundrum, layered and informed by years of multi-disciplinary practice, yet strongly rooted within the contemporary dance field. Within the text-based strand of this research enquiry, I aim to untangle this web and
clarify the emergent choreographic methods and modes of enquiry I engaged with in the creation of the two choreographic works at the centre of this research.

In addition to what dance artist and academic Bannerman (2006) describes as the ‘conscious’ methods or modes of enquiry, I am also aware of what he describes as the unconscious or intuitive aspect of the creative process. Philosophers, Wittgenstein (cited by Shusterman 2000) describes this as the mysterious aspect; Nietzsche (ibid 2000) as the instinctive; and Shusterman (2000) as the ineffable aspect, of the creative process. Bannerman describes this unconscious aspect as a phenomenon that comes from a space outside of rational and conscious thought (which might be similar to what I define as a third space in this heuristic). He argues that words and language cannot fully account for this unconscious element of the creative process. The artist realises that language can misrepresent aspects of the creative process and concludes in his article ‘The Butterfly Unpinned’, that,

> An expert practice and a domain of knowledge contain the intuitive, and the analytical, as well as a core of interwoven engagements. These forces are not at rest, nor are they fixed; they resist definitive categorization and point to a way of knowledge that is more complex, subtle and fluid; this is not ‘dead certainty’ but a living, dynamic, synergistic interplay.

(Bannerman 2006, p.22)\(^{42}\)

While I suggest that the final choreographic work may reflect these ineffable aspects, it is important to note that this written document sits beside it in support of my research enquiry, rather than as an attempt to document the unexplainable or what Bannerman describes as the mystery. As the 20th century philosopher of language Wittgenstein said, “There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They show themselves. They are mystical” (Wittgenstein cited in Shusterman 2000, p.136).

\(^{42}\) Christopher Bannerman founded a research group called ResCen (Centre for Research into Creation in the Performing) in Middlesex University in an attempt to bridge the gap between the academic and arts communities. They came together to research the complex nature of the creative process in arts practice.
**Dancer, Choreographer, Performer States**

*Generating States* is a movement practice that is in a state of continuous adaptation and reconfiguration, as it evolves to inform the particular choreographic work I am creating and the particular questions I am reflecting on. It supports me to mediate multiple perspectives and states, in my role as dancer, choreographer and performer.\(^{43}\) Within this practice, my inner moving body experience as a dancer, encompasses an immediate, sensory, kinaesthetic, energetic, intuitive, responsive state. And my outer perspective, as a choreographer, draws on a more critical, constructive, analytical, reflexive and witnessing state. Finally, my perspective as a performer draws on a large variety of tools and approaches that I move in and out of within various performance modes and acquired performance states. It is important to reiterate that all three perspectives - dancer, choreographer, and performer, all interrelate and simultaneously comprise (to a greater or lesser extent) the various qualities and states that I have identified. All of these states have to be carefully negotiated. And when the choreographer, dancer and performer are the same person, as in the case of TerrainSkin and TerrainSkin:4DFlow, all of these multiple states and perspectives have to be negotiated simultaneously.\(^{44}\)

**Inner, Outer, Third Spaces**

In order to discuss *Generating States* as a method, I conceptualise and separate out for the purpose of this research framework, three spaces - ‘inner space’, ‘outer space’ and ‘third space’.

Inner space refers to the inner biological, physiological, energetic and experiential aspects, from a ‘living body’ perspective (Hanna 1980). Biological elements refer to physical parts such as muscle, bone, skin and fluid. Physiological systems refer to systems such as the respiratory, circulatory, and nervous systems. Experiential aspects refer to sensation, intuition, impulse, energy, memory and imagination.

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\(^{43}\) I do not mean to neatly separate out and oversimplify these roles as a dancer, choreographer and performer as they do not exist that way within my practice, rather, they all interrelate and inform each other continuously. It is through the process of translation of movement to writing and for the purpose of inventing a research framework that this separation automatically occurs.

\(^{44}\) *Generating States* has evolved predominantly to support and sustain me as a dance artist but has extended out past the dance field into the much broader context of my everyday life. It has evolved as a restorative, therapeutic and spiritual practice combining and extending a variety of specialist movement skills and body practices (from contemporary dance, somatic and psychophysical fields) to attempt to cultivate authenticity and awareness of self, other and environment and our inherent interconnectivity.
Outer space refers to the surrounding space or environment that I move in, including the surfaces, textures, elements, qualities I interact with in site-specific locations. This can extend to include artistic collaborators and/or an audience within a performance context.

Third space refers to what I experience as a state of heightened awareness within my practice. It can be described as both a ‘state’ and a ‘space’. Without separating out the experience too much, as it permeates both the dancers and choreographers experience, I would suggest that the term ‘state’ might reflect the more intimate, inner dancers embodied state of awareness and the term ‘space’ might refer to a more expansive witnessing state of awareness of a choreographer. This third state and space, integrates both inner (dancer) and outer (choreographer) and expands out beyond both. It is experienced as a present, creative, expansive state, which I attempt to enter into, or access, via the practice of Generating States. It is out of this space that my creative process unfolds.

Social geographer, Edward Soja (inspired by work of French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre), developed the theory of ‘Thirdspace’, which he describes as a space in which,

“everything comes together… subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history.”

(Soja 1996, p. 57)

Soja rejected polarisation, just like many others from a range of fields (such as philosophers James, Dewey and Derrida, and physicists Bohm, Capra), and advocated to “draw selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives” in the generation of new knowledge (ibid, p.5).

For the purpose of my research questions, and for the purpose of attempting to translate these experiences through language, I have identified and described these spaces as separate, but, experientially, they are not as such; on one hand, they seem to have clear identifiable boundaries, but, on the other, they all spill into each other, mixing their fluid, permeable thresholds to create new concoctions, new peripheries, new nuances and in turn new artistic impulses.
**Five Stages of Attunement**

The intention of *Generating States* is to provide a container through which I maintain present moment awareness while witnessing my inner self and my outer environment simultaneously. This is practiced through a series of, what I am defining as, basic attunements. The principles that inform *Generating States*, aim to harvest a deep multi-sensory listening or attunement to both inner and outer spaces, which may facilitate a third space to emerge, an experience of heightened awareness. For the purpose of this research enquiry I examine two specific aspects that contribute to this sense of heightened awareness – the kinaesthetic and the energetic and how they support me in my moving relationship in site-specific environments. Before I reduce the practice of *Generating States* to its basic principles or components, through what I call its five stages of attunement, I will first briefly introduce the site-specific environments I selected to work in within a collaborative creative process for *TerrainSkin*.

*TerrainSkin* was created with long-time collaborator, composer, Dara O’Brien, who shared my artistic trajectory over the last sixteen years. O’Brien’s primary roles within the creative process were camera-man, editor and sound artist. I was drawn to working in both natural environments of forests, rivers and lakes due to the inherent movement found within these spaces, as well as man-made derelict sites that held, what I experience as felt energetic resonances. The structure of *Generating States* for this project, had five basic active attuning stages that aimed to generate particular body-mind states, which supported my moving encounters.⁴⁵ These stages were; Attuning to Self – Breathing, Attuning to Terrain - Walking, Attuning to Materials - Constructing, Attuning to Site - Moving and Attuning to Video – Filming and Witnessing. I write about *Generating States* in the present tense to reflect it as an active stream of consciousness to reflect its experiential force within the creative process.

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⁴⁵ Although the overall philosophy of inner, outer and the relational third space remains the same, the structure and series of attunements used within *Generating States* change to support the various environments and projects I am working on and the people I am working/collaborating with – it changes to support my personal dance practice, the particular spaces and environments I am working in (theatre or site-specific) and to support me within a performance context.
**Attuning to Self – Breathing**

Each morning I enter into the first two attuning stages of *Generating States* simultaneously - attuning to breath and attuning to terrain. I start this practice in a selected spot (I call my perch!) within a site. I become still, draw my awareness to my breath, which directly connects me down into my body to become more fully present. Present and witnessing my inner body sensations and simultaneously outer environmental sensations of wind, temperature, sounds, smells.

My breath acts as a direct portal to my energetic system which becomes more consciously activated with each breath. This conscious connection between breath and energy begins to extend outwards to simultaneously expand my awareness to the reciprocal relationship between my inner energetic system and the outer energetic field of the surrounding site. A felt energetic resonance circulates and flows throughout my whole system. Often an increased energetic sensitivity builds up in my spine which vibrates (sometimes gently and sometimes quite dynamically) as an inner, outer interconnectivity is activated – my spine feels like a radar or aerial vibrating active attunement. Medical scientist and cranio-sacral therapist Zappaterra’s (2015) recent research indicates that cerebrospinal fluid which bathes the inner and outer surface of the brain and flows down the spinal cord, is a powerful conveyer of energy.46 Cranio-sacral therapist Sills (2013) refers to this fluid as a ‘liquid medium’ which acts as a reservoir for this life energy. Sometimes a particular chakra point will begin to pulsate (usually my sacral chakra) spontaneously through which information from my surroundings is being absorbed. More often I experience this energetic sensation as a general flow all around my body that forms an energetic communion (between inner and outer) similar to how Hartley articulates,

> When energy is moving in a free and balanced way, all body systems and structures are in a state of communication with all others....When a spontaneous free flow of energy and body-mind integration are accessed, there is an awareness that encompasses mind, body, and feeling in totality and transcends all distinctions, from which may emerge an experience of spirit or pure consciousness.

(Hartley 1995, p.115)

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46 For more information please refer to: https://www.scienceandnonduality.com/the-cerebrospinal-fluid-and-the-appearance-of-i-am-mauro-zappaterra
Although I am sitting in stillness, remaining present to my breath, sensations and energetic system, I am already engaging intensely with my surrounding environment.

Scientist and expert in bioenergy Hunt (1996), describes that the energetic body is the first to ‘interact’ (rather than react) with its environment even before a sensory response. Japanese philosopher, Yasuo Yuasa defines what I call the energetic body, the “quasi-body”. He asserts: “The experience of this ‘quasi-body’ takes the form of sensations of ‘flow’, ‘heat’, and/or ‘vibrations’ that are quite different from the experience of nerve impulses” (cited by Zarilli in Banes, Lepeki 2007, p.67). He describes the energetic system as being very different from the kinaesthetic or sensory motor response, which is activated by the central nervous system. The energetic system is activated by what he identifies as “…the **ki**-meridian system or network beneath the skin covering the entire body and used in acupuncture ... roughly equivalent to the ‘subtle body’ of yoga” (*ibid*, p.67). Yuasa asserts that, through practices of ‘self-cultivation’, this system can be sensitised, “this “invisible” circuit can become “visible”, i.e. it is brought into awareness or consciousness and utilized” (*ibid*, p.67) and that this way of experiencing does not conform to, but in fact breaks down common subject-object ways of relating.

This awareness of breath, energy and sensation, facilitates a deep receptivity as I begin to witness, both inner self and outer environment, infuse together as body becomes land.

*It is impossible for me to singularly focus on my breath (as I can in a studio space) in site, my surroundings are so alive, intoxicating, stimulations everywhere. I am part of a much bigger organism pounding, pulsing with life force that runs dynamically through my breath, spine, veins, blood, cells. It is impossible to stay focussed on my breath only, rather, I breathe my surroundings and they breathe me….*

(Vaughan, Journal extract, Dec. 2013)

When practicing the simplicity of breathing in stillness, I am immediately drawn to a knowing (or experiencing) that I am part of a whole. I no longer focus solely on myself as a separate entity but my sensory and energetic awareness expands to consider how I exist in the totality of, and in a co-creative relationship with my surrounding environment. I am no longer separate from the activities that surround me but deeply immersed as part of them. Abram reiterates how conventional Western scientific
discourse privileges an abstract view of the world in isolation from the sentient nature of experience, which, in turn, objectifies it. He discusses the role of sensory experience in ‘indigenous, oral cultures’ where their connection to their surrounding environment was “sensate, attentive and watchful”. This knowing impacted their behaviour towards their environment so as to not “offend the watchful land itself” (Abram 1997, p.69).

Similarly psychotherapist and yoga practitioner Stone (2008) considers how the separating effect of duality is self-constructed through our Western cultural conditioning, which observes and conforms through the strong lens of subject-object relationship; “Duality, the creating of a self ‘in here’ that perceives an object ‘out there’, always creates separateness and alienation. Dualism is self-constructed; it’s not built into reality as it presents itself” (Stone 2008, p.11). The practice of Generating States supports me to bring the kinaesthetic and energetic aspects to my conscious awareness, which helps quieten my mind’s pre-dominant conditioning or tendency to separate things out in the manner which Stone describes as I enter into a different state of awareness, being or experiencing. When I am in this state I experience my surroundings very differently similar to what cognitive scientists, Gallagher and Zahavi suggest that our inner state can directly inform how we experience our outer environment and vice versa.

The ‘internal environment’ of the body which functions homeostatically and automatically, and is constituted by innumerable physiological and neurological events, is simply an internalized translation and continuation of the ‘external environment’. Changes in the ‘external’ environment are always accompanied by changes in the ‘internal’ one… It is also the case that when there are changes in the ‘internal’ environment, the ‘external’ environment can suddenly take on a different significance – i.e. the environment can become experientially different. (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, p.138)
**Attuning to Terrain – Walking**

I only went out for a walk
and finally concluded to stay out
until sundown
for going out
I found
was really going in

(Muir cited in Tufnell and Crickmay 2004, p.32)

The next stage of *Generating States* is an attuning to terrain through the practice of walking in silence while remaining fully present both to self and surroundings. The locomotive practice of walking, further enhances a strong sense of my relationship with my environment. Walking in nature facilitates a very particular kind of attunement, out of which creative ideas, inspirations and stimulations emerge. The pace of walking has an effect of quietening my cognitive mind, and opening up a more expansive awareness that generates an active kind of alertness, a creative flow out of which spontaneous impulses and imaginative journeys begin to germinate.

*The repetitive hypnotic nature of walking brings my attention to my inner rhythmic pulse, which facilitates a kind of unfolding enhanced alertness. I become aware of the undulating silhouettes of the trees present on either side of my path throwing abstract leafy patterns of limbs onto the ground. I am drawn into the detail of the surfaces I move through – the warm, baked, muddy, earthy textures, caked cracks and crevices hardened by the summer sun, absorb me right down into them as I imagine the decent.*

(Vaughan, Journal extract, Dec. 2013)

Historically, many writers, artists and philosophers have explored walking as a significant method, practice or tool that activates, stimulates and inspires creativity.

Walking seems to be the most natural and human-scale rhythm to stimulate and synchronise movement and thought, and as such has been the preferred occupation for philosophers from the Sophists to Rousseau, Kant and Kierkegaard to Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Benjamin’s concept of the flaneur.

(Cools 2014, p.17)
I am aware of how the rhythm of walking can 'stimulate and synchronise movement and thought', but within my practice as a dance artist, I aim for it to transport me to a creative space where thought can be somewhat transcended. When I use the term transcended I do not mean that thought ceases, but rather it slows down and my focus becomes anchored in an embodied present state, out of which a simultaneously expansive state unfolds. It is within this transcended space/state that a creative third space of heightened awareness begins to emerge. The second yoga sutra of Patanjali, *Citta Vṛtti Nirodhah*, refers to the process of training or quietening the mind (Bryant 2009). *Citta* refers to the mind, *vṛtti* refers to the revolving or turning nature of the mind and *nirodhah* refers to a process of self-training. Through a process of bringing my body into present moment awareness of my surrounding environment, I allow the repetitive nature of habitual thoughts, emotions and/or actions to slow down.

Many dance artists are engaged with walking both as a practice and a performance. British dance artists, Tamara Ashley and Simone Kenyon (2006), walked the 270 miles of a well-known English national trail that extends to the Scottish border, using it as a performance score for a work called ‘The Pennine Way: The Legs that Make Us’. This resulted in a publication that documented the walking practice which engaged with poetry, prose and philosophical writing (2007). Welsh based movement artist, Simon Whitehead, has developed a substantial body of work directly out of his practice of walking, which explores his relationship with environment through what he describes as an ecological and intuitive approach to site.

I begin walking in a forest location and notice how I resonate with what I experience as the life-giving energy and calming nature of trees. As I walk through the forest, I enter into a state of awareness (*Citta Vṛtti Nirodhah*) that feels like the forest passes through my body as I walk listening, smelling, touching, soaking in my environment. Writer and ecologist, Dr. Nadkarni (2008), in her book ‘Between Earth and Sky: Our Intimate Connections to Trees’, suggests that trees can evoke a state of “mindfulness,” where we become better in tune with, present with, and more compassionate towards our surrounding environment. This resonates with my direct experience evoked through the following passage, written in a forest location.

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47 Simone and Tamara created a blog for this project at: http://ashleykenyonwalk.blogspot.com
48 Please refer to: www.untitledstates.net
.... lungs like tree, filling up, expanding and emptying out filtering....pattern of the tubular branches of bronchi, root system of the tree. The compelling, steadfast, present nature of the tree in all its solid leafy security and shadowed depths. I sense my own rootedness within this larger ecological system and I begin to sense the tree looking down on me.

(Vaughan, Journal extract, Dec. 2013)

It is in this forest environment that I become aware of my shadow cast onto the lumpy ground surface, and as I move, is displaced onto and throughout the trees. (This went on to directly inform my creative process and my way of expressing the energetic body within TerrainSkin). My walking expedition takes me to an old ruin of a house almost swallowed by the forest (this became one of the derelict sites in TerrainSkin). It draws me into its space and brings my attention to what I experience as the strong energetic residue contained within it. I sense the movement of time resonating within this building as I imagine the comings and goings of previous occupants. This triggers a heightened sensory response. I hear the echoing sounds of crows in their nests on inner ledges of the roof. I smell the mould and rot of the wood structure, small saplings growing up through the beams of the floor as my hand begins to trace and feel the bubbling wallpaper with mouldy mildew. A white powdery deposit leaves imprints both on the wall surface and on my hands. The wall imprints have their own distinct patterns of erosion, layers of meaning, a reflection of accumulated time. My hands have a white chalky mouldy residue, an imprint of my engagement which settles down deeply into the lines in the palms of my hands, reflecting back to me my own personal stories, my lifelines, my immortality. I take a journey through time to the soft grassy native land before the house was built, to the cultivated family home in its prime, to its current derelict and unkempt return back into the nature out of which it was born. An unexpected sadness and loneliness arises, cycles of life and death, and I leave.

The open, simple, rhythmic and spontaneous nature of walking, journeying, arriving, landing and departing to and from spaces, while keeping a particular focus and/or attention to the present moment, generates inspiration, intuition, exploration, imagination. This stimulates what I describe as a third space of creative flow that my work emerges out of - bubbling, gestating, fermenting just beneath the surface as the unknown waiting to unfold.
Attuning to Materials – Constructing

The mind is as much in the body as the body is in the world. The body penetrates the mind just as the world penetrates the body... the skin is a porous membrane. Electrically and chemically the world moves right through us as though we were made of mist.

