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# Excuse Me I am Expanding

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Paul Michael Henry



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*Practice Journals*

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(October 2020 – April 2022)







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## One: Trust Life

*Date: 08/10/2020*

*Duration/Location: 1 hour, RCS room M3*

I did twenty minutes' formal meditation on my yoga block at the beginning. This brought me back to now but also to my body before starting. A sense of humming soma exhibiting as presence. It was very helpful to know the building was fairly empty due to COVID - less chance of undergraduates barging in, which has hindered my immersion in the past. This is the first time I've been in a studio since February 2020 - my practice has felt frozen so it feels like beginning again.

I set myself the task of feeling into the life within my body and Trusting it. 'I just follow life' - Kazuo Ohno. I used no music, set an alarm for one hour, sat back down on my cushion. My eyes were closed for most of the hour. I never made it to my feet. By the end I was crouched in the centre of the room, having travelled only one metre. I continually let go of any goal beyond feeling the life in my body, and let that take me where it would.

Some things: I noticed that by letting go of decision making and restricting my will and volition to just staying with the process, resting my attention deeply on the life in my body, deep and unexpected things started to happen. It didn't matter at all how I moved or how much I moved. I gave that up and let my body do what it wanted.

I removed all concern with what I looked like, which was accompanied by a deep letting go of social reality. I wanted to be a flower: just an example of life, requiring nothing more. Everything else melted away.

I considered tension (e.g. in the shoulders) merely as frozen life. Not judging it, but paying attention to it and allowing it to dissipate in expansion.

I deeply let go of the world and 'my' place in it; my worries and to-do list.

At one point I felt the life of my teeth, calcium and minerals evolved to their form just like stones



and rocks. They were there because life grew them.

- At one point my hand brushed my cheek and I felt how my stubble had grown of its own accord, exactly like grass from the soil. The Life force transforming everything into itself. It reminded me of Alan Watts speaking about how an apple ‘apples’ and your hair and nails grow all on their own.

- I tuned into the dialogue between my body parts, and then realised the dialogue between body and floor was the same in kind. Sometimes I felt my body settle down below the floor’s surface; a love dialogue. This makes me think of Hijikata’s concern with the body becoming an object (‘feeling as if one’s own arm does not belong to one is a deep secret to Butoh’). It occurs to me that this is ‘objectifying’ in a negative sense only if I have decided that objects are dead. If I have extended life, animistically, to objects, then where is the problem? Everything has life force. Why does it need to be ‘mine’?

- Any time there was doubt I returned to the mantra ‘Trust Life’ and this renewed the dance.

- There were interesting spasms and convulsions in certain postures. I didn’t exaggerate them but stayed with them and let them play out. They seemed to be giving me information.

- Lastly, it was very interesting to practice Non-attachment in a Buddhist sense during the dance. This meant not judging what was going on in my body and experience, even the few pains and unpleasant feelings. I just respected everything as Life and kept an interested attention. This allowed me to go deeper and be with everything.

This was a very profound hour and felt like a ‘successful’ practice. Very unremarkable from outside I am sure. I walked very slowly through the streets afterwards, feeling I had dropped out of the social race. At the same time I was able to feel that the Life in my body is the same life in other humans around me, and in objects. We are the same; we are what life is doing. Just respect and be with.

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## Two: Wilderness of the body

*Date: 13/10/20*

*Duration & Location: 1 hour, RCS room M3*

*Music: MyNoise Irish coastal sounds.*

I felt very far from society; radically departed. Language and social rules fell away. It's delicate to re-approach afterwards (buying coffee from a barista feels distinctly like roleplaying; 'this is what the humans do').

I was more physically active this time: travelling, spasms, muscles, voice. But without concern for aesthetics.

I re-confirmed the research value of not making decisions with the intellect. The intellect's job here is to commit the attention to the process without making judgements. Just staying interested.

The distance is great between this kind of practice and a performance for others. Gurgling and twisting on the floor. An unedifying spectacle for outsiders. Autotelic. Not emoting or expressing. Staying with and becoming.

Eyes could be open this time without interference, so long as my attention remained deep down within the body.

This was an Evolutionary dance, more metamorphic than last time where I focussed on feeling the life inside my body. The ocean sounds encouraged this change.

Images that I became:

Seaweed // Kelp // Molluscs // Bi-valves // Stones

Body as object / material. Once again I am appreciating a new sense of what Hijikata may have



meant by this. 'The road trodden every day is alive. We should value everything.' This means the body as object(s) is not reductive because objects are alive.

A dispersed, multiple body this time. Eyes as molluscs while seaweed moved separately in the limbs. Lungs as bellows, rudimentary valves with their own activity. Where have *I* gone?

I stood, walked, spun this time, but not as a human. Just material plural possibilities, activity. Where am *I*?

Everything vibrating with its own activity; each part going its own way, but somehow hanging together.

I never run out of 'material'. Something new always arises.

The deep dropping out of the social body made clear all my movement habits: habitual decisions about how *I* move. Suspending these decisions so something else can emerge.

The need for duration. One hour is really not long for this kind of process.

Concaves: I found armpits, behind knees, nape of neck, under the ribs, foot arches and so on can be caves, sea caves, places of receptivity when tuned into. The environment and evolutionary landscapes can enter in these places and flood my body.

In the process everything became less personal. Becoming no one. Even now, an hour later, I'm reluctant to adopt my role as Paul / Michael. Quite spacey but still functioning. A loosening of the