(Bliebtreu cited in Tufnell and Crickmay 2004, p.124)

Subsequent to my connecting stage (with self and terrain) I select another area to work in, to start what I identify as the construction stage. I seek, forage, select and gather surrounding materials to build small sculptural constructions (or art works). This process generates a heightened kinaesthetic awareness through my haptic sense - the direct connection made between my hand skin surface and the materials surface, my body and the site in direct engagement through the sensation of touch. I sense and feel the textures, hard, soft, dry and crumbling, wet and soggy – all the inherent qualities of the materials, through my sensory nerves or ‘exteroceptors’ (these exteroceptors “receive stimuli from the external environment primarily through the skin and through the nerves of the special senses of hearing, vision, taste, smell and equilibrium” (Hartley 1995, p.122). The process of gathering and constructing these small sculptures stimulates a creative flow.

The kinaesthetic connection between the body’s sensory organs (including skin) and environment is processed through an active sensory-motor circuit or response generated by the body’s central nervous system. Touch creates an immediate tactile dialogue between the skin and the central nervous system and is used as a tool within a wide variety of different somatic and movement disciplines including Body-Mind Centering, Contact Improvisation, Feldenkrais, Cranio-Sacral Therapy, to amplify sensory experience through the skin (Eddy 2009, Babinskas 2005). Within my dance practice, each body part contacts surfaces such as floors, walls, objects as well as other dancers bodies (in contact improvisation) which leads to an ever evolving deepening of and a sinking into a state of kinaesthetic awareness.

We intersubjectively engage the world around us through our sensorimotor surface body, such as when we use a hand to explore, touch, or relate to the world...the
surface body vis-à-vis the world it encounters is ‘ecstatic’ in that the senses open out to the world.

( Zarilli in Banes and Lepecki 2007, p.50 )

The skin can be sensed as a container of the body, the negotiator connecting the inside of the body to the outside. The inner and outer worlds respond to each other absorbing information through the permeable nature of the skin. Sheets Johnson argues that, “Tactility and kinesthesia are indeed commonly intertwined: our tactile-kinesthetic bodies are the bedrock of the dynamic invariants that shape our everyday lives” (2010, p.120). Initiating movement from tactile sensation allows for a kind of information loop from skin surface to nervous system, feeding movement explorations and increasing sensory sensitivity, that all lead to an ever deepening and conscious awareness of heightened kinaesthetic intelligence.

**Attuning to Site – Moving**

Kinesthetically I am receiving the changing states in my body from movement to movement, aware of the whole body and of its constantly changing form, aware of shifting weight and of the changing contact between my body and the floor, feeling my hand on the floor, my shoulder releasing, the air on my skin, aware too of my changing feelings and states of mind. This is the ultimate condition glimpsed at moments. This reality more often than not is that one moves in and out of different levels of awareness.

(Poyner 1996, p.30)

Dance artist, Poyner, expresses the simultaneous states and levels of awareness experienced and negotiated within the improvised moving experience which reflects the next attunement stage. After the above stages of breathing, walking and constructing, I enter into an improvised ‘movement in response to landscape’, attuning to the sensation, within the immediate meeting point of skin and materials or body and environment. Levels of awareness are directly supported by a system of nerves called proprioceptors, which are “located in the joints, tendons, muscles and ligaments, record information about the position of the body in space, its movement, and its relationship to body parts” (Hartley 1995, p.122). I attempt to allow movement to emerge in a non-
judgemental manner, which I often describe as a process of getting out of my own way - a quietening, while at the same time remaining open and responsive to what Whitehouse calls within Authentic Movement the process of ‘being moved’ (Whitehouse in Hanlon Johnson 1995, p.243). This ‘being moved’ state may be similar to what I define as a third space (or indeed state). It cannot be forced although it can be generated, supported and enticed. Sometimes I cannot generate it at all and sometimes it arrives spontaneously. This feels like a state of expansion and/or connection to a greater intuitive force moving through my body wanting to express itself.

Nelson (2006) describes improvisation as having, “... no intrinsic substance. It is descriptive of a methodology that has potentially as wide an application and manifestation as the word ‘choreography’”. Foster describes it as “a means for discovering the new, amplifying the body’s power, endowing it with the capacity to blast existing frames of thought and behaviour” (2002, p.53) and Tufnell (2004), “...essentially the end point is unknown until it arrives.... It lends itself to an intuitive approach” (2004, p.289). I have broken my improvised moving experience down further into stages to dissect what emerges within it.

Quietening and Remaining Present
My improvisations begin slowly with a strong intention to remain fully present to and witness each moving moment with awareness. I am in a slow moving, quiet and receptive state, which supports what yoga practitioner Stone describes within his practice as, “studying the way we organise and construct our experiences” (Stone 2008, p.36). I sense my weight distribution and the fullness of my body mass. As I move, I extend out to absorb all the information (sight, sounds, smells, structures, materials, textures, elements (weather)) of my surrounding environment passing through each cell of my body. I open up in a manner which echoes Stone’s description: “Slowing down gives us an opportunity to get to know what it is we are investigating, rather than the usual tendency of superimposing our theories on whatever it is we see” (Stone 2008, p. 36).

Grounding and Sensing
I ground down through the soles of my feet which spread out like roots - this rooting sensation supports an energy flow down past the ground surface into the darkness of the depths below and simultaneously rises up above the top of my head to the open light
space of the sky and its holding expansiveness. I am held and stabilised by oppositional forces of earth and sky. The density of my body becomes light as the passing clouds move through me, yet I notice simultaneously that I am also solid and unchanging deep within my core as I glimpse and connect with the background solidity of the blue part of the sky that never moves. The solidity of the earth energy absorbed by feet drinking up in tingling sensation through legs to root and sacral chakra – my grounding force, my solidity, my fixity.

(Vaughan, Journal Extract, January 2013)

Inner, Outer and Third States of Awareness

I become aware of my ever-changing moving states relating to both inner and outer impulses simultaneously. Poyner articulates this inner, outer relationship in her own practice,

The focus of the practice is not primarily internal rather the body becomes the meeting ground between inner and outer worlds. The aim is to be aware of oneself and open and responsive to the surroundings, rather than blocking them out or losing oneself in them.

(Poynor 1996, p.31)

This losing of oneself in one’s surroundings is something that can be experienced, particularly with the continuous ever-changing stimulation of information and sensations passing through the body. In my moving experience, sensing a strong deep connection through the core of the body supports me to move in relational interactive spontaneity within the present moment, while simultaneously witnessing these inner and outer activities without losing myself in them. I relate to how Poyner describes her body-mind awareness becoming the mediating force between inner and outer worlds as she moves between both, with a strong sense of self in relation to her surrounding environment. The inner, outer dualistic spaces drop within the moving experience into a third space, which has no boundaries. My energy expands and opens up a potent, alive, intuitive and instinctual flow, similar to what Abram (1997) expresses as, “…we are organs of this world, flesh of its flesh,…. the world is perceiving itself through us” (1997, p.68).
Some time has passed, intoxicated by the sounds, smells, light. Skin of my face absorbs the soft cool passing breeze, echoing sounds circle inside me and I continue to move from this place – hyper-sensitively – my energy seems to merge with the energy of rock, fissures, veins, sharp erosive edges, all simultaneously becoming part of my solid bone structure. My movement becomes involuntary and a timelessness occurs. I could be here forever. A sensing, sinking, softening, melting, morphing of body and structure merging back into and through me.

(Vaughan, Journal Extract, January 2013)

Attuning to Video – Filming

Throughout my moving interaction with site, there is a simultaneous process of filming, in collaboration with O’Brien. Our approach to the filming process is directly informed by the movement principles and choreographic sensibilities of Generating States. We begin with the same premise discussed in the above attunements - to remain present to and witness our sensations as they arise and allow this to inform our overall filming method. My awareness expands out, as I witness my own movement sensations and how these may impact O’Brien’s witnessing of the sensations in his own body. This may in turn, impact his filming process and the resulting video work. It is my choreographic intention that this manner of working might reflect through the resulting choreographic work to an eventual witnessing audience.

As both dancer and choreographer/video artist, I am actively engaged in a continuous process of traversing and negotiating a range of different body-mind states. As a dancer I move fluidly through states of spontaneous, immersive, heightened kinaesthetic and energetic engagement, in direct response to the environmental information passing through me. As choreographer I am negotiating more analytical, critical, practical and technical considerations such as: positioning and camera angles, use of tripod or handheld camera, current lighting which is in a state of constant flux, and the specifics of the frame, to mention but a few.

One of the main challenges within the filming process is to avoid what I experience as filming techniques that create a one-dimensional, flat, distanced observation of my movement encounters, which might result in a more subject-object perspective. To best support my research aims, we decide to work primarily with a continuously moving
hand held camera to evoke the kinaesthetic sense of both the continuous flow of my movement experience and the inherent natural environmental movement within the sites. On site, we discover that, while the use of a tripod may create a steady smooth pan or sweep of footage across a landscape, it can result in a somewhat artificial flow, whereas the hand held camera produces an evidently shakier, but more human, perspective. This camera instability seems to best reflect the nature of my movement experience as I encounter my environment, reflected through the sensation of touch and bodily control of the handheld camera rather than the steal rigidity of the tripod. However, we discover a balance is needed, as shaky footage can also be a distraction that breaks the overall flow or momentum of a shot. The practice of *Generating States* prepares us for the subtle and sensitive nature of the filming process, a process of constant discernment, between the moving quartet of camera, cameraman, dancer and site.

The stages of attunement within *Generating States* which aim to provide for a deeper connection to the body (inner space) and to environment (outer space) support O’Brien in the physicality and sensitivity involved within this hand-held filming process. The movement principles support the necessary physical awareness required within the filming process such as the softening of the knees, positioning of the feet, awareness of the core of the body, to support, stabilise and soften the arms while panning slowly and continuously across landscapes, capturing close up encounters with moving limbs, surfaces, textures, inherent qualities within the various sites we work in. The intention is to capture footage that evokes a heightened awareness of (third space awareness), and a sensitivity to, both bodily and environmental movement. This requires the camera/camera operator to assume a role like that of a moving partner.

*Generating States* could be described as a movement practice that has an ecological approach through its strong sensation of radical interconnectedness with environment. As anthropologist, Tim Ingold, posits “a proper ecological approach is… one that would take, as its point of departure the whole organism-in-its-environment…not a compound of two things, but one indivisible totality” (2000, pp. 19-20). The above documentation sets out to evoke how *Generating States* acts as a conduit or container that generates periods of heightened kinaesthetic and energetic awareness, facilitated directly through the principles that inform each stage of attunement. Each appropriated principle acts as a pointer within a much larger map journeying through inner, outer spaces that may
arrive at a third space. The kinaesthetic and the energetic bodies are active catalysts that support non-dualistic experiences with environment. Through their cultivation within my practice they become conduits for entry into a third space. When in this third space state of heightened awareness, I experience my body resonating in convergence with site, where the boundaries become porous, fluid, malleable, part of one continuous, co-creative flow. It is out of this third space, where the dancer is present to the immediacy of a movement response and the choreographer is in a receptive witnessing state, that the creative force emerges to express itself.
CHAPTER 4

**TERRAIN SKIN**

Skin, filament of fragile scales, stretchy layer of protective spongy softness
Terrain, earth surface wrapping, container of living organism

In this Chapter, I detail the process of creating a three-screen video dance installation called *Terrain*Skin through which I examine and reflect on the immersive nature of my moving experience in both natural and man-made derelict sites. I simultaneously describe the experimental filming process I entered into with my collaborator, O’Brien. My overall choreographic intention is to explore and develop filming methods that might provide for an audience to have a direct, embodied, felt and/or sensed experience of my video work. Through this work I also aim to evoke the multiple states of kinaesthetic and energetic awareness I traverse within my moving encounters in site-specific environments.

To reflect on the moving and filming relationship, I write about both states (moving and filming), respectively, under the three thematic strands that emerged directly out of my moving experiences. I also contextualise the three thematic strands through reflections on specific theoretical perspectives that support and deepen my creative process. Finally, I discuss the editing process, the installation environment that *Terrain*Skin was screened in and I conclude with a short critique and reflection on the work through a retrospective lens.

Site-specific dance artists Davis (2007), Halprin (1995, 2002, 2003, 2013), Eiko and Koma (in Kloetzel and Pavlik 2009), Tufnell (2004), Lee (in Bannerman 2006) and Poyner (1996), all inspired the emergent creative process I entered into, not least because of the manner through which they evoke the moving body as part of the landscape through their choreographic work. New York based Japanese artists, Eiko and Koma, seek to integrate landscape and body through their site-specific art (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2009). Time, within their video work, is experienced as a slow and highly concentrated journey that reveals itself layer by layer, creating a sensation of
timelessness through processes of emergence and absorption. They describe their site-specific choreography as continuously evolving works in progress, rather than finished products, which are in a continuous state of emergence that is ‘primal, closer to a prayer or a ritual’ that never reaches an end-point (2009, p.194). They aim to interact through the immediacy of their individual improvised responses to the landscape, rather than being influenced by the narrative, historical or cultural relevance of the site.

This means our intentions, objectives, processes, and our audiences’ perceptions of art and environment are more intricately connected and affect each other in surprising ways... a merging of “us and them”.

(Eiko and Komo cited in Kloetzel and Pavlik 2009, p.192)

Anna Halprin’s dance documentary ‘Returning Home’ (2003), a collaboration with anthropologist and video artist, Abrahams, reflects on the relationship between nature and the aging process. Through a journey of descent down into the earth, the natural processes of decay, disintegration and death are explored. Meaning is given time and space within the work to emerge and reveal itself out of direct embodied encounters with site-specific environments, rather than setting out with pre-determined methods, ideas or concepts. Abrahams acknowledges how the medium of film supports him to transcend polarisations through its ability to mediate boundaries of body, site and spectator through, “connecting subject to spectator to our own tangible or intangible inner and outer worlds…” (Abrahams Wilson 2002, p.232).

Artist, writer and philosopher Rupert Spira’s examination of the nature of experience within his art work, resonates with my own objective for TerrainSkin. His intention is, “…to reveal experientially that there is no separate inside self and no separate objects, others or world with which to be one. Rather there is one seamless intimate totality always moving and changing....” (Spira 2011, p. 130). Italian installation artist, Giovanni Anselmo, a renowned figure within the modern art movement, called Arte Povera, was highly influenced and inspired by the natural processes and energies of particular sites.49 He considers how energy influences him within the creation of art,

49 The Arte Povera movement is a term coined by Italian art critic Germano Celant for the modern art movement during 1967-1972 which took place in cities throughout Italy. It was a period where artists made a radical and revolutionary shift through their condemnation and revolt against power structures of the time.
... a successful piece of art is like a meeting point where energies go and from which energies depart. It’s a moment of tension between the inside and the outside, in all senses: in the personal sense and in the sense of the space.

(Anselmo cited by Kaye 2000, p.148)

These artist’s intentions, creative processes and resulting work, all reflect authentic expressions of individuality, while at the same time reflecting a commonality in their experiences of merging, interconnectedness, absorption and immersion. They are all expressions of the infinite possibilities, approaches, perspectives out of which a work might emerge.

**The Creative Process**

The two primary questions that informed my creative process were; Can I, through the medium of video, evoke the intimacy and immediacy of my moving experience, for an audience, through my dance and choreographic practice (*Generating States*), without the live presence of my body? Can the subtle energetic and kinaesthetic interaction between the body and environment be expressed through the medium of video?

**Generating Body As Environment**

In coming into our body we become connected to our greater home, the earth; we become a part of the earth and she a part of us. We are received into her, and she into us; we grow through and from her support and nourishment, and we express her qualities through our very being. She is our ground.

(Hartley 1995, p.xxi)

Each site had its own inherent spatial qualities, elements, textures, light and colour, sounds and smells, as well as energetic resonances, feelings and associations. Towards the beginning of the creative process, I was engaged in a movement exploration in a forest location exploring the receptivity of mossy mounds of bumpy, vibrantly green, spongy ground surface, which softened to receive and support my body weight as I jumped from one mound to another. I became aware of my undulating shadow rolling along the mossy contours of the ground, displacing my body image onto the landscape.
at varying levels and dimensions rising from ground to tree surface. As I moved in, out, through and around the tall, thin, linear wood structures, I experienced the relational dynamic of the two directional movement of the tree structure through what visibly looked like antennae reaching dynamically up into the space above, while simultaneously and invisibly diving down through a complex root system deeply into the space below. I measured through my moving limbs, the way the sunlight reflected onto its branches and refracted directly onto my body to cast strong shadows of varying height, depth, breath, scale and volume.

I became absorbed by the green, lumpy, disjointed, textures of the earth surface merging with my own shadow. I began to witness this relationship, becoming fully present to it - in a state of responsive attunement to my inner self and my outer shadow projecting back to me from the landscape. I experienced a sense of integration between my self, shadow (which simultaneously reflected back to me another aspect of my ‘self’, my shadow self) and environment, through this rolling dark layered shadowy interconnection with the landscape. This encounter initiated and crystallized what I attempted to express through the medium of video. I experienced my body as being both present as a shadow, but absent as a full body image, in direct relation to and merging with the structures and surfaces that surrounded and supported me, mirroring my direct

Figure 20: TerrainSkin (2014), photograph Maurice Gunning
moving encounter. Out of this experience of interconnectedness, the concept of ‘Body As Environment’ began to manifest.

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Light blasts
Skin surface
Warmth

I move with my re-configured self,
My undulating self,
My mosey green self,
My watery self,
My leafy self,
My golden reedy slippery self,
Skin of the oak tree self
Feet of the root self
Wind passing through self
Unifying, Merging, Absorbent
Antennae of tree matrix
Modulating energy pulse
Through which life expresses itself
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Scientist, Lovelock and his theory of Gaia proposes the earth as a living integrated being, encompassing all living forms of which humans are a continuum within this extensive living system.\(^{50}\) He describes the planet as a coherent, self-organising living entity whose atmosphere is supported by the oceans, soils, plants and animals all collectively contributing to a “single living entity” (1982, p.9).

The entire range of living matter on Earth, from whales to viruses, and from oaks to algae, could be regarded as constituting a single living entity, capable of manipulating the Earth's atmosphere to suit its overall needs and endowed with faculties and powers far beyond those of its constituent parts.

(Lovelock 1982, p.9)

Ecologist and philosopher, Abram, argues that the theory of Gaia has still to gain full recognition within the scientific, mechanistic world-view of separate parts or isolated

\(^{50}\) The theory of Gaia was developed by British scientist, Dr James Lovelock in the late 1960’s, directly after his work with NASA. His research contributed to a new approach to Earth and its inhabitants.
systems, but that biologists are continuously discovering and revealing aspects of the integrated ‘Gaian regulatory systems’ (Abram 1990). According to Abram we are not only living ‘on’ this planet but we are fully immersed ‘in’ it and that “…if we choose to view this planet as a coherent, self-sensing, autopoietic entity, we shall have to admit that we are, ourselves, circumscribed by this entity. If Gaia exists, then we are inside her” (Abram 1990, p.2).

Both American physicist’s, Capra (1996) and Bohm (1980), highlight, through their research, this shift to a more integrated and undivided whole perspective. Capra discusses how within the world of classical Newtonian physics it was understood that all “physical phenomena” could be broken down into “solid material particles” but in the 1920’s quantum theory turned this understanding on its head to discover that these solid particles,

... dissolve at the subatomic level into wavelike patterns of probabilities. These patterns, moreover, do not represent probabilities of things, but rather probabilities of interconnections. The subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities but can be understood only as interconnections, or correlations, among various processes of observation and measurement.

(Capra 1996, p.30)

Bohm’s enquiry into the nature of physical reality within the fields of quantum theory and relativity theory concurs with Capra and Lovelock, postulating that although the world appears to us to be a collection of solid separate objects, the underlying reality is that they,

... merge and unite in one totality This undivided whole is not static but rather in a constant state of flow and change, a kind of invisible ether from which all things arise and into which all things eventually dissolve.

(Bohm in Hayward 1987, p.25)\footnote{David Bohm (1917 –1994) was a pioneering quantum physicist, known for his radical work well ahead of its time and contributed significantly to the fields of theoretical physics, philosophy and neuropsychology.}

Bohm’s key concept of ‘holomovement’ reflects the principle of ‘undivided wholeness’ and reflects the idea that everything is in a state of process which he calls ‘universal
flux’ like a dynamic wholeness-in-motion where every part is moving in interconnection with the other (1980). \(^{52}\)

**Filming Immersion**

In the shape of the land we can sense the sculptural processes of its formation – thrown up by fire, shunted into folds of internal pressures; carved, ground and shoveled by ice; shattered by frost and sun; worn smooth by wind; washed away and redeposited by rain and rivers; swept up and dropped by seas....

(Tufnell 2004, p.241)

My choreographic intention is to explore and develop filming methods that might evoke the multiple states of awareness I traverse within my moving encounters in site-specific environments. Filming movement in its immediacy requires a careful and complex negotiation - on one hand the camera has the ability to capture the up close intimacy of the movement experience from a large variety of perspectives and angles, yet on the other hand it may lose the immediacy of movement through the carefully choreographed, positioning of pre-set shots or frames. The presence of the camera and the necessary preparations can inhibit the spontaneity of the movement encounters. This is a fine balance that takes consistent negotiation. McPherson (2003) highlights the importance of the choreographed camera and its influence on how movement is captured.

The choreographed camera, moving through space in relationship to the dancers, alters our perception of the dance, rendering it three-dimensional and creating a fluid and lively viewing experience. However... the carefully choreographed camera can lose out on an important element of dance: the feeling of spontaneity, the energy of the moment, which can make watching someone dance live such an exhilarating experience.

I would describe our filming process as both intuitive and highly technical. On one hand, we were intuitively drawn to particular aspects, qualities, textures and/or energies

\(^{52}\) See more at: http://www.scienceandnonduality.com/david-bohm-implicate-order-and-holomovement/#sthash.3h0RXqm8.dpuf
within a site, which triggered a creative flow and, on the other hand, we were in
continuous collaborative dialogue about technical issues such as camera angles, frames,
proximity, camera movement – hand held, use of tripod, lighting and choreographic
intentions. The creative flow preceded and initiated an exploration of a variety of
filming approaches and/or methods.

My filming choices were undoubtedly strongly informed by my dance and
choreographic sensibilities. One example of this was when I was filming a river - my
approach was to zoom in on a particular point of movement in the flowing water surface
so that the boundaries of the river were not in the frame. This moving point became
abstract (as its boundaries were eliminated from the frame), which drew a focus to the
reflections, colours and qualities of the surrounding environment, which were projected
onto the fluid water surface. A deeper layer of moving abstracted image was captured,
the reflection of seemingly static landscape onto rapidly moving water surface. This
instigated a process of trying to make the familiar appear strange or abstract with the
choreographic intention of reflecting new ways of experiencing or sensing our
environment, from a dance artist’s moving perspective.

Unification of ground and sky
Blended by water
Swapping spatial relationship
A natural process of estrangement
Making the familiar strange and the strange familiar

Within TerrainSkin, I wanted to find a way to give expression to inner outer worlds -
states in constant flux. I decided to film my interactions through the inherent movement
and physical formations of the site we were working in. When filming shadows, we
began to develop a strong awareness of the fluctuating sunlight as it moved in relation
to the clouds and trees, moving in sync with the natural movement of light and shade.
Shadows were filmed in isolation from the rest of my body as they projected onto
particular selected surfaces, such as the swaying reeds in a lakeside location, or the
sweeping branches of trees in a forest location. We were particularly interested in how
my body could be redefined through its interaction with environment. For example, my
body’s shadow, cast onto textures such as reeds and branches, created a depth of field
evoking a sense of my body being deconstructed and displaced throughout the environment, while, at the same time, being completely integrated with it.

Filming my movement through elements such as water, captured a reflection of the moving body submerged and surrounded by the fluid, watery trickles meandering, contorting and re-configuring the boundaries of my body. The ripples of water became a natural projection of the surrounding environment (trees, sky, reeds), as well as my moving body, a choreography of layered, textural, cellular movement. Through filming shadow, silhouette and reflection, we had discovered a method, which suggested a porosity between the boundaries of body and site, evoking the experiential interconnectivity between them.

Footfalls
Repetitive rhythms
Solid soft yielding soles to surfaces
Connection
Silhouette patterns stirring
Shifting moving in random spill
Swirling surges sweep
Hypnotic traces
Spaces expand into more spaces
Associations emerge
Sensing consuming opening amplifying

I contemplated my body being both present as a shadow, but absent as a full video body image within TerrainSkin. This absence of the fully visible physical body image might provide space for the viewer to reflect on their own embodied relationship with environment. I considered how, through the anonymity of my shadow video dance body and the abstraction of moving landscapes, an audience might be enticed to attune to, sense and feel their own bodily response.

Dance critic, Marcia Siegal, wrote dance “exists as a perpetual vanishing point.... an event that disappears in the very act of materializing” (1972, p.2). Performance Studies writer and academic, Lepecki (2004), discusses the concept of ‘absent-presence’ in relation to French choreographer Jerome Bels work called ‘Jerome Bel’ (1995),
…. the past is not that which vanishes at every second that passes, but rather that which presents itself in the present as a forceful absence, a set of references, signs, lines of forces, all traversing the body on stage, and defining the ground on where dance (all of us) stands.

(Lepecki 2004, p.176)

According to Lepecki, the ephemeral nature of dance reflects a continuous process of disappearance through which the past can be experienced in the present moment as a kind of absence. Within this absence, a resonant presence may be sensed. This absent resonant presence, Lepecki describes, might reflect the imprint of shadow on environment in TerrainSkin. My body being present as a shadow, may evoke a sense of the subtle energetic presence, expanding out from the boundaries of my body and absorbed into the landscape. My energetic imprint on materials, molecules, particles, both bodily and environmental, displaced through, around, above and below my intersecting and immersive movement encounters. A transient energetic mass, moving through space, impressing, engraving, reconfiguring, both body and site, respectively.

**Generating The Energetic Body**

*I am drawn to decaying, forgotten ruins or derelict sites that accumulate or hold within their structure, strong energetic residues, a sense of accumulated time, fading significance, enigmatic spaces of suggestion and memory, the eroded, no longer visible, silent, still places, an absorbent collective consciousness that continues beyond form …*

*I feel it is unnecessary to move in this derelict house, it might be disrespectful to the strong male presence resonating throughout the space. Instead I attune. More powerful in his absence, his traces left behind speak volumes. I feel his breath in the air, I hear the lonely silence yet palpable life force passing through me, crows haunting the haggard, flocks of feathery sounds in their lightness. Timelessness is so present here.*

*My energy is responding through my sacral and root chakra. A pulsation extends out into the space as I simultaneously feel an inner undulating throb or hum. It is minute, barely felt, but as I become more aware of it, its pulsations develop and generate through my breath ….*
Filming becomes an act of reverence to the life lived but forgotten, no genetic imprint to reminisce, overlooked, neglected, ransacked, empty container, no longer visible in form but felt, sensed, remembered through this encounter, witnessed, captured and released.

(Vaughan Journal extract, Dec. 2013)

Layers
Time
Memory
Erosion
Loss
Release

I sense my moving experience of interconnectedness most radically through my energetic body.\textsuperscript{53} When filming the material for TerrainSkin, I was drawn to work in derelict sites, due to the strongly felt pulsations or vibrations of energetic residues within these spaces - residues that I experienced as a kind of echo, trace or emission left behind from past interactions. These residues held certain feelings, sensations within them which were absorbed by my body. I sometimes can isolate the particular area (or chakra) in my body through which this information is being absorbed. Actor, writer and Alexander Technique teacher, Park (2000) describes how particular environments hold collective energies and that these contribute to the quality of the energy directly experienced.

The energetic body is widely accepted and acknowledged within Eastern medical systems such as Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine which are predicated on the flow of energy (known as chi or prana) within the meridian systems or the nadis (energy channels) of the body.\textsuperscript{54} The Western scientific world defines energy as a bioelectrical field or as an electrical current flowing throughout the body. In 1905, Einstein contributed hugely to the world of science with his theory that matter is made of energy - every solid thing, is made up of concentrated energy, which is now widely known and accepted within the field.

\textsuperscript{54} Prana or life force is said to constitute the source of life has 95 other names in 95 other cultures (Brennen, B. A. 1988. Hands of Light: A Guide to Healing Through the Human Energy Field, New York: Bantam New Age Books).
Dr Valerie Hunt (1996), a professor of kinesiology at the University of California has been a pioneer in the field of bioenergy through her invention of protocols and electronic devices to detect and measure the bio energy patterns or vibrations in the body. Through a device called an electromyography, which measures the electrical activity of a muscle, she measured the fluctuation of the human energy field within changing environments. Her most recent research concluded that our primary responses to our surrounding environment occur within the energetic field, not within the sensory nerves of the body or the brain. She discovered that before brain waves or other stimuli were activated such as heart rate, blood pressure or breathing, the energy field had already responded. Hunt describes our energetic relationship with our surrounding environment as an ‘interaction’ as opposed to a ‘re-action’ and that,

... the body is more than a conglomerate of systems...Instead all systems and tissues are organized by energy: specifically, bioenergy. The study suggests the existence of the chakras and recognizes them as involved with the physical, emotional and energetic natures of our being.

(Hunt cited in Dale 2009, p.249)

Her research has validated the existence of chakras and how these particular sites radiate or emit energy through which certain levels of consciousness were linked to specific frequencies. American writer and healer, Dale (2009) defines energy as “information that moves” and details how this subtle energy has a particular speed and frequency which is received, interpreted and transmitted back out into the environment through particular chakras; “A chakra vibrates from inside the physical body to the outside, radiating the information through the skin. It also pulls information from outside into the body, transforming it for reception” (Dale 2009, p.245).

*Filming Resonance*

Dance video artist Mc Pherson discusses how,

... the camera can take the viewer to places they could not usually reach. The lens can enter the dancer’s kinesphere – the personal space that moves with them as they
dance – framing the detail of the movement and allowing an intimacy that would be unattainable in a live performance context.

(McPherson 2003)\textsuperscript{55}

My intention is to evoke my energetic relationship with site-specific environments through the intimacy of the camera lens. One such intimate encounter happened in a forest location, on a cold and frosty December morning I was moving in relationship with my visible frosty breath trails that were tapering upwards through the space above me, in the direction of the tall surrounding trees. I was reminded of a documentary film, about the life of Anna Halprin, by Ruedi Gerber, called ‘Breath Made Visible’ (2009), where Halprin expresses that this is how she defines dance, as ‘breath made visible’. My visible breath, expelling carbon dioxide through dynamic bursts of hazy smoke trails, dissolved and vanished into the surrounding atmosphere. I sensed the rise and fall of my breath, which extended my awareness to my physiological connection to the trees and the exchange of gases through the process of photosynthesis. O’Brien captured this moment on film spontaneously and, when I viewed the footage afterwards, I witnessed myself as a silhouette, surrounded by a strong orange, golden hue of light that looked like an aura surrounding my body, enhanced by a strong winter sun glaring through the trees in the background. This synchronistic natural lighting, captured in a spontaneous manner, seemed to support, enrich and give expression to the energetic body and its deep connection with the breath. This moment defined how we would attempt to capture my movement as a silhouette where possible, in addition to the shadows on the landscape and the reflections in the water.

The aura is unique to each individual, which extends out from all around the body and is made up of seven different layers, all corresponding with the seven major chakras of the body (Park 1989, Dale 2009). Park describes the aura as an “... energy field which is created around something. It is the composite of the energies flowing from that object or being, or from a collection of objects and/or beings” (Park 1989, p.193). She asserts that we are situated in the middle of multiple energy fields coming from multiple directions and that, “The invisible world is much greater and more powerful than the visible, but we still tend to limit our sense of reality to what is visible” (ibid, p.195). Dale (2009) defines two major energy fields known as the veritable field (sound, light,

\textsuperscript{55} Please refer to an article written by Mc Pherson, “Approaches to making dance for the screen”, www.makingvideodance.com
magnetism, radiation), which can be scientifically measured and the *putative*, *biofields* or *subtle* fields which cannot. It is her argument that we are both affected by, and create, both types.

But human and personal biofields also interconnect with greater fields that work in two directions; they receive and draw energy *from* us and also provide energy *to* us. Because we are actually composed of fields – as is the world – we have to see ourselves as interconnected rather than self-sustaining, constantly involved in the flux of becoming something new even as we shape and reshape the world.

(Dale 2009, p. 95)

**Generating the Kinaesthetic Body**

Whitehouse defines kinaesthetic knowing or intelligence as a technical term for simply feeling one’s body move, the sense that allow us to navigate, understand and experience our surrounding environment fully; “The core of the movement experience is the sensation of moving and being moved” (Whitehouse in Hanlon Johnson 1995, p.243). 56 According to Whitehouse, if the kinaesthetic sense is not consciously developed, it becomes unconscious, resulting in what she describes as a process of “living in the head” (she links the consequences of “living in the head” with repressed physical emotions), which lead to an over obsessive, compulsive focus on the body’s external appearance, image and function (Whitehouse cited in Hanlon Johnson 1995).

Directly through my movement practice, *Generating States*, I became aware that a lot of my movement initiations, impulses or starting points of kinaesthetic engagement were primarily through the haptic sense – the largest and most sensitive organ of the body, a direct channel from skin surface to environmental surface, a strong meeting point, a place to attune to and a place from which to respond. In derelict sites, I was primarily drawn to interact with the erosive wall surfaces, which resembled giant abstract paintings, created by nature through her seasonal and cyclical processes of erosion and decay. Moving interactions with surfaces covered in rust, bubbles of mould and mildew, crumbling layers of paint and flaking wallpaper, seemed to all hold and contain within

56 *Kinesis* is the Greek word for motion and *aesthesis* for sensation (Fabius 2009, p.331).
them, their own sensations and stories. My body became more and more sensitised, attuned and receptive as I smelt, touched, tasted the damp air surrounding me, memories and images emerged to join the sustained flow. I noticed the simple act of touch elicited a continuously changing experience of sensing, connecting, feeling, listening, remembering, encountering – generating moving states, of an “inner connectivity” that manifest in “outward expressivity” (Debenham 2009, p. 5).

Installation artist, Rubrige’s work which reflects on neuroscientists, Damasio, Gerald and Claxton’s research, investigates how the sensory informs our responses to our surrounding environment. This relationship results in what they define as a form of ‘knowing’ which may be similar to what I define as ‘experiencing’ within my research.

These writers hold that the data transmitted by the senses set off responses deep in the physiology which give us our sense of being in the world, and colour our understandings not only of the sensed world, but also the world of ideas and thought. The understanding generated by these deep physiological responses, they argue, is a form of knowing.

(Rubrige 2003) 57

Within my immersive moving experiences, I became aware of how my sensed world contributed directly to a stream of creativity, imagination, inspiration, ideas and concepts, which, in turn, informed my moving response to my environment in an interconnected loop.

As I stroke the powdering erosive surfaces of this derelict site with my fingertips a strong feeling of impermanence emerges. I sit on the floor surface, listening, writing, drawing in response.

The building in towering stillness, witnesses me.

The spiralling seasons, accumulating time through the impact of weathering. A long slow invisible movement of dissolve, submerging into the landscape – the progressive time related erosive movement of disintegration.

57 See http://www.sensedigital.co.uk/writing/PARIP_03.pdf
A container of memories, mysterious concealed codes, patterns and symbols of interaction. In the process of reclamation, back down into nature - trees growing out of floor foundations, rain flooding through ceilings, becoming forgotten, yet, an energy echoing even louder as it faces its slow death of ground swallowing.

(Vaughan, Journal extract, January 2014)

**Filming Touch**

Without an awareness of touch, and the physicality of our bodies, the myriad and changing world in which we live seems fixed and distant and we ourselves caught within stories that seem to repeat themselves.

(Tufnell 2004, p.122)

We decided to film the above encounters between skin and environment through the zoom of the camera lens and a slow paced continuously moving pan of the camera. Writer and video artist, Laura Marks (2002), describes how ‘haptic visuality’ (which Fabius in Butterworth and Wildschut, 2009, defines as ‘haptic aesthetics’) the sense of touch in video, can engender a haptic relationship through which the viewer might embody the physicality of the video experience. She advocates that haptic visuality can become a tool that leads to a direct experiencing, knowing and/or understanding - a method that can potentially create a blurring of boundaries, which may support a process of becoming one or merging with something, through the direct, felt, sensed, embodied experience of it, rather than singularly looking at it from a distanced subject-object perspective.

Filming methods that would zoom in to capture the detail of a surface, such as the pattern of the bark of a tree, a rock, a leaf, the skin of a hand or a crumbling wall, were explored with the intention of making it somewhat unidentifiable in the frame and thus shifting attention from the whole object and abstracting it from its normal context. The intention was to draw insight and awareness to the inherent qualities of the object, such as its textures, patterns, imprints, movement, from the up close, intimate perspective of the kinaesthetic nature of the moving experience.
Surfaces were filmed with a continuously moving pan of the camera and were gradually revealed, becoming fully visible in the frame, an initial abstracted view to a more complete picture. My hands were filmed in isolation from the rest of my body as they interacted with surfaces, textures and site materials. The zoom of the camera lens captured details of my fingernails, the patterned lines on my palms ingrained with residue from my physical interaction with the surfaces of the site – a close up encounter that might not be experienced within the context of a live performance. In another scene, my isolated hand was filmed in the frame, capturing my interaction with an autumnal leaf slowly disintegrating, fingers entwined in the shredded remnants, holding onto the leftover central rib or stem before it falls, revealing the fragility and expressive nature of both hand and leaf. Themes and concepts spontaneously emerged directly within my moving and filming process, to reveal themselves in direct relationship with the site I engaged with.

The overall pace of the filming was slow but continuous, an evocation of Tufnell’s observation that “The land connects us to a sense of time and space beyond the scale of our own lives” (Tufnell 2004, p.242). I would describe this quality as a sensation of timelessness. Slow, continuous pans of the surfaces and landscapes seemed to best reflect my moving encounters where, at moments, time seemed to stand still, yet the movement continued within and around this still point. The decision to film at this slow pace was an attempt to reflect the absorbent nature of the deep sensory listening, attuning and responding at the meeting point of skin and surface.

Choreographers, including William Forsythe, Boris Charnatz and Meg Stuart, have all examined the kinaesthetic nature of dance directly through their work, which according to Fabius, “… has altered the ways of seeing dance” (Fabius in Butterworth and Wildschut 2009, p.331). I would argue it has altered not just how we see dance but more specifically how we experience dance in a more embodied manner. Choreographer, Stuart, integrates video into her work to highlight subtle microscopic movement, and is primarily concerned with the ‘physical states’ and ‘emotional states’ the body experiences while moving (ibid, p.336). Stuart believes that altered states of mind are achieved through disciplined training and experimentation. In an interview with Scott Delahunta, Stuart states:

I am in the desire to be possessed or to be a channel or to be a container [sic]. We
have tried different approaches to this like ‘holotropic breathing’, invented by Stanislav Grof, a scientist who did LSD research. He developed this technique with breathing which basically means without drugs you can achieve the equivalent of an altered state.

(Stuart 2007, p.132)\textsuperscript{58}

Through her work, Stuart aims to draw her audience into these particular states and to elicit a sensory response. Stuart explores video techniques through, “a kind of haptic aesthetics”, where “… the sense of sight behaves just like the sense of touch” (Fabius citing Smith 2009, p.337).

Despite some similarities with Stuart, in terms of her choreographic aim to reflect the kinaesthetic aspects of movement and states of awareness, I extend my intention to also express the energetic body specifically through, what Whitehouse (cited in Hanlon Johnson 1995) describes as, the ‘experience’ of movement itself, rather than the ‘appearance’ of movement.

\textbf{The Editing Process}

McPherson (2003) categorises two basic approaches to editing; one is for continuity of the flow of a live choreography and the second which best describes our working method is,

the ‘montage’ approach, in which shots are taken from different spatial and temporal contexts and are re-ordered, breaking down completely the sequence of the live action and creating a spatial logic and rhythm unique to the video dance work.

The selection of footage was a long and arduous decision making process like a continuously unfolding filtering system, one that required clear focus and commitment to the research questions, aims and objectives. I was interested in creating work which

Spira describes as art that might “... cut through or slowly dissolve thought, leaving experience itself divested of all objectness and otherness...” (Spira 2011, p.134). My intention was to choreograph both body and environment as a permeable duet - to overlap, loop, move through, beyond, wrap around, above and below each other, reflective of “the seemless, indivisible, intimacy and oneness of experience” (ibid 2011, p.129).

We decided early on in the process to work with three screens instead of a singular flat screen, in an attempt to re-create the three-dimensionality of the site, which might support me in my aim to create an immersive experience for an audience. Selecting and editing footage across three screens was a layered and complex process with each screen choreographed carefully in relation to the other two. Early in the editing process I decided to structure the work so that the central screen would primarily reflect my movement responses, and the two screens either side would be choreographed as extensions of the wider surrounding environmental movement that moved me. Numerous technical aspects had to be considered – such as how particular patterns, textures, colours and light, blended and integrated between all three screens. While each screen had to be choreographed individually, I needed to hold a simultaneous awareness of how each would respond to the other two in order to choreograph and structure all three screens as one whole immersive experience. It is only now through the process of writing, that I become aware of how the three screens may be an intuitive reflection of the three spaces within Generating States that continuously emerge to frame this overall research paradigm – inner, outer and third space. An overall rhythm emerged while choreographing across the three screens.

McPherson (2003) describes how within the editing process, “The significance of a moment, or movement, is explored as time is slowed down, stretched, speeded up, repeated or stopped....”. The purposeful slow, evolving, meditative pace of TerrainSkin was my direct authentic inner response to what I experience as an overwhelming, overstimulation within current society. My aim was to create an environment through which a timeless quality might be sensed, allowing for an attunement to an inner impulse or a connection into an inner authentic experience of the work. While I decided to keep the overall pace or rhythm slow and continuous, there was a build-up to an arc towards the middle. This pace seemed to best reflect the various stages of attunement within Generating States and specifically the nature of inner, outer listening and responding to site. My intention was to provide adequate time for an audience to
become aware of any unfolding and responsive sensations, “time for impressions to sink in; time to sense what impulse is waiting to come through” (Tufnell 2004, p. 111). The arc in the middle reveals more fully articulated movement of a faster pace as I respond to the more dynamic rhythm of a flowing stream beside me. My moving body’s boundaries are permeable and distorted, as my watery rippling reflection blends with liquid water floating leaves and flesh all merging within the frame.

Within the editing process, I became strongly aware of the multiple perspectives and concurrent tensions of a dancer and choreographer as both have their own set of sensibilities, sometimes overlapping and sometimes opposing. I noticed that from my inner moving perspective, particular remembered movement sensations which I felt attached to as insightful moments, or moment of deep immersion that were captured on video, translated very differently onto the screen. As choreographer/editor, I witnessed the work from an outside perspective, with a strong intention of staying true to the overall aims, objectives and artistic research that underpinned the work. I do not mean to oversimplify these variances in perspectives, but I think they are important to consider. For example, I held a strong embodied immersive memory of a forest location one foggy, frosty early December morning, with the moving reptile-like limbs of the tall bare trees casting their shadows on me, the sun rising in unison with me, the birdsong moving me. When I looked at the footage, I considered my movement to be too revealing and possibly a little clichéd. The high release in my spine, with my head falling backwards, throat and chest rising up to the trees, seemed too dramatic and overly expressive. As it was my full upper body image captured within the filming process as a fully articulated movement within the frame, it was not a suggestive or subtle. Due to this filming method, this moment seemed overpowering. Possibly if the body had been filmed partially or from a different angle (a close up or long distance perspective), it might have been less revealing. I decided as a choreographer that this moment was privileging the body over environment and would not support the wider choreographic structure. Yet, as a dancer, I held the tension that this unifying moment would not be honoured within the context of TerrainSkin. In hindsight, this now seems irrelevant, as this moment found its place, residing and resonating deep in my bodies cellular memory which may be reflective of the third space creative reservoir that is held within my membranes and flows through to surface as I write this account.
Many questions arose throughout the edit. One important question was to what extent “….reality must be altered on camera in order to create a more ‘real’ experience for the viewer” (Davitt 2014, p.5). Another was how can I illuminate, in a subtle and suggestive manner, the moving experiences and the thematic strands which emerged out of my creative process, in a manner that is ‘impressionistic rather than literal” (McPherson 2003).

For the specific theme of ‘Generating Body as Environment’, we decided to explore editing techniques that might soften the boundaries between body and environment by taking clips of movement and layering, mixing and blending them into clips of the environment. This effect created a sense of the body dissolving into the environment and vice versa, which evoked the moving sensation of the boundaries of skin (inner space) and surfaces (outer space) becoming permeable (third space). It created a sense of the environment being experienced through the body and the body through the environment, with one passing through each other in continuous moving relationship. Initially, the use of multiple overlapping layers, long cross fades, and numerous other effects were explored. Although effective at times, I quickly realised that there needed to be a balance between the intimate visceral engagement and the use of effects. The more effects used, the more distance was created from the sense of being in the site, or in the body, or being in (trying to express) the third space, so they were kept to a minimum.

Strong impressionistic images and an overall aesthetic, began to emerge out of our selected footage. Footage that zoomed in on natural environmental patterns, textures and imprints on surfaces of rocks, trees, forest floors, water and erosive residues on the walls of derelict sites were enhanced and almost became alive through the moving, blending, revealing flow of the edit. This aesthetic became a strong guiding force. We edited close up encounters of isolated hands stroking surfaces, water dripping down onto the palm of the hand, autumnal leaves being shredded in the palm of an isolated hand to highlight my tactile engagement in site. We layered and embossed shadows, such as fingers over textured materials (curtains) or surfaces in derelict sites, in an attempt to illuminate the energetic resonances and interactions and the timeless nature sensed within of these spaces. While the abstract emergence of nature’s erosive patterns formed an overall aesthetic, it is now, in hindsight, that I see this work as a direct mirror reflection of my own inner habitual patterns, which were also coming to the surface to
be expressed and afterwards experienced consciously (and surprisingly) through the revealing window of the work.

O’Brien had initially considered using only real-time audio, made up of natural sounds captured in the various environments. However, capturing these sounds was not always easy, mainly due to traffic noise in the distance. Although the majority of the sounds are field recordings from the sites, other sounds are also added and layered. Attempting to stay true to the intention of the work and creating the sound design from the sites, he created naturalistic sounds in his studio, built largely from materials or substances found in the various environments such as dripping water, the scratching of stone surfaces, and the cracking of wood. Some of the audio recordings were digitally manipulated. For example, in order to reflect the sense of invisibility, and the energetic body that we were trying to evoke, he manipulated some of the environmental sounds. Through the use of infinite delay and reverb, he created an echo of the original sound. He then got rid of the original sound, so that only the echo of the sound remained, suggesting the presence of a subtle inner quality. After the video editing was complete, and after layering and placing many of the field recordings and naturalistic sounds, it became clear that digitally created sounds added a third essential layer, helping to evoke the atmosphere of site and helping to consolidate the flow of the overall work.

**Installation Environment**

It was an unexpected, interesting, but challenging process to decide to work outside of the theatre environment and then to re-introduce the work back into it. In the absence of a more intimate circular space, which I had initially selected to premiere the work in the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, I was given the option to present the work in a larger more traditional theatre setting. I was aware from the outset the challenge of attempting to screen an immersive dance video installation in a theatre space, due to my previous experiences. Simultaneously, I was aware that maybe the challenge presented itself so that I may explore methods to overcome it.\(^{59}\)

Tiered seating had an automatic distancing or separating effect on the work, with the audience sitting outside the parameters of the installation. I was aware how this might have expressed and afterwards experienced consciously (and surprisingly) through the

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\(^{59}\) I had intended to screen the work in a more intimate circular space, which became unavailable at the last minute, so my only option at that time was to screen the work in a theatre space.
strongly set up a subject-object relationship. I explored methods of reconstructing the space. We positioned three large screens in the space carefully measuring them in relation to each other and how they portrayed the dimensions of site. Ecological remnants collected from site, including branches, tree bark, seeds, buds, moss, herbs, rock, animal bone were placed onto the floor in an attempt to ‘soften’ the theatre space, to distil the qualities, textures and patterns derivative of site and to evoke the three dimensionality of site. The three screens extended the dimensions of site and the materials extended the site down onto the floor space which had a subtle spill of sparse warm lighting reflected onto it. The theatre blackout allowed attention or focus to be absorbed into the screens and spill down onto the floor space.

The site materials were placed with great attention to detail, into spirallic patterns on the ground as a reflection of the inner and outer spaces of body and environment. Somatic practitioner and writer, Hartley, describes the spirallic pattern as something that re-occurs both within the body’s internal systems and within nature. She describes how inherent qualities and structures found in nature could be perceived as a reflection of our own inner anatomical structures or systems - the breath being similar to the wind, the lung’s alveoli being comparable to the root system of a tree, the veins in the body resembling rivers rock formations or fissures, “The cell itself is essentially spherical in form…” (Hartley 1989, p.64). Essential oils of cedar wood and pine were burned to stimulate and summon memories of immersion in nature through the sensation of smell.

Figure 21: TerrainSkin (2014), photograph Maurice Gunning
In an attempt to reconcile the challenge of the one dimensionality of the singular screen, we worked with three large screens. Even though the complex process of choreographing all three screens in relation to each other aimed to provide for a more three-dimensional immersive sense of site, I became aware that the one-dimensional nature of the flat surfaces of each screen still existed. This, in my opinion, acted as a kind of ‘fourth wall’, contributing to the separating effect, which once again might contribute to create a subject-object viewing experience. The ‘fourth wall’ refers to the imaginary boundary, which is perceived as an obstacle, in a traditional three-walled proscenium theatre setting, through which the audience observes the performers within the live event on stage.60 The screens ‘fourth wall’ effect could possibly have nullified my aim to provide for an embodied immersive movement experience. The three large screens seemed to facilitate some of my aims and objectives around eliciting an immersive experience, but the fact that the audience remained separate and physically removed from the installation space itself, I felt, could possibly not be reconciled. These particular challenges went on to directly inform the next phase of my research, which focused on constructing what I call a four dimensional installation environment, in collaboration with two visual artists and resulting in the second phase of my creative process and a choreographic work called TerrainSkin:4DFlow.

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60 The ‘fourth wall’ is a theatre term first introduced by Denis Diderot in his 1758 “Discours Sur La Poésie Dramatique” (Poetics of the Drama).
Figures 22-24: TerrainSkin (2014), Installation in IWAMD, photography Maurice Gunning
Conclusions and Continuations

TerrainSkin embodies and contains within it the specific artistic research imperatives that initiated it. It is not thematically about the experience of movement but rather it aims to transmit a direct experience of movement through an embodied, kinaesthetic and/or energetic response. The interface of the camera lens (filming process) and the computer screen (editing process) supported a creative, reflective, critical and analytical investigation of both the kinaesthetic and energetic aspects of my movement responses. The medium of film provided me with infinite possibilities, opportunities, approaches and tools, which were all informed directly by my dance and choreographic sensibilities. I experienced a similar sense of freedom as dancer and writer Reid describes,

Just as video dance can redefine the vocabulary of dance, can physically enhance, defy gravity, extend time, reconfigure space, my physical body is a hybrid site, redefined and reconfigured, its vocabulary both real and imagined.

(Reid 2005, p.9)

The challenge was to invent a new language that could be expressed through this hybrid medium of neither singularly ‘dance’ nor ‘video’ respectively, but rather a merging of both.

This research has brought many underlying challenges related to my intention to evoke the energetic and kinaesthetic interactions without the live presence of my body. Due to the nature of these subtle sensibilities the presence of the body seems necessary in order to truly reflect them. Although it may be impossible to fully compensate for the presence of the live moving body, I argue that if there is an understanding of these challenges from the outset, and if I have an embodied knowing or awareness of the nature and quality of the subtle kinaesthetic and energetic body, then it may be possible to express aspects and even further highlight them through the medium of video. McPherson (2003) discusses how the medium of film can provide for “an intimacy that would be unattainable in a live performance context” through filming techniques that capture a close up perspective of the moving body. Within TerrainSkin, I decided to remove the centrality of the body and its physicality altogether - to suggest movement.
through shadow, silhouette, reflection. In this regard, I felt that the subtle shadow body might enhance and draw even more attention (than a live performing body) to the particular energetic and kinaesthetic qualities of the moving experience.

**Inner Reflections - Body Consciousness**

Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and makes him its instrument. The artist is... one who allows art to realize its purpose through him... he is "collective man"— one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic forms of mankind.

(Jung 1930)

After *TerrainSkin* was created, I began to experience a strong personal narrative (that also held within it personal habitual patterns), that I did not realise and therefore did not consciously set out to express within the work. I felt vulnerable and confronted by the visibility of the narrative that emerged on screen. My choreographic approach remained open, emergent, abstract (non-narrative), unknown, working with spontaneous, immediate moving responses to the environments I encountered. What emerged through the mirror of my video work, was a shadowed reflection of loss, acute grief and repressed sorrow. I became aware that the creation of this video was an unconscious cathartic process and became a vessel to release what was withheld. Through this withholding, *TerrainSkin* emerged.

In my experience, there is a lot sensed, felt and absorbed unconsciously and held within the cellular memory of the body, which can go on to form (sub)unconscious habits and holding patterns of tension in the body. These in turn may be projected out into the environment unconsciously. Bainbridge Cohen states that, “There is something in nature that forms patterns ....The mind is like the wind and the body the sand. ... all mind patternings are expressed in movement through the body. And that all physically moving patterns have a mind” (1993, p.102).

*Patterns in nature reflecting inner habitual patterns – a merging of abstract forms of inner, outer shadows of each other.... carving themselves out to become conscious. Empting out of river vein from which to gush again...*

(Vaughan, Journal extract, November 2015)
I discuss this aspect, as it reflects the subjective nature of my arts research, a direct expression of a body-mind that holds a reservoir of embodied knowledge through sensation, feeling, memory, imagination, which sometimes the cognitive mind is not fully conscious of.⁶¹ Although this theme of loss is not a focus of my research, it is reflective of a personal story - a story that without direct intention, is reflected back to me in a more intensely, powerful manner than if I had purposefully set out to create work based on themes of impermanence, loss and grief. Now, almost two years after making this work, I trace back to what I experienced as a deeply held, embodied, unconscious and intuitive knowing that something big was shedding and shifting.

*TerrainSkin, relived and moved in the solidity of imprint on page. The Infinity Symbol reoccurring, circling around, witnessing my movements, while simultaneously deepening into unconscious realms. Residing in the still point - neutral space of in betweeness, male-female energy balancing, core stability.*

*Creative process of skin, held in the vastness of nature’s creative processes of terrain. Traversing the magnificent orchestration filling up and emptying out. Unconscious draw to crumbling, shedding, erosive surfaces. A clearing out and dusting down to nothing, the subtle, the simplicity of the slow breath still breathing....*

*The watery fluid cytoplasm reservoir of inherited codes of cellular knowing. Attuning to tides with fine tuning fork, sounding/sensing/feeling/resonating... multi-directional and multi-dimensional. A simultaneous embodied knowing of past, present and future held in membrane. A future knowing, a radar of shivering sensation running up and down the spine, an upward jolt, a sinking inwards, then dissolving downwards into earthy pasts and futures. Predictive insights, potential foreboding... stripping.... dispersing.... resolving... (re)creating.*

*Travelling up above, unstructured, non-habitual, non-linear. Densities shifted, unearthed and re-directed back down towards a burning dissolution - a mystical sensation of density and transparency, simultaneous past, present and future, held within Impermanence, Chrysalis and Bone.*

(Vaughan, Journal extract, November 2015)

⁶¹ Cognitive science proved in the 1970’s that 95% of our brain is unconscious and inaccessible to the conscious mind.
In my experience, this unconscious intuitive which resides directly in the cellular body can be engaged through a letting go of over-identification with the cognitive mind and connecting with direct experience through the expanded reservoir of inner sensing, feeling, memory and imagination. The body becomes a direct instrument for expression of the (sub)unconscious, which, through its movement, has the ability to cut right through the cognitive or conscious mind. This bodily expression holds its own consciousness, commonly defined as cellular awareness (Hartley 1995) or body consciousness (Shusterman 2008). As the dance evolves through the direct expression of the dancer, through the direct path of the moving limbs, the dancer becomes the dance. Through cultivation, this dance can deepen further into a subtle experience of a moving body consciousness, which expresses itself as it unfolds into a third space/state of heightened awareness.

Pakes (2013) compares the mediums of dance and music and describes how dance happens directly at the “locus” of the body, whereas music is located in sound. McFee (2012) asserts that musicians make sound through their expertise of a musical instrument, whereas dancers “movements instantiate the artwork, rather than merely causing it” (2012, p.2). It seems important to highlight my own personal experience, which is reflective of how dance, as an art form, can potentially transmit through direct spontaneous agency, a primal (pre-verbal) body consciousness. Through this connection to a strong sense of moving (body) consciousness, a creative force is generated, felt and sensed and moves through the body to express itself. It is through this process that the (sub)unconscious revelations of the artists personal life can arise to the surface and be expressed through the direct channel of the artwork.

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the expressive role of the body and its primordial awareness below the level of consciousness, which can be expressed in spontaneity, immediacy, unreflective intentionality and mysterious efficacy. He saw these as magical, miraculous, intuitive elements; “The body as spontaneous expression is like the unknowing marvel of a style in artistic genius” (Merleau Ponty cited in Shusterman 2008, p.59). Shusterman (2008) argues that Western philosophy must acknowledge and account for sensory experience as much as cognitive experience through recognising that there are no minds separate from bodies. Shusterman discusses how William James recognised: “The body . . . is the storm centre, the origin of coordinates, the constant place of stress in [our] experience-train. Everything circles round it, and is felt from its
point of view” (cited by Shusterman, 2008, p.135). He advocates the inclusivity of mind, body, social and physical context to form an expanded notion of self.

By enabling us to feel more of our universe with greater acuity, awareness, and appreciation, such a vision of somaesthetic cultivation promises the richest and deepest palate of experiential fulfilments because it can draw on the profusion of cosmic resources, including an uplifting sense of cosmic unity.

(Shusterman 2008, pp. 215-16)

**Outer Reflections - Witnessing Responses**

..instead of begetting a performance, the public lives it, through ‘skin, brain and hair’.”

(Boenisch 2004 cited by Fabius 2009, p.331)

I entered into a post-show discussion with the audience directly after the screening, which provided valuable insight, but it was in personal conversations directly after the work which truly resonated with me. Although I deeply appreciated these responses, which are always extremely important to me as an artist, they are not imperative to my research, as I do not think the particular moving aspects (kinaesthetic and energetic) that I set out to examine within my choreographic work can be measured in any way. However, I am aware that these responses might give me an indication as to how the energetic and the kinaesthetic aspects were experienced by an audience.

Shared experiences of being taken on a journey that was absorbing, hypnotic, meditative and/or sensuous were expressed. An audience member noted that she felt that I did not allow the physicality of my body to dominate. She experienced the dancer and her movement merge with the environment and vice versa, as opposed to the body being located or situated in its environment. She also experienced the shadow as a ghost of the body, which seemed always present as a reminder of how we cannot encounter environment without our perception. This feedback, describing a ghostly shadow, reverberates tremendously, due to my underlying personal story.

Another audience experience was that of the environment passing through the dancer’s
body and vice versa. The continuously moving camera drew her awareness to the continuous flux, evoking an environment that is never static or fixed reflecting the underlying nature of universal movement. These responses are evocative and intriguing, but can I identify these experiences as kinaesthetic and energetic responses? As these responses are difficult to fully express through language, and as they are predominantly ‘lived’, ‘felt’, or ‘sensed’, they seem impossible to fully account for. How I define the ‘energetic’ and the ‘kinaesthetic’, may be expressed by others in entirely different language. The following comments from audience members might indicate some insight into kinaesthetic and energetic engagement.

One audience member felt relaxed, centered and became deeply aware of her breath which slowed down in pace while witnessing the work. Another became aware of the sensations in her own body of the surfaces and textures in the various sites. Another became aware of the ever-changing evolving, impermanent nature of the cyclical processes of metamorphosis and rejuvenation within the environment, but also within her own body, as she reflected on her own aging process. Another described her experience as meditative and that she appreciated what she defined as ‘the spaciousness of the work’, which had a calming effect on her nervous system. From the beginning, she did not feel the need to follow a narrative, theme or grasp onto anything other than to allow the experience to unfold and wash through her.

TerrainSkin has since been continuously adapting and transforming into many different configurations, not purposefully, but rather due to the various environments in which I have been invited to screen the work. It was screened as part of ‘Light Moves International Screendance Festival’, 2014, where it was presented in a small studio environment on three 24 inch television screens, in the Dance Interactive Space, Firkin Crane (Cork), over a six-week period on three projection screens and, finally, it was screened in its most condensed form on one single TV screen as a split screen, as part of ‘And Sophia Danced’, an arts practice research symposium’ in IWAMD, November 2014. It is interesting to see how these spaces and re-configured screenings influence the work and its relationship with audience. I now enter the second creative process within this research paradigm, which will include screening and reconfiguring TerrainSkin once again, but this time with the inclusion of live responses to this video, through the mediums of movement and visual art in my quest to construct immersive installation environments.
CHAPTER 5

**TERRAINSKIN:4DFLOW**

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*TerrainSkin* was screened as a three-screen triptych over a seven-week period in the Dance Interactive Space, Firkin Crane in October/November 2014. During that time I was invited to create and perform a live response to the work, which resulted in my second choreographic work, *TerrainSkin:4DFlow* - a multi-disciplinary collaboration between movement, video, and visual art. It was created as a three-hour live durational response to *TerrainSkin*. I invited visual artists, Aoife Desmond and Carolyn Collier, to respond to *TerrainSkin* through their respective expert practices, with the overall aim to discover how we might create an immersive installation environment that sets out to “…. dissolve the borders between the work and the field of observation surrounding it” (Nollert 2004, p.11). Through this choreographic work I also wanted to deepen my enquiry into the energetic body. I was interested in how it is experienced and expressed within both the creative process and the context of a live performance.

At this stage of my research, I was becoming more aware through the process of writing, of the extent of the role of what Bannerman (2006) defines as the ‘intuitive’ or the ‘unconscious’ methods I engaged with, in the context of creating choreographic work. I choose to use the term ‘intuitive’ within this Chapter instead of ‘unconscious’ as I have a conscious skill set embedded within my practice of *Generating States* that aims to generate this intuitive aspect. Through *Generating States* I have detailed my process of connecting to an inner space that simultaneously extends out to include the outer space of my surrounding environment, and integrates to expand into what I define as a third space. *Generating States* consciously aims to generate a third space experience, out of which the intuitive aspect arises, so to use Bannerman’s term ‘unconscious’ may be misleading in this regard.

Through the direct mirror of *TerrainSkin*, I had realised that my body consciousness had a much deeper level of awareness of my personal ‘reality’ as well as my habitual patterns, that I had cognitively suppressed at that time. Through the reflection of the work, these aspects were made visible to me through my inner state being projected outwardly. In addition, I discussed in Chapter four, how my body consciousness seemed
to hold what I would describe as an intuitive sense of both a past, a present and a future knowing - a knowing that seemed to reside deep down in my cellular body consciousness or awareness. I now have a sense that this knowing resides also in present moment awareness, where the experience of linear time ceases to exist. While this experience was extremely revealing on a personal level, I realise it is impossible to account for through words, yet I now am interested in what this intuitive element might reveal yet again through my choreographic work, TerrainSkin:4DFlow.

Many artists highlight the significance of the ‘unknown’ or ‘mysterious’ aspect of the creative process, yet many decide not to write about it due to the difficulties of attempting to language it and, in turn, a fear that they may misrepresent it (Bannerman 2006). It is not my intention to misrepresent it; rather, I simply want to reflect on the extent the role of the intuitive plays within my creative process.

I examined the nature of my direct moving experience in site-specific environments, through the framework of Generating States, within TerrainSkin. I now wanted to reflect on the direct experience of my creative process, through the framework of Generating States, within TerrainSkin:4DFlow. I was interested in the relationship between what I experienced as a third space or state of heightened awareness generated within the practice of Generating State, and my creative process. My aim was to attempt to “unpack the mystery a bit, while recognizing that there is still a mystery” (Bannerman, p.21) and to examine what Bannerman describes as a “living dynamic fluidity” that exists within the creative process experience. Through reflecting on the nature of this third space experience/state, my intention was to evoke “a way of knowledge that is more complex, subtle, fluid; this is not a dead certainty bit a living dynamic synergistic interplay” (ibid, p.22).

I decided within TerrainSkin:4DFlow to set out once again from a similarly open, emergent space and allow the work to unfold. Of course, this unfolding would be held and supported by the framework of Generating States, which is reflective of all the consciously absorbed tools, and selectively appropriated movement principles, choreographic sensibilities and performance approaches and philosophies that have informed my dance practice throughout the last twenty-five years.
Energetic Expressions

I am experiencing sudden surges of energy which is expressing itself very specifically in my body-mind as it rushes, vibrates, pulsates and spirals up and down my spine, especially around my chest/heart (spiralling), my throat (vibrating) and sacral area (pulsating). I wake up in the middle of the night with intense and erratic energetic expressions that almost jump out from inside of me into the space around me. I can identify very specific movement patterns of either spiralling, vibrating, pulsing that extend out in very specific directions in space, depending on which part of the body the energy passes through to express itself. I sense it is very connected to my nervous system, which I attempt (although with difficulty) to stay present to and witness.

In parallel to this, I am maintaining an outward appearance of what looks like a normal life (maybe this is simply my perception!). I am currently researching my second PhD choreographic work as part of a two-week dance residency in Dance Limerick, in a very unique space - a Romanesque style church called St Johns, built on a historic mediaeval site. I am working alone in this large empty space except for an elderly man who sits outside drinking cans of beer in the surrounding graveyard, singing old Irish rebel songs. He often watches me through the window and I watch him as he lies down prostrate (heart to ground), and sometimes on the flat on his back (spine to earth) on the graves. At first I found this shocking, as he probably found my rolling on the ground shocking... I now understand this is his way of expressing, as mine is moving. He has found his way to exist within his own universe of alcohol, song and connection to ground holding. I sense his longing for death to come, jeering at it, confronting it fearlessly through sound, intoxication and body lamentation ... inner, outer reflections resonate deeply as I write this.

I am maintaining a solid daily practice of Generating States, which is evolving steadily. It seems to regulate and pacify the intensity of my energetic sensations. I am intuitively integrating very specific tools, movement principles from a variety of improvisational and somatic practices that help me to ground, layer, refine and deepen particular connections and understandings. Today I specifically explore rocking, pulsating, shaking movement. This expands out into the space as I explore through sensation of skin surface against textures of surfaces, corners, grooves, glass, stone, wood. Over time my practice seems to distil down into deeper layers,
passing information through to organs, tissues and cells. I am led from state to state within a slow, sustained, considered movement that pacifies my erratic energy. This practice is a therapeutic tool (inner space) and simultaneously a mode of enquiry for my research (outer space), as well as a generator of an amplified state out of which I begin to create (third space) – all of these states revolve in, around and through each other simultaneously.

I work inside in the church space in the mornings sensing the resonances of the building, taking photographs of the stunning architectural features, light patterns and shadows projected onto wall and floor surfaces. In the afternoons I explore the graveyard space outside depending on my friend’s presence, as I do not want to impede on his ritual grave interactions. Maybe one of these days we will commune and roll together in a duet of beer, loud rebel chant and connection to earth.

(Vaughan, Journal Extract, September/October 2014)
Figures 25-28: St John’s Church, Dance Limerick Residency (2014), photography Mairéad Vaughan
Creative Process

Third Space – Inner States and Outer Constructions

In order to reflect more deeply on the experiential aspects of the creative process and its relationship with the third space experience, I decided to work with a live improvisational performance structure for TerrainSkin:4DFlow. I allowed our creative process to form the basis of the performance structure. This meant our respective daily practices would become the ‘substance’ or ‘material’ for the live performance structure.

These daily practices evolved out of our direct responses to the video work TerrainSkin. These responses resulted in a process of constructing sculptural structures and spaces that would eventually form the installation environment. I considered how Generating States might act as a method to support us to dive more deeply into our respective practices (inner), our real time interactions with each other, while simultaneously constructing and developing the installation environment (outer). As I worked alongside the artists I considered two experiential aspects, which I identify as ‘simultaneity’ and ‘timelessness’ and are inherent to the creative process.

The simultaneous nature of the creative process is reflected through my movement experience itself, which navigates inner, outer and third spaces all simultaneously. The various stages of the creative process, the conscious and unconscious methods and modes of enquiry, the varying perspectives, sensibilities and approaches of dancer, choreographer and performer, are all traversed simultaneously also. Many questions evolve around and emerge within the creative process simultaneously. The process of writing the text-based strand of this thesis was also simultaneous in nature, as it did not start out from the perspective of a predetermined question, but rather, it emerged directly out of my dance and choreographic practice. Each sentence is refined, each paragraph shaped and crafted, each page structured, while attempting to keep an awareness of an overall successional flow. The final thesis may be somewhat linear in structure but the process of creating this heuristic was not. This heuristic is reflective of the container of Generating States - a holding ground that aims to evoke the multiple dance, choreographic and performance states and perspectives traversed within this research paradigm. A process of simultaneous translation from what resides in the cellular awareness or consciousness of the moving body and within the creative process,
to the solid, static, stability of the black ink print on paper.62

Within my moving experience and my creative process, time can sometimes be experienced as what feels like a sustained moment, or a sense of timelessness. This could be described as a time lapse. Through the practice of Generating States an attunement, a sensitization and an amplification occurs, which generates a heightened state of awareness. While this timeless, immersive state is impossible to describe through language, I can attempt within the constraints of my own linguistic capabilities, to describe it almost like time itself becoming the movement of energy through space.

As I move through this installation space humming with creative energy, I become energy, I become time within the paradox of time ceasing to exist. A moving invisibility, a blank openness, an emptiness through which space arises and time falls away, a forgetting yet heightening into the eternal moment of the still point of time, as she vanishes.

(Vaughan, Journal extract, November 2014)

I experience timelessness when I am fully present or aware in a moment, so that all that exists is this one continuous moment in time as past and future fall away. Experientially, concepts of linear time dissipate and time seems to stand still. This open, timeless, still-point, facilitates a third space experience of heightened awareness, through which the unknown might express itself spontaneously. I was interested in examining and exploring how the timelessness nature of the third space experience might be evoked within the installation environment we constructed, as well as through my live performance of Generating States. This led to more questions that emerged simultaneously. Could we reflect a third space experience by remaining present (in the timeless moment) to our kinaesthetic and energetic interactions within our respective practices, in relation to each other and our surrounding environment? Could we transmit a tangible sense of timelessness through a process of inner, outer attunement from performer to audience?

The Dance Interactive Space in Firkin Crane, Cork, consisted of three, tiers or levels within a circular parameter. In choreographing the overall space, I started from the

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62 The term cellular awareness within Body-Mind Centering affirms, “Each cell of the body has its own innate intelligence, its own sense of presence and its own unique life process” (Hartley 1995, p.8).
premise of constructing a shared space through which both performers and audience could move freely, both holding equal importance. The creative process evolved to become what I describe as a practice of ‘constructing space’ through which sculptural responses were created in direct response to the three-screen triptych positioned at the back of the space in a slight curve. The sculptures extended out from the screens, down into and through the three-dimensional installation space, in an attempt to overcome the challenge of the ‘fourth wall’ effect (the flatness of the screens).

My choreographers’ perspective became wide and expansive, as I witnessed the three-screen video (TerrainSkin), the intricate practices of constructing sculptures and the growing spatial organisation and design of the installation environment. As I witnessed our interactions and the installation evolve, I became aware that our creative process was becoming increasingly expansive – the focus was not solely on each respective practice, but rather, what was slowly emerging was an interactive ‘energetic system’ that dynamically organised itself within the space. Through a synergistic interplay of self-generating kinaesthetic engagement within each respective practice, each artist also adapted their individual practice to become part of an overall emergent, integral field of interactivity.

As I witnessed this emergent process, I considered how the thematic strand of interconnectedness, explored within TerrainSkin was re-surfacing, but now within this multi-disciplinary collaborative context. I also became aware after some time that as I reflected on the outer activities within the space they began to have a direct relational impact, as I seemed to absorb the energy of the space inwardly. I was interested if an audience might experience this absorption also. Once again I am drawn to consider Bohms’ (1980) theory of holomovement or “wholeness in motion” once again, which originated out of the theory of holonomy.

Every system is a "holon"— that is, it is both a whole in its own right, comprised of subsystems, and simultaneously an integral part of a larger system. Each new holonic level— say from atom to molecule, cell to organ, person to family— generates emergent properties that are nonreducible to the capacities of the separate components.

(Macy 2009)63

63 Please refer to: http://joannamacy.net/how-life-self-organizes.html
Within our creative process, each artist’s distinctive practice became integral to the construction of the ‘greater whole’ of the installation environment through an emergent, spontaneous process.

I reflected on what seemed like a unified synchronicity of three’s which I had not considered previously - the three dimensions (tiers) of the space, the three screens of TerrainSkin, the three multi-disciplinary practices of video, movement and visual art, the three collaborative artists in space. Then there are the three spaces/states of Generating States (inner, outer, and third), the three perspectives of this research through the lens of a dancer, choreographer and performer - all working within a three-hour durational performance model. In addition, it is only now as I write that I can see another layer of three’s emerging – the three energy bodies.

**Generating Inner and Outer Energetic Fields**

The human body is an energetic system with channels that serve as rivers of energy – or rivers of light – to provide structure for the body. These channels interconnect the physical universe with the pulsating, living tissues inside of us.

(Dale 2009, p.157)

Within yogic philosophy, there are three energy bodies that interface with what are known as five sheaths called *koshas*, which reflect different states of consciousness and are further subdivisions of the three main bodies (*ibid*). The three bodies are known as the gross body or physical body, the subtle body or energetic system of *chakras* and *nadis* and the causal body, which reflects the unconscious (Western perspective) or a non-dualistic state of consciousness (yogic perspective). The *koshas* are often imagined as layers of an onion and reflect different dimensions, energetic fields or states of consciousness within the three main energy bodies.⁶⁴ It is only now as I write that I sense I may have intuitively been working with these dimensions within my movement practice and within my overall choreographic design or construction of the space.

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⁶⁴ The Sanscrit terms for the five koshas are: *annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya*, and *anandamaya* (Dale 2009).
With a retrospective gaze and through the process of writing about TerrainSkin:4DFlow, I now recognise how, in parallel to my fully conscious aim to create an immersive installation environment using the principles and sensibilities that are contained within my conscious method of Generating States – there was also a parallel unconscious intuitive process emerging. I frame this as a process of ‘structuring energy’ - this was a process through which my energetic body intuitively responded, to what I experienced as particular felt energies within different tiers of the space. It was a process whereby inner felt resonances/vibrations were expressed outwardly, through carving out and sculpting what I conceptualise as multi-dimensional energetic fields. It is only now in hindsight as I write, that I am attempting to devise a framework that might evoke and further investigate how my energetic body expressed itself. The symbiotic nature of the relationship of inner energetic body and outer energetic environment was emerging, expressing itself and reflecting through my work once again.

*Hinting*
*Tingling*
*Moving multiplicity*
*Not here, yet present*
*Not present, yet solid*
*Not solid, yet energy*
*Everywhere, nowhere*
*Timeless now*
*In the stillness of*
*Air*
Inner Dimensional Energetic Field

Modern physics has thus revealed that every subatomic particle not only performs an energy dance, but also “is an energy dance”; a pulsating process of creation and destruction, without end.

(Capra 1975, p.244)

The inner most point of the semi-circular space at ground level became what I define as the ‘heart space’ of high energetic activity like the blood flow of the choreographic work, circulating in and out and through the many channels, veins, arteries of the heart centre. We constructed three sculptures in this space through a layered and intense kinaesthetic and tactile engagement between hand and material surfaces, producing textural sculptures that extended out into the space. Most of our interactions occurred in this heart space through direct physical encounters as well as our energetic relationship with each other, the space, the video and the constructions. The sensation of ‘touch’ and ‘relationship’ relate directly to the heart chakra of the energetic system (Dale 2009).
What we called the ‘cellular sculpture’, created from paper circles expanded out of one screen and spilled down onto the floor surface. This initiated a strong energetic field, which formed a channel from screen to sculpture and down through a diagonal line, cutting right through the centre of the space. I experienced this as the ‘mid line’ of the space. The ‘mid line’ is a term used in cranio-sacral therapy to describe the energetic (quantum) and structural (primal) mid line of the body, that is “ascending from the coccyx, through the vertebral bodies and cranial base, to the ethmoid bone from where it seems to disappear in space like a fountain spray of life” (Sills 2013). This channel is also known as one of the primary nadi’s (energy channels) called the sushumna in yogic philosophy and is the main distributer of prana to all of the chakras (Dale 2009).

It was important to me in the construction of the space to allow this channel to remain clear and empty, so that the energy could flow freely through the heart space and be released like ‘a fountain spray’ out into and around the other two tiers that comprised of the installation space.

I observe, sense and breathe in her wrapping rhythm – juxtaposing binding of magpie sparkling metal twine on wood natural branch. Delicate fingertips, looping, cutting, tightening, painting, precision, focus, detail, knobbly fingers become knobbly twig. Mysterious floating structure balancing. Absorption of geometric measurements, skin to bone to branch to screen. Practice of parallel reality... her child and future self at play simultaneously.

(Vaughan, Journal extract, November 2014)

**Second Dimensional Energetic Field**

..... stillness is a ubiquitous ground of emergence for all of life and is a gateway to its deepest mysteries. Stillness deepens beyond the conceptual mind and its conditioned state to the roots of our human condition.

(Sills 2013)
This second tier became an in-between space for stillness – a grounding space, an absorbent space, an inner, outer connecting space, reflective of our perches in the site-specific environments where we sat in stillness within nature, in TerrainSkin. The energy on this dimension was less active, although I strongly sensed and felt connected to the constructing activities within the inner heart space. I sensed this space was reflective of the sacral (Svadhisthana) and root (Muladhara) chakra due to the particular sensations felt when in this dimension.

*Awareness drops down into core. Outward appearance of stillness, becomes inner swirling vortex of energetic spiral. I sense my body in two spaces at once – feet on ground level absorbing first tier, core in second tier. Lingering in in-between states and spaces, waiting in the paradox of stillness and movement, I listen and wait for my next spontaneous impulse. Until then I remain present to down deep primal storehouse.*

(Vaughan, Journal extract, November 2014)

I purposefully placed cushions on the edge of this second level so that when seated, the feet connected down onto the surface of the inner floor space. I measured precisely where to place the cushions to allow experiences from different perspectives, angles and positions in space. This in-between space was a holding environment, supporting inner and outer activity simultaneously.

**Third Dimensional Energetic Field**

The outer tier was a transient space, a walkway in and out of the installation. It was also a reflective space where all our materials from the two phases of creative processes were gathered. Our resource reservoir consisted of materials such as bones, branches, moss, lichen, rock, paper, incense oils (burnt daily as the sense of smell resonates with root chakra), photographs, journals, experiential writing, drawings, books which both performers and audience could interact with, allowing further insight into our creative process.

From a choreographer’s perspective, I used this tier to witness from a higher level or dimension of the space - a more panoramic, surround, whole experience of sound, movement, sculpture and video projection. This dimension seemed to resonate with
what is identified as the expressive, creative nature of the throat chakra (vishuddha) and the sixth witnessing energy of the third eye chakra (ajana) located in the centre of the forehead region (Dale 2009).

*I am becoming aware that I get a lot of headaches in this dark cave-like space, which I only notice when I am standing in the third tier of the space. It seems I am so engrossed and absorbed while in the other spaces, that I do not feel this throbbing sensation in my forehead until I am removed from and step up and out into the third tier. It is here I witness the underworld activities of the dark inner caves and crevices, engrossed in hypnotic repetitive actions of creation, materials, textures, bone and skin, tools extensions of hands. Fractal geometry of projected layers of contained moving holograms on body, branch and paper surface becoming pockets of miniature worlds extending and merging beyond space, time and flesh.*

(Vaughan, Journal extract, November 2014)

**Fourth Dimensional Energetic Field**

What I define as a fourth dimension within the title of this choreographic work, included the live energy and synergy of our real time collaborative interactions. Our moving bodies responding, constructing, measuring and expanding the space, in, out, above, below, through and around each other. Surfaces of both the live bodies and the sculptures in the space became converted into mini screens. Fractal-like projections added to the sense of expansion, creating, moving four-dimensional layers in the space. These projections displaced the aspects of the site throughout the space emitting particles of light and layered textural pockets onto both sculptures and flesh. They became what I sensed as little miniature parallel realities of fluid expressions that appeared in spontaneous moments, according to what materials or bodies were directly in between the projector and the screens. For me, this experience seemed to resonate with my third eye (ajna) chakra also. The third eye region resonates with extra sensory perception, through which all inner senses connect with outer ones. In Eastern traditions, this area reflects our connection with spiritual realms or to our ‘Being’ which is reflected through Western traditions, as the sub/unconscious mind. The third eye is recognised as a point of the deepest inner/outer part of our ‘Being’ and a level of consciousness that directs all of our actions.
It is only now as I write about the creative process of TerrainSkin:4DFlow that I am discovering many more layers that help me to contextualise and frame the levels of my intuitive experience, within the context of creating this work. Discussions on the three-dimensional nature of space go back as far as Aristotle’s ‘Physics’ (384–322 B.C.E.). Einstein’s’ (1961) theory of ‘spacetime’ established time as qualifying a fourth dimension to space. He concluded in his later years, in relation to time, that he believed there was no true division between past, present and future; rather, they all exist simultaneously as a single existence. He claimed the concept of time, as past, present and future was only an illusion. Russian mathematician and esotericist, Ouspensky (1947) believed that by going beyond mechanistic, dualistic and logical thinking, which categorised and defined three-dimensional space through the separation of physical matter, space could be experienced as an ‘undivided unity’. He advocated that a fourth dimension could be sensed subjectively, by connecting to higher states of consciousness, which could be discovered within what he called the inner space of the psyche. According to Ouspensky, time was a movement in the fourth dimension of space. Like Jung, he believed that art could become a path to cosmic consciousness, which he described as a four-dimensional one, where matter, time and the three-dimensional world were illusions, echoing the Hindu non-dualistic philosophical concept of maya.

At the time of creating this work I was not aware of any of this theoretical information. It is only now as I write the text-based strand that I interact with these theoretical findings as it helps me to clarify my direct embodied experiential knowing. I am drawn to these theorists writings on the simultaneous nature of time, past, present and future and how time can be experienced as movement in a four-dimensional space. This four-dimensional space resonates with what I define as a third space within my research paradigm. The third space state of heightened awareness resonates with what Ouspensky describes as an inner psyche that supports accessing states of consciousness that transcend dualistic ways of being in the world. These aspects were all intuitively explored through the agency of my movement experience and within my creative process that emerged as the two choreographic works that reside at the core of this thesis.
Performance Practice

Collaborative Assumptions

Coming from a performance background, I made an assumption that both artists would be comfortable with constructing their work ‘live’ within the performance environment. One of the visual artists had not fully considered this aspect and expressed a concern about having ‘to perform’. Her assumption was based on what the term performing meant to her, which turned out to be very different from mine. From a choreographer’s perspective, I was interested in the various stages of her creative process - her considerations/choices around the selection of materials, as well as textures, qualities and the direct kinaesthetic interactions of her tactile engagement. My interest did not lie singularly on the final sculptural construction, but, rather, on the decision making process and the actual kinaesthetic manner through which it was being created.

Questions about the term ‘performance’ clarified my own performance approach. Do we need to ‘act’ differently when we perform, because we are being ‘watched’, or can we simply stay focussed on and present to our individual tasks, movements and intentions within a performance environment, as we are witnessed by another? This led to discussions about Generating States and the movement principles, choreographic sensibilities and the somatic performance approaches that it contained within it. Through the container of Generating States, I wanted to establish a solid performance approach, which circled around the question and the practice of (which is highly influenced by Authentic Movement) - how can I stay present to my own authentic nature in performance while being witnessed by an audience?

Durational Performance Modal

The three-hour live durational model I decided to work with for TerrainSkin:4Dflow, provided adequate time to construct the performance installation in ‘real time’. It also provided time (both the artists and the audience) to attune to the multi-dimensional nature of the surrounding installation environment – the three-screen video (TerrainSkin), our respective practices of sculptural constructions and movement responses and the three-tiered spatial exploration (audience could walk through the space within the live performance). This model also provided me with time to create a
body of experiential writing within the live performance environment. This writing is reflective of my direct engagement with the installation environment and the states of awareness I moved through, within my live performance practice of *Generating States*.

In addition to the above, I was also interested in developing a shared performance experience with my audience. There is an expanding field of literature from both site-specific and Post-Modern dance that discusses the limitation of the relationship between performer and audience within a traditional theatre setting. This is predicated on a desire to break away from it, in a quest to develop an environment of shared democratic community-based experiences, sensations and/or values (Njaradi, 2012). Much of this literature emerged directly out of Post-Modern dance and the work of the Judson Church dancers who challenged the traditional ‘passive’ audience and demanded a more ‘responsive’ participation that supported what Reynolds (2007) describes as ‘inner participants’.

Dance artist, Walla, in her article ‘Body As Place: Durational Performance As Activist Practice’ (2009) cites Federici’s (2007) work to define what a durational performance is and its direct effect on time.67

Durational performance is a performance format in which the very agency of time is brought to the forefront...A durational performance is designed to let time physically affect or thematically inform the performer's practice of his/her art form, as well as the audience's reception...By exceeding the normal time-span of the performance, which in Western culture, is 1.5 hours...durational performance challenges habitual Western patterns of consumption of cultural products...Thus, durational performance could be considered......, a break for bodily reflection upon existence.

Walla defines her performance as an activist practice, which she first became aware of through the practice of witnessing in collaboration with dance artist, Tamara Ashley, “In working with her I have been given an incredible gift: by seeing my life reflected in the eyes of a witness, I have come to view my activist work as a type of durational performance...”. I am struck by this quote, as it highlights the power of the witness to support us to formulate and re-define what is truly authentic to us as artists. I wish to relate to my audience as active, responsive, witnessing agents. This ‘witnessing

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67 Please refer to: http://bcollective.org/ESSAYS/op5.download.gaia.pdf
process’, developed through my yoga practice, as well as through my experience in other somatic practices, including Authentic Movement, has been described previously as a state of ‘being present with the sensations that arise in a moment’.

I was drawn to the writing of Adler (1995), a student of Whitehouse (founder of Authentic Movement) who shares a personal story of her direct energetic experiences that erupted spontaneously in her body, which took her a five-year process to integrate. She describes this integration process as a deep inner witnessing through which she returned to her practice of Authentic Movement over and over again. Through her writings I witnessed her experience, which deeply impacted my own dance practice and choreographic work and made me aware of the power of a witnessing practice. The beauty of the practice of Authentic Movement is that it facilitates and supports the development of a witnessing consciousness in a group environment unlike other psychophysical or somatic practices, which tend to work on developing a personal inner witnessing consciousness.

Through this choreographic work I am interested in how our inner act of staying present to and witnessing our own and each other’s respective practices in the installation space might extend outwards to influence an audiences witnessing consciousness. A durational context might provide the necessary time to develop or attune to this witnessing state or consciousness for both the artist/performer and the audience. I am also interested in what Walla describes in the above statement – how can a witnessing audience further clarify or reflect back to me what is authentic to my own creative process.
Performing Generating States

The following passages of writing and images are direct responses to the sculptures in the space. These were written both within the creative process and within the live performance of Generating States.

Cellular Paper Sculpture

Prayer circle flags fluttering in the wind
Memories of Anapurna walking circuit
Ingrained cellular messages soaring to sky
  Absorbing intentions
  Of whispering space
  Walking backwards
Ragged invocations journeying upwards in spine
  To floating distant peaks
  Hovering
Figures 30-31: Cellular Paper Sculpture, photography Carlyn Collier
Fallen Vertebrae

Sensation of sharp edge of paper cuttings
Fallen vertebrae crumbling in heaped pile
Crackling paper displacing all around
Emerging from shredded sheaths
A sea creature ridden with plankton
Hanging from limbs, hair, folds
Ascending from the depths
Of inner reef – here again - more fully present

Figures 32-34: Fallen Vertebrae Sculpture, photography Carolyn Collier
Bone Branch Sculpture

Ancient
Wrinkled surface
Bones of the earth
Branches
Delicately hanging
Mapping the inner
Framing the core
Vibrant space humming
Endless vortex
Of delicate balancing

Figures 35-36: Bone Branch Sculpture, photography Carolyn Collier
I witness Aoife’s evolving, delicately considered, idiosyncratic practice of magical balancing twig and branch composition becoming, ‘the bone structure’. This fence like bone structure evolves steadily, extending from one outer screen to the other, in an arc clearly framing and defining the inner heart space. Weighty, solid bone and branch fed from tactile fingers into space. Her focussed practice reveals a deep kinaesthetic understanding as her structure evolves like a mystical balancing of inner outer cohesion. Becoming ritual like, precision and measuring relationship, of fence to screen, from site to installation space, from breath to wood. Pockets of flickering projections of three-dimensional miniature worlds refract on branch equilibrium. Real time challenge, testing, gauging, measuring, crafting, risking, the momentary sudden crashes of instability as clumpy wood falls in heaped pile – a dynamic potency - a disintegrating force. Impermanence reflected through three window screens – shattering splinters cutting through time.

(Vaughan, Journal extract, November 2014)

Figure 37: Bone Branch Sculpture, photograph Carolyn Collier
Keeping low to the ground supported by darker spaces, barely visible, I move slowly, unobtrusively with one commitment – to attempt to stay as fully present as I can to what is happening in each moment within the performance space. I sense my body-mind becoming more sensitised and amplified, as I reciprocate quietly through subtle measured actions. I choose to respond to multiple aspects at times and sometimes I attune to one – the range of choices can be slightly overwhelming at times but that is only when I lose connection to the present moment – the performers, the sculptures, the video screens, the installation space, the embodied memory of the sites in TerrainSkin and the audience are all stimulants in this vibrating space. I move through so many states, which are impossible to consciously track. I allow myself to simply pass through them while attempting to hold an awareness of my momentary movement responses. I am now after moving into the second tier space, so I sit to pause and write in an attempt to track what is occurring NOW through stream of consciousness....

As I write, I draw attention to my breath and sensation of my inner body and then quite suddenly I realise that I might be sensing on the inside what feels like other people’s sensations, thoughts, feelings passing though me – A realisation occurs - I have always directly sensed audience responses in my own body but previously I might have confused them as my own. It is only now that I am fully conscious of this – now in this moment - as a person sits close by in the space, I sense his tentative witnessing. He is engaged, absorbed, contained. Another witness is sitting in the shadow hiding. I sense her confusion, her impatience with the slow unfolding. Another has been here for hours actively engaging - she sketches and her energy extends out into the space and passes through me in complete receptivity.

It is disorientating to sense another’s ‘inner responses’ in my own body. I sense a slight curling of energy inwards to protect my open sensitised performing state. I am drawn to think about why I gravitated to site-specific environments .... to create more space, to be free of the theatre with its isolating expectations and judgements. Free to move with holding authenticity absorbed by what is real, becoming part of a vast orchestration that moves through me in dissolving co-creation.

(Vaughan, Journal extract, November 2014)
Figures 38-39: *Generating States*, photography Carolyn Collier
Generating Immersion & Rasa Resonance

I first attended what I experienced as both a durational performance (although it was not defined as this), and an immersive performance, which was an overnight North Indian classical music concert, as part of a music festival in Varanassi, North India in 1999. My western body-mind sensibilities were completely challenged, as I began to feel distracted and restless after the first two hours of the performance, but gradually, through an unfolding process of letting go and releasing my habitual notion of time and relaxing my questioning mind, I became absorbed by the atmosphere of rich sounds, smells, colours, expressions and stayed there all night. The informed Indian audience became intoxicated by the performance as time went on, which was reflected through their active spontaneous, dynamic vocal and gestural responses to exquisite moments of musical virtuosity. I was privileged to become part of what I would describe as a poignant, immersive and ritualistic experience. This experience is defined as rasa. The word rasa is a term used to describe the overall mood, resonance, taste, flavour of a performance and is central to the performing arts in India (Ramaswany 2014). It is a term that is used as a lens, through which a performance may be embodied, sensed and/or felt by an audience. While rasa, could be regarded similar to the Western term ‘kinaesthetic empathy’, which Foster describes as a psychophysical relationship between audience and performer and which neuroscience has measured through mirror neurons fired in the brain when observing movement, I resonate with rasa as a deep and ancient all encompassing perspective that reflects the multiplicity, richness and ritual nature of an inclusive performance experience.

I find myself returning once again to complete a full circle and to reflect on what I suggest might be an underlying influence of rasa still present within my current dance practice as a resonance from my training in Bharatanatyam (and yoga). Rasa has been referred to both as a witnessing experience and as a channel through which an embodied experience of interconnectedness may be transmitted between audience and performer. It is now as I conclude this Chapter, that I connect these aspects that continuously emerge to underpin my work, with the rasa experience.

My performance approach is similar to Indian contemporary dance artist and Post-Modern choreographer, Chandralekha (who also trained in Bharatanatyam) as, “a

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68 Rasa translates directly as ‘taste’, ‘essence’ or ‘flavour’’. There are eight principal rasas documented in the Natyashastra that are said to evoke specific emotional states (Schwartz 2004, p. 5).
grounded, tensile and constantly mobile power, which enables a process of constant ‘becoming’ rather than one of ‘performing’” (Chatterjea, 2004 p.232). Chandralekha redefines her understanding of *rasa* as a more secular “harmonious integration of the individual with himself, with society and nature” (ibid, p.48). This resonates with the continuous surfacing of the thematic strand of interconnectedness within my choreographic work and my desire to transmit this experience through my performance practice, *Generating States*. Albright extends the term *rasa* to an aesthetic theory that describes a ‘witnessing experience’ through an act of ‘responsive watching’ or ‘mutual dialogue’; “To witness something implies a responsiveness, the response/ability of the viewer towards the performer” (Albright 1997, p.xxii).

I think that Rasa provides us with a theory of watching dance that is closer to witnessing in the interactive sense of that word. Rasa is based on the notion of a mutual responsibility between the performer and the audience. I mean that in the sense of real ‘responsiveness’, an ability to ‘respond’ to the energy of that moment. (Cools cited Albright 2014, p.35)

According to the *Natyashastra*, the central role of the performing arts and the embodiment of *rasa*, is not simply to entertain but to evoke and channel divine creativity through the agency of a direct embodied transmission. It facilitates a transcendence of the worldly experience of both the performer and the audience. Terms like ‘divine presence’, ‘transformative qualities’, and ‘sacred space’ are all commonly used to describe the ritualistic performance context of *Bharatanatyam* and the experience of *rasa* (Schechner 2006). Ramaswany (2014) describes her practice of *Bharatanatyam* as a practice of natya yoga (dance yoga) and her relationship with an audience through her performance experience,

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69 Both yoga and *Bharatanatyam* are perceived as agents for the attainment of a higher level of consciousness, to transcend ones ‘self’ and go beyond form, towards an embodied journey that reveals self-knowledge. According to Balayogi Bhavanani and Devasena Bhavanani (2001), “These great arts help us to divinize ourselves, to develop spiritual qualities of loyalty, fidelity, a sense of Dharma, discipline, awareness, sensitivity, strength, courage, skill, cooperation, diligence, health, happiness and well being, serenity and peacefulness of mind” (2001, p.16).
When this experiential state of yoga is shared in dance, it evokes a corresponding experience of resonance (rasa) in the engaged onlooker .... a dancing expression and experience that transcends the physical self ... leads to an inner dancing experience of oneness, and also invites the onlooker (audience) into this space of oneness.

(Ramaswamy 2014, p.108)  

Schechner traces the *rasa* experience back down into the body through his theory of rasaaesthetics. He suggests how *rasa* may be experienced as a gut feeling through a neural response, in the enteric nervous system (Schechner in Banes and Lepecki 2007). The enteric nervous system has been described as ‘the gut brain’, which is a large system of neurons that are located in the lining of the esophagus, stomach, small intestine and colon (gastrointestinal system). It is connected to the central nervous system by the vagus nerve but operates autonomously from the brain. The presence of this gut brain, around the region of the navel and the pubic bone, has been widely recognised in many somatic fields and within Eastern practices including yoga (in the sacral chakra or *uddiyana bandha* region 71), Indian Classical dance, martial arts and Ayurvedic medicine. This area in the body is widely recognized as an energy source or radiating spot for grounding, centering and integrating. Zarilli (cited by Schechner in Banes and Lepecki 2007) through his practice in Indian martial art, *Kalarippayattu*, discusses the relationship between this area (the gut brain or the sacral chakra) and performance. He describes it as a source of feeling or as an activating force through which an actor can direct his attention and transcend the role of a character on stage into “an embodied and projected/energized/living form between actor and audience...That dynamic figure exists between audience and actor, transcending both, pointing beyond itself (p.21)”.

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70 Natya yoga is taught simultaneously to Bharatanatyam within professional training systems. Though incorporating the traditional static asanas (yoga postures) and pranayama (breathing exercises) of Hatha yoga, Natya yoga extends these static postures into a codified series of dynamic and rhythmic dance movements.

71 *Bandha* is a Sanskrit word, which translates as lock, hold or tighten. *Bandhas* are used in Hatha yoga to hold back the flow of energy outwards to activate it and redirect it from the periphery back to the centre of the body for integration. There are four *bandhas* within the practice which can be engaged individually or all together at the same time: *mula bandha* located in the perineum, *uddiyana bandha* just below the navel, *jalandhara bandha* in the throat and *maha bandha* which combines all three of the bandhas.
I can now trace back how as a young dance artist, I was intrigued by the notion of *rasa* as a divine channel, which I felt energetically when I attended performances in India.\textsuperscript{72} I was also drawn to the responsive nature of the audience, performer relationship, which seemed less judgemental and objectifying than what I had experienced in the Western proscenium arch theatre setting. While my training in *Bharatanatyam*, particularly the aspects of *mudra* and *nrtita*, had a strong influence on my earlier form-based choreographic work, I can now make the connection that it has since dissolved down into an invisible, but still very much alive resonance, within my practice. I now sense that *rasa* might have continued to impact me through my desire to create performance environments of inclusivity, environments that provide for a shared, responsive, direct kinaesthetic and energetic embodied experiences, through processes of attunement, to inner, outer, and third spaces. Although I cannot measure this transmission or attunement process, I have selected three short, anonymously written and intuitive audience responses to conclude this chapter.

\begin{quote}
\texttt{The movement of the female body in likeness of life}
\texttt{But here it shows the harsh reality of the inevitable decay}
\texttt{Lovely sensibility of all three in the space ... sensory mystical transformative}
\texttt{Intriguing actions that draw me into their doing of them}
\texttt{Stunning visuals and sounds ... want to stay}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{72} There is detailed description of my embodiment of this form and how it impacted my choreography in the following publication, Vaughan, M. (2014) ‘Emanating Awareness: Tracing the impact of Bharatanatyam and Iyengar yoga on my contemporary dance and choreographic practice’. Issue 1.1, *The Journal of Dance, Movement and Spiritualities*, Intellect Publishers.
CONCLUSION

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time

T. S. Eliot

My conclusion does not arrive neatly at any one single resting point; rather, it extends out to summarise some of the terrain I have traversed in this research enquiry. I reflect through my writing, the importance of the body’s inclusivity in attaining a more complete and integrated approach to research - an approach that recognises the innate wisdom of the kinaesthetic and energetic intelligence that resides in the body. When this body consciousness is cultivated it has the potential, to break down a singular subject-object way of relating to and experiencing the world, which contributes to an ever-deepening, more meaningful understanding of self, other and environment.

Within this research undertaking, I created a multi-disciplinary mixed-mode heuristic framework, which consisted of two strands of enquiry - a text-based and a studio-based strand. This framework was designed to support me, to examine what I experience as a symbiotic relationship between my moving body and my environment, through the process of creating two original choreographic works.

Within the studio-based strand, I entered into two creative processes, which resulted in the two choreographic works at the centre of this research - TerrainSkin, a three-screen video dance installation, and TerrainSkin:4DFlow, a live multi-disciplinary (video, dance, visual art) performance installation. I also created a psychosomatic dance, choreographic and performance practice-based method of working called Generating States, which supported me in my investigations, through the creation and the performance of these choreographic works.

Within the text-based strand, I created a framework for Generating States. This facilitated me to give an account of the subtle kinaesthetic and energetic nature of my moving encounters in site-specific environments and a live performance context. This
framework for *Generating States* was invented with the intention of supporting a new more embodied approach to arts practice-based research. It provides a transferrable modal that other artists may appropriate to support them in their own investigations within a variety of multi-disciplinary arts practice research contexts. This modal serves to reflect the direct agency of the artists’ lived experience within their research process.

The three primary thematic strands or theoretical findings within this research emerged out of my direct moving encounters in site-specific environments within the process of creating *TerrainSkin*. I identified and deepened my enquiry into specific aspects of these thematic strands, within my creative process for *TerrainSkin:4DFlow*.

The first thematic strand reflected on what I experienced as a deep sense of interconnectedness, where the boundaries of my body and the site-specific environments I was engaging with, became permeable. On deepening my enquiry into this intimate moving experience, the two primary bodies at the source of this encounter and this research enquiry emerged, which I identified as ‘the kinaesthetic body’ and ‘the energetic body’. From an experiential and somatic perspective, these two bodies reflected, an innate, primal and preverbal living body intelligence, which may be commonly defined as a ‘body consciousness’, a ‘cellular awareness’ (depending on which field is referring to it). I examined and reflected on how these bodies when activated and brought into awareness, reflect a deep reservoir of experiential knowing which can inform and enrich a more expanded notion of self, other and environment.

Through this research framework I traced a twenty-five year retrospective journey, from my conservatoire-based dance training to my current enquiry, through a process of deconstructing a lot of the ideologies that I absorbed unconsciously (within my training) and becoming more conscious of other values that were buried underneath. This enquiry revealed aspects that fuelled a continuous search over the years and allowed me to access and give expression to them through my choreographic and performance practice. I detailed the journey from the gestural body to the energetic body within my dance practice and choreographic work, alongside my shift from creating choreography for the proscenium arch theatre settings, to working within site-specific and installation environments. Through the guidance and engagement with dance artists who have travelled similar paths, I have now found my own path and continue to extend my research into the energetic body and its expression within my work. I am now more
conscious that the intuitive has always played a very strong role in my creative process and it now seems more available to me to work with directly as an artist. Working with the intuitive allows the more conditioned habitual form-based responses to have less of a hold. While form supported certain developments, it inhibited others. I am now interested in not being constrained by form in order to dive more deeply into the intuitive, spontaneous and unconditioned impulses that arise out of an infinite pool of creativity that resides in my body consciousness.

In Chapter one, I contextualised and traced my artistic trajectory from my professional dance training to the various disciplinary practices I engaged with that informed the development of my dance practice. I identified the disciplinary practices of: Release contemporary dance-based techniques and Post-Modern practices, Iyengar yoga and selected principles from Somatic practices, which directly inform my current dance, choreographic and performance practice, Generating States. I traced my dance journey from the primarily form and shape orientated conservatoire dance training, through to my simultaneous longing to engage with a more somatically felt, sensed and reflective movement practice, to a more experimental Post-Modern influence. To translate this journey, which I would describe as a deepening of my practice from outer surface to inner depth, I defined the multiple body perspectives that emerged out of the various stages of my dance practice. My conservatoire training reflected ‘the ideal body’ and ‘the neutral body’, my training in Bharatanatyam reflected ‘the gestural body’, while the disciplinary practices of Release technique and Post-Modern practices, Iyengar yoga and Somatic practices, reflected ‘the experimental body’, ‘the kinaesthetic body’ and ‘the energetic body’.

Chapter two discussed four choreographic works that I selected to reflect my choreographic journey over a ten-year period: Matra (2001/2), Turbulence (2005), Frozen (2007/8) and Stone and Form (2011). I traced the choreographic sensibilities, intentions, questions, and sensations that continuously drove me to the edges of my practice. I gave an account of my creative search and a continuing sense of emptiness and longing for aspects I could not identify. I described how this search intensified and catapulted me into an eight-year (2000-2008) primarily studio-based exploration and simultaneous development of a personal idiosyncratic movement vocabulary or choreographic signature, which I defined as ‘the gestural body’. I documented how, through the opositional nature of this gestural signature, I pushed the boundaries of my
physicality to its extremities. Conforming to this way of working eventually facilitated a sense of being trapped in a habitual pattern of oppositional movement, which I experienced as a sense of separation within my body, my movement enquiry, as well as with my surrounding environment. This journey led to my search for a more integrated, underlying unit or wholeness behind each separate oppositional gesture.

I detailed my simultaneous collaborative and multi-disciplinary improvisational practice, which underpinned my studio practice. This served to somatically deepen my movement investigation, which led to what I now frame within this research undertaking, as my current psychosomatic practice-based method, *Generating States*. Working with a somatically informed improvisational practice instigated a strong intuitive desire to work outdoors in site-specific locations in direct relationship with my surrounding environment. Although my primary focus seemed to be on the development of the gestural body during this period, this body did not exist separately, but rather was in continuous dialogue with the many other bodies that emerged within my practice and which are identified and discussed within this research paradigm.

Through documenting my choreographic trajectory, I was brought right back to the source, to the impulse of my dance enquiry, through which a strong desire to interact choreographically with both video and site-specific environments re-emerged - but this time through the immediacy of an improvised, spontaneous response. Having created two previous dance films, I intuitively felt that the medium of video might have the potential to capture and illuminate the more subtle aspects of my movement experience and to simultaneously support me to deepen my enquiry into them. Documenting my artistic trajectory clarified what I was becoming increasingly aware of and deepening into – the kinaesthetic body and the energetic body.

Chapter three introduced my studio-based strand of enquiry and was primarily dedicated to inventing a framework for my practice-based dance, choreographic and performance method, *Generating States*. I detailed its agency as a method, within the context of the creative process I entered into for *TerrainSkin*. Through the framework of *Generating States*, I translated and simultaneously deepened my enquiry into my symbiotic moving relationship with environment, through which I experienced sensations of radical interconnectedness.
In order to discuss *Generating States*, I conceptualised and separated out three spaces (also reflective of my moving states of awareness) that re-occur within my dance practice – ‘inner space’ referred to my somatic or ‘living body’ moving experience (Hanna 1980), ‘outer space’ referred to my surrounding environment, while ‘third space’ referred to what I experienced as a creative space or state of heightened awareness within my practice. I identified that it is out of this third space generated within my dance practice that I begin to create work. This spaces eventually extended out to encompass my entire research enquiry. I examined the relationship between all of these spaces/states, through framing a series of five active attunements within the creative process of *TerrainSkin*. I now articulate the essence of my findings within these five stages of attunement, while focusing on the implications of each stage.

**Attuning to Self – Breathing**

This method introduced the symbiotic relationship between the breath, inner energetic system and environment. My energetic body was the first to interact with my environment through what I describe as felt resonances, pulsations, and/or vibrations in different parts of my body. I reflected how through self cultivation, the energetic system can be brought into conscious awareness and facilitate a direct energetic experience that proceeds any moving engagement with environment. It is through the channel of this energetic reciprocity that the singular, mechanistic subject-object way of relating to environment dissolves to deepen into an experiential understanding of interconnectivity.

**Attuning to Terrain - Walking**

The next attunement stage detailed a practice of walking, which generated states of sensorial receptivity. I documented how the locomotive practice of walking quietened the cognitive mind and opened up a more expansive awareness that channelled an alertness, a spaciousness, a creative flow, out of which images, impulses, ideas, associations, energies and/or sensations began to germinate. Walking in nature facilitated a very particular kind of attunement that supports a transcendence of the thinking mind by dropping awareness down into the body to connect to what I identify as a third space of creative potential.
**Attuning to Materials - Constructing**

During this stage of attunement, I documented how the kinaesthetic connection between the body’s sensory organs and environment is operated through an active sensory-motor circuit or response generated by the body’s central nervous system. I discuss how tactile engagement through the haptic sense leads to an ever evolving deepening of and a sinking into states of heightened kinaesthetic awareness. Initiating movement from sensation provided for a kind of information loop from skin surface to nervous system which increased sensory sensitivity and generated a conscious awareness of the kinaesthetic sense. I document the direct link between the sensory and the stimulation of the cognitive mind as well as memory and imagination out of which themes and concepts emerge.

**Attuning to Site - Moving**

This attunement stage consisted of movement improvisations through which I document everchanging states and levels of awareness, within the immediacy of my moving experience in direct response to the landscape. I described experiences or states of awareness where I sensed the landscape passing through every cell of my body and processes of ‘being moved’ (Whitehouse in Hanlon Johnson 1995). These states or experiences cannot be forced, but can be generated, or can simply arrive spontaneously. I discuss a state of heightened awareness becoming the mediating force between inner and outer worlds as I move between both, with a strong sense of self in relation to my surrounding environment. The inner, outer dualistic spaces dropped within the moving experience into what I define as a boundariless third space, a space I would describe as “the world is perceiving itself through us” (Abram 1997, p.68).

**Attuning to Video - Filming**

This attunement stage reflects how Generating States can extend out to support and influence a multi-disciplinary collaborative process. I discuss how this stage of attunement prepared us for the subtle and sensitive nature of our experimental filming process, a process of constant discernment, between the moving quartet of camera, cameraman, dancer, and site. I reflect how the movement principles and choreographic sensibilities of Generating States supported our overall approach to filming. This practice helped me to overcome challenges I had encountered in previous filming processes.
(Frozen and Stone and Form) and supported me to discover new filming techniques that reflected the intimate, subtle nature of the moving experience.

The above five stages of attunement reflected experiential insights and research outcomes which were layered throughout my account of Generating States. I translated how a more somatically interactive relationship with my environment, drew my awareness to the outer edges and boundaries between my body and environment, which became more permeable. As the body and environment became less distinctive, an inner-outer merging occurred, through which the kinaesthetic and energetic bodies became more present. This is the process through which these bodies became the ground of my practice and subjects of my dance and choreographic enquiry.

Chapter four details the creative process and the thematic strands that emerged out of the immediacy of my moving experience (through the practice of Generating States), in both natural and man-made derelict site-specific environments, within the context of creating TerrainSkin. I detailed the simultaneous experimental filming process I entered into, in an exploration of filming methods that might evoke the kinaesthetic and energetic aspects of my moving experience. TerrainSkin embodies and holds within it, the specific artistic research imperatives that initiated it. My choreographic intention was to create work that might provide for a direct embodied kinaesthetic and/or energetic response in an audience. This intention reflected a longing for a more interactive, shared, inclusive relationship between performer and audience.

I introduced the three primary thematic strands that emerged out of my dance enquiry which I contextualised in reference to theoretical sources from the fields of Philosophy, Science and Physics. The first thematic strand, ‘Generating Body As Environment’ details my movement encounters and the simultaneous collaborative filming process. I discussed the decision making process of the creative process and how my moving interactions were filmed through the inherent movement of the physical formations of the environments I was moving in. My aim in this regard was to evoke a sense of my body being deconstructed and displaced throughout the environment, while, at the same time, being more fully integrated into it. I documented a filming process of evoking the familiar as strange, and the strange familiar, in order to reflect a different way of experiencing environment through the fluid lens of a moving encounter. I contextualised my non-dualistic moving experience in site-specific environments, while
referring to scientific research into the nature of reality as one of fundamental interconnectedness – a reality whereby the universe is in a process of continuous interactive movement, as each particle evolves in direct relational response to the other (Lovelock 1982, Capra 2014, 1996, and Bohm 1980).

The second thematic strand ‘Generating The Energetic Body’ provided a frame, through which I could give expression to and deepen my investigation into the energetic body. I give an account of how the energetic system is activated prior to the sensory motor system when it comes into contact with the surrounding environment (Hunt 2009). I reference research that describes how particular environments hold collective energies and how these contribute to the quality of the energy experienced in a particular environment (Park 2000). Chakras radiate energy that correlates with particular states of awareness or consciousness in continuous response to our environment (which I detail further in Chapter 5). The energetic body extends out to connect with its environment through the aura, which is an energy field that extends out past the boundaries of the body and is made up of seven layers that correspond to the seven major chakras of the body. I defined the two energy fields - the veritable field (sound, light, magnetism, radiation) and the putative, biofields or subtle fields, which are both affected and created by each other in an interactive manner (Dale 2009).

Within the filming process, my intention was to capture the subtle, ephemeral and transient nature of the energetic body and to discover methods that might reflect my energetic encounters. I detailed my decision to work with shadows, silhouettes, and reflections of the body, rather than the fully visible body. Through the absence of the fully visible body image, I attempted to cultivate an awareness of a subtle energetic presence. I wanted to evoke the cyclical process through which energy expands out from the boundaries of my body, is absorbed into the landscape, and, in turn, re-absorbed from the environment back into my body in one continuous loop or feedback system. My overall objective was to provide for an experience (through the manner in which the body and environment were filmed) for an audience to go beyond the form, density and solidity of the physical video body and through a process of attunement, begin to access their own energetic system.

I introduced the third thematic strand, the kinaesthetic body, which was generated through a process of attunement to an ‘inner connectivity’, that manifested in an
‘outward expressivity’. I reflected on the process of how bringing the kinaesthetic sense into conscious awareness, facilitated a different experience of the world that was not separate and distanced, but rather, deepened my relationship with myself and in turn how I experienced my environment. I gave an account of the kinaesthetic body as a vast moving intelligence, in a state of continuous activation, through the stimulation of my environment as it passed through my body. I documented how this interaction happened primarily through the haptic sense, a direct channel from skin surface to environmental surface. I detailed the process through which this direct sensory engagement stimulated deep physiological and sensory responses that generated the creative forces of imagination, inspiration, intuition, as well as setting off ideas, associations, and concepts that all layered and informed my creative process.

I discussed the filming process and our overall intention to capture close up footage that would slowly over a long period of time reveal itself. Our aim in this regard was to stimulate what is defined as a ‘haptic visuality’ (Marks 2002), where the sense of touch in video, can engender a haptic relationship through which an audience might embody the physicality of the video experience. ‘Haptic visuality’ is used in video as a tool/method that might lead to a direct experiencing - a method that can potentially create a blurring of boundaries, which may support a process of becoming one or merging with something, through the direct, felt, sensed, embodied experience of it, rather than singularly looking at it from a distanced subject-object perspective.

I concluded this chapter with a brief critique of TerrainSkin through a retrospective gaze, and through audience feedback. I discussed an unexpected outcome – a process through which I became aware of how my body had become a direct instrument for the expression of my (sub)unconscious mind, through the mirror of TerrainSkin. This personal experience revealed how the (sub)unconscious, or what might be defined as a primal, pre-verbal body consciousness, can be engaged through direct experience out of which an expanded reservoir of inner sensing, feeling, memory and imagination emerged to be expressed. This bodily expression held its own consciousness, commonly defined as an embodied or body consciousness, and revealed what was somewhat suppressed by my cognitive mind.

I also clarified challenges such as the effect of the flatness of the three screens, which in my opinion may have created what I described as ‘fourth wall effect’. I also reflected on
the constraints of the theatre space, in which the work was shown, and the inherent separating effect of the audience from the installation environment in this context. These factors contributed to my decision within the next creative process, to collaborate with two visual artists to create a live immersive installation environment.

In Chapter five, I detailed the collaborative creative process I entered into to create a live multi-disciplinary performance installation. Through our three-hour durational performance modal, and through our live respective multi-disciplinary practices, we attempted to break down the boundaries between the performer and the audience through constructing an inclusive highly energised installation space. My aim in this regard was to bypass the conceptual mind and stimulate a directly felt, sensed kinaesthetic and/or energetic response. Simultaneously, I deepened my enquiry into the energetic body, and examined how it supported me in the construction of the performing environment as well as how it was experienced within a live performance context. This chapter includes extensive passages of experiential, somatic-based creative writing in an attempt to transmit aspects that could not be experienced through the video documentation of the live performance.

I give an account of the following thematic strands, which emerged out of the creative process: ‘Generating Third Space’, ‘Generating Outer Space’, and ‘Generating Inner and Outer Energetic Fields’.

Through ‘Generating Third Space’ and ‘Generating Outer Space’, I deepened my enquiry into the experiential aspects of my creative process and its relationship with what I experienced as a third space or state of heightened awareness. My choreographic intention was to attempt to reflect this third space experience, through the construction of an installation environment. I identified two experiential qualities of this third space/state as ‘simultaneity’ and ‘timelessness’ and my desire to express these aspects through the direct agency of our live performance within what I defined as a four-dimensional installation space.

‘Generating Inner and Outer Energetic Fields’ details an intuitive process through which inner felt resonances from my energetic (chakra) system guided me in the construction of what I described as outer multi-dimensional energy fields within the installation space. I referenced the framework of three energy bodies within yogic philosophy: the
gross body or the physical body, the subtle body or the energetic system of *chakras* and *nadis*, and the causal body, which reflects the unconscious (Western perspective) or a non-dualistic state of consciousness (yogic perspective), in order to frame my own energetic experiences. These three bodies are said to reflect particular states of consciousness, which I consider in relation to what I experience, as multiple states of heightened awareness within my dance practice, *Generating States*.

I established an overall collaborative performance approach through the practice-based method of *Generating States*. I document the overall ideology of *Generating States* as a performance method, which was to stay present to our own authentic tasks, movements and intentions while being witnessed by an audience. Through the performance of this choreographic work, I was interested in how staying present to and witnessing our own and each other’s respective practices in the installation space, might extend outwards to influence an audience’s witnessing consciousness. Through passages of experiential writing, I reflected on how, through highly attuned sensitized performance states, I began to sense audience’s responses within my own body. This confirmed my interest and my eventual move to work in site-specific and installation environments that advocated a more inclusive performer, audience relationship.

Finally, I concluded this chapter by returning to the *rasa* experience and the nature of the performer, audience relationship. I considered how the underlying influence of *rasa*, from my training in *Bharatanatyam*, still resonates within my current practice. I discussed *rasa* in relation to a witnessing experience and as a channel through which an embodied experience of interconnectedness may be transmitted between audience and performer.

Through one of my research questions, I set out to examine how I might evoke the kinaesthetic and the energetic aspects of movement (or states of awareness) through the medium of video, without the live presence of the body in performance. Although undoubtedly the power of the live presence of the performer cannot be fully accounted for, I would argue that sometimes due to the ingrained habitual subject-object Western approach to viewing performance - the physicality of the body can sometimes get in the way of experiencing it. Through the medium of video I bypassed this physicality or density of the body and suggested it through shadow, silhouette and reflection. This provided for a permeability between the boundaries of the body and environment, which
allowed for sensation and feeling to be generated through the screen rather than through the live body. Within the live performance there were undoubtedly audience participants who resonated deeply with the live presence of the body and through shared processes of attunement and/or energetic transmissions, but there were also some who I sensed within my own body, remained distanced and removed from these experiences.

The infinity symbol mirrors back to me the infinite labyrinth of layers, dimensions and possibilities within the creative process. It symbolises the infinite perspectives, moving states of awareness, pathways, questions, sensations and energies that loop around it. My current focus remains in the in-between still point of the symbol, the point of integration between the two dynamic loops as they pass through in what I imagine to be an infinitely sustained energetic flow.

I now balance at the edge of my practice, to fall into a new space that loops through the porous boundaries of inner and outer, body and environment, performer and audience. My journey resolves at a new beginning – the cusp of a new edge from which to dive into the infinite possibilities of a fresh impulse and initiate a whole new continuum.

Cell to memory
Impulse to letter
Sensation to word
Energy to verb
Motion to sentence
Space to page
Time to chapter
Taming of flow
To the still point of imprint in Ink
11:11:2015 ... a new moon and a new movement
APPENDIX I

Body Of Work As An Independent Dance Artist

*TerrainSkin:4DFlow* (2015, self funded, supported by IWAMD, Dance Limerick, Firkin Crane)  
3 hr durational performance  
Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan  
Video/Sound Artist: Dara O’Brien  
Dance Artist: Mairéad Vaughan  
Visual Artists: Aoife Desmond, Carolyn Collier

This was a live collaborative dance, video and visual arts performance installation, which facilitated an immersive experience for an audience. It allowed insight into an evolving creative process, a process of becoming, a process of construction, a process of re-configuration, a process of transition from site-specific environments to a live performance installation experience. Within our live response we attempted to dissolve the boundaries between performer and audience through a shared, immersive, kinaesthetic and energetic experience.

*TerrainSkin* (2014, self funded, supported by IWAMD, Firkin Crane) 18mins  
Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan  
Video/Sound Artist: Dara O’Brien  
Dancer: Mairéad Vaughan  
Screened in IWAMD, Light Moves Screendance Festival, Firkin Crane and at various symposiums 2014

This three-screen video dance installation considers the deep symbiotic relationship between the body-mind and environment. The boundaries of body-mind and site are explored, mediated and blurred in an attempt to reflect the non-dualistic experience of interconnectedness between the body-mind in natural and derelict site-specific environments.

Body Of Work for Shakram Dance Company

*Stone and Form* (2011, Arts Council Funded, supported by the Firkin Crane) 14mins  
Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan  
Video/Sound Artist: Dara O’Brien  
Dancers: Mairéad Vaughan, Thomas Butler, Inma Moya Pavon, Patric Cashman, Karen Gleeson  
Screened in Firkin Crane as part of Cork International Film Festival

This site-specific dance film is set in the historic ruins of Kanturk Castle and Ballybeg Augustinian Priory, Co. Cork. Stone and Form presents the delicate balance between the body’s internal architecture and its relationship to its surroundings. This sensory engagement responds to the energetic residues inhabiting these ruins. The body is perceived as sculptural material that can be moulded into spaces and surfaces, exploring the permeability that exists between the body-mind and its environment.
**Bi-location:** Blank Canvas Residency (2009, Arts Council Funded, supported by the Firkin Crane)
Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan
Video/live laptop: Dara O’Brien
Dancers: Mairéad Vaughan, Thomas Butler, Inma Moya Pavon, Patric Cashman, Karen Gleeson
Performance Venue: Firkin Crane

This performance was the culmination of a dance residency in the Firkin Crane, exploring the relationship between body, video and location. An installation experience brought the historic and evocative ruins of Ballybeg Priory and Kanturk Castle into the theatre through video, dance and live sound.

**Two World’s Lie At Their Feet** (2008, Dublin City Council funded)
Choreography/Dancer: Mairéad Vaughan
Actor/Voice: Regan O’Brien
Composer/Live Sound: Dara O’Brien
Performance Venue: Project Arts Centre

Mairéad Vaughan and Regan O’Brien simultaneously perform self-devised solos woven together in a symbiotic exchange of dance, theatre and voice; accompanied by Dara O’Brien’s live soundscape. While gazing through a window, they search for a question they forgot to ask. This work reveals the world between illusion and actuality that is at the heart of the question they seek to retrieve.

**Being Nowhere Else** (2008, Arts Council and Dance Ireland funded)
Choreographer/Dancer: Mairéad Vaughan
Composer/Live Sound: Dara O’Brien
Selected to be performed at Dublin Dance Festival, Ireland April 2008.

This solo was researched and conceived as part of Dance Ireland’s Choreographic Initiative. Mairéad was funded to spend ten weeks researching, exploring and absorbing information after having attended a variety of ethnic dance workshops in Borneo, Malaysia, Peru and Ecuador over the previous two years.

Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan
Composer: Dara O’Brien
Dancers: Olwen Grindley, Becky Reily, Eloy Casanova and Mairéad Vaughan
Camera: Dara Mc Cluskey
Editor: Ronan O Muirgheasa

Frozen is a site-specific dance film set in the streets of Dublin and in the Garden of Remembrance. Frozen juxtaposes Ireland’s iconic and historical past with today’s rapidly evolving culture questioning the relationship between myth and modernity and posturing a dilemma in the contemporary Irish psyche struggling to reconcile Ireland old and new. Described as a dance highlight of the year, 2008 in The Irish Times by Michael Seaver.
The Anima and Animus (2007, Arts Council and D.C.C. funded)
Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan
Composer: Dara O’Brien
Dancers: Olwen Grindley, Jennifer Fleenor and Mariam Ribon
Performance Venue: Project Arts Centre, Temple Bar

A flash of brilliant light. A shot like an explosion in the head shifting perceptions of time and space. When crossed wires fuse and the memory filing system falls into disarray, the basic language of shapes and colours emerge from our unconscious reservoir. This work presents an ethereal journey into a sinister and surreal world of mystery, eloquence and confusion. A myriad of jarring moving sculpture influenced by classical Indian dance forms.

“Ranging from the near kitch to more classical maneuvers, this is a performance in which all the theatrical elements come together to wonderful effect. Stunning”

Siobhan Mannion, R.T.E. Entertainment

Turbulence (2005, Arts Council and D.C.C funded)
Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan
Composer: Dara O’Brien
Live Musicians: Dara O’Brien, David Lacey
Dancers: Jennifer Fleenor, Olwen Grindley, Thomas Butler, Avril Murphy
Performance Venues: Project Arts Centre, Temple Bar, Droichead Arts Centre, Drogheda

Turbulence is a collaborative production presenting unique relationships and interplay between live music and dance, with four dancers and two musicians. Turbulence reveals the chaotic nature of the human brain. Looking beyond the exterior to a more profound quality of movement, we can observe the dancer moving in a deeply personal manner, at moments almost entering into the minds of the performers.

“…strikingly memorable…a space humming with vibrations”

Michael Seaver, The Irish Times

Cylinder (2005, Arts Council and Drogheda Borough Council funded)
Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan
Dancers: Mairéad Vaughan and Thomas Butler
Performance Venue: Martello Tower, Drogheda

This site-specific dance installation was created specifically for the unique and historic setting of the Martello Tower in Millmount, Drogheda. It was premiered as part of the Drogheda Arts Festival, May 2005. Inspired by the architecture of the building and the surrounding historical landscape, this duet is a truly evocative piece of dance presenting ghost like images of our past, present and future.
The Anima and the Animus (2003, self-funded)
Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan
Dancers: Jennifer Fleenor, Lucy Dundon, Megan Kennedy and Lisa Mc Loughlin
Music: Various, including music by Dara O’ Brien
Performance Venues: Project Arts Centre, Temple Bar and Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray

This piece was presented as part of a triple bill called ‘Promises Promises’ by three Irish - based choreographers and was supported by Project Arts Centre.

“...it is metrical disciplines of the Indian dance form that enables her to craft seductive contrapuntal quartets that I could have watched all night”

Michael Seaver, The Irish Times

It Was All About the Truth (2003, self-funded)
Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan
Dancers: Tom Butler and Olwen Grindley
Performance Venue: Project Arts Centre, Temple Bar

Looking beyond a calm exterior to a more profound quality of movement through the immediate emotion of the performer, we may witness the dancer as a person rather than a dancing ‘body’ communicating, expressing, feeling and sensing in a deeply personal manner.

“Her inventiveness and craft throughout the work made it the highlight of the night and probably her best work to date”

Michael Seaver, The Irish Times

Matra (2002, self-funded)
Choreographer: Mairéad Vaughan
Dancer: Mairéad Vaughan
Live Musician and Composer: Dara O’Brien
Toured Ireland, performed in Norway as well as Project Arts Centre, Mermaid Arts Centre

Matra is a live collaboration between dance and music. Dancer and musician worked closely dissecting and interpreting the complex rhythmic nature and gestural qualities (mudra) of the Classical Indian dance (Bharatanatyam) and music forms. The result is an intoxicating reflection of ancient and modern influences. ‘Matra’ toured throughout Ireland and was selected to be performed at “Disclosures”, a Dublin Fringe Festival platform presenting emerging Irish choreographers in Firkin Crane, Cork. ‘Matra’ was also supported by The Arts Council to be performed at the Ilios Festival in Norway, 2004.

“Mairead and Dara complemented each other and created a wholeness. The contemporary sounds combined with a distinctive movement style is something we look forward to seeing again”

Bente-Lill Dankertsen, Harstad Tidende (Norway)
APPENDIX II

TERRAINS KIN, TERRAIN SKIN: 4DFLOW:
PROGRAMME NOTES AND RESPONSE

TerrainSkin (2014, funded by The Arts Council) 1Bhinn
Choreographer, Video Artist, Performer: Mairéad Vaughan
Sound Design, Video Artist, Editor: Dara O’Brien

“I am drawn to decaying, forgotten ruins or deserted sites that accumulate or hold within their strata, social, historical and energetic residues, a sense of accumulated time, feeling of presence, enigmatic spaces of suggestion and memory. It receded, the no longer visible, places where one can sit and absorb a collective consciousness that continues beyond form…”

TerrainSkin is inspired by moving from the urban landscape of Dublin to the rural expansiveness of County Cork. This three-screen dance video installation considers our relationship with our surrounding environment, both natural and man-made. It reflects on the deep symbiotic relationship between the body-mind and environment, through an immersive experience of kinaesthetic and energetic interaction. TerrainSkin seeks to make us more aware of the movement in our natural environment, the fragility of time, forgotten enigmatic spaces, empty containers of energetic traces, the presence of the disappeared…

Mairead Vaughan is a choreographer, dance artist, researcher and lecturer. She graduated from Northern School of Contemporary Dance (UK) with a degree in Performing Arts (Dance) and completed an M.A. in Contemporary Dance Performance from the University of Limurck. She is currently undertaking an Arts Practice PhD in The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, UCD. Mairead is a recipient of four consecutive Arts Council bursaries to fund her PhD.

Mairead co-founded Shaktam Music and Dance Company (www.shaktamdance.com) in 1999. She has choreographed an eclectic body of multi-disciplinary, collaborative work with influences ranging from dance video art, film, live voice, live sound and site-specific performance. Her work has been presented in festivals nationally and internationally including Dublin Fringe Festival, Dublin Dance Festival, the Iilis festival, Norway and The World Congress of Dance Research, Athens. She travelled to India, Peru, Ecuador, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to study a variety of world dance forms and continues to reflect on the impact these have had on her dance and choreographic work.

Mairead performed with Daighdi Dance Company, Myriad Dance Company and has worked with a variety of international choreographers, including Mary Ni Mhainn (IRE), Elisa Nelson (USA), Steve Pierson (USA), Yoshitaka Chuuma (Japan), Wendy Houston (UK), Sandra Loring (USA), K.J Holmes (USA), Christine Marren (UK), Mark Baldwin (UK) and Jody Mahdavi (USA).

Dara O’Brien is a composer, performer, music lecturer and music therapist. He has extensive experience composing and performing for contemporary dance (including Dance Theatre of Ireland, Myriad Dance Co. and various independent choreographers) and is co-director of Shaktam Dance Company. He teaches Indian classical music at U.C.C. and works as a music therapist in the area of autism. As both a performer and academic, his specialist area is Indian classical music. He has been studying sitar for fifteen years under various teachers, notably Pandit Kushal Das and Sougata Roy Chowdhury in Kolkata. Dara graduated with an M.A. in Ethnomusicology, U.C.C., in 2000 and he recently completed his doctoral studies at U.C.C. School of Music.

“Mairead and I complemented each other and created a whole new. The contemporary sounds combined with a distinctive movement style is something we look forward to seeing again”
Bente Lill Dankertsen, Harstad Tildende (Norway)
**TerrainSkin:4DFlow**

Dance Interactive Space  
Firkin Crane  
November 5th, 2014, 12 – 3pm

*TerrainSkin:4DFlow* is a three-hour durational response to a three-screen dance video installation, *TerrainSkin*, currently screening in the Dance Interactive Space in Firkin Crane, Cork. *TerrainSkin* explores the symbiotic relationship between body-mind and environment. This live response through the mediums of movement, video and visual art, allows insight into an evolving creative process, a process of becoming, a process of construction, a process of re-configuration, a process of transition from site-specific environments to a performance installation environment. This live response aims to dissolve the boundaries between performer and audience, through creating a shared immersive interactive space of heightened kinaesthetic and energetic awareness.

Mairéad Vaughan – Movement  
Carolyn Collier – Visual Art  
Aoife Desmond – Visual Art  
Dara O’Brien – Video
Response to TerrainSkin:4Dflow

written by Laura Murphy,
Dance artist in residence, The Firkin Crane, Cork

Three black clad persons choreographer Mairéad Vaughan, visual artists Carolyn Collier and Aoife Desmond move about the circular Dance Interactive Space at the Firkin Crane in Cork. They move in interaction with natural objects and also sit in various points within the space to write and draw. The performers respond to each other in real time.

Meanwhile TerrainSkin is projected in triptych onto a semi-circular wall behind them. The dance film contains moving (in every sense of the word) images from nature and buildings. Streams flow, trees sway and hands crush autumnal leaves. Mairéad Vaughan’s movement relates her pre-recorded work in site, to her live performance. The man-made integrates with the natural, moving without distinction.

TerrainSkin: Four dimensional flow unfolds with time. The onscreen images develop as the black clad figures interact with their environment, subtly affecting the work as a whole, its space and mood. Painted white branches are placed as softly as Vaughan, Collier and Desmond move about. The sound complements the dance film’s pre-recorded score. TerrainSkin's palpable atmosphere is nonchalantly improvised.

Vaughan’s TerrainSkin provides audiences with a chance to be with nature in an installation setting. There's something meditative and spiritual about a work that asks only that we sit, spend time and absorb.

(Laura Murphy, November 2014)
APPENDIX III

DRAWINGS BY CAROLYN COLLIER AND BIOGRAPHIES OF VISUAL ARTISTS
Carolyn Collier graduated with an MA in Art & Process from Crawford College of Art and Design. She holds an Honours Degree in Design communications from Cork Institute of Technology and a Higher Diploma in Art and Design Education from Limerick School of Art & Design. She works primarily in the medium of installation, performance, video and photography. Recent exhibitions include *Re:Connected* at The Triskel Arts Centre and *The Aesthetic Rhythm* at Crawford Art Gallery. She currently lives and works in Ireland.
Aoife Desmond is an interdisciplinary artist who works predominantly with film, drawing, performance and sculptural installation. Her art practice includes collaboration and curation. She is currently focusing on filmmaking, creating short essay style films on 16mm and Super 8 and collaborating with sound artists and musicians.
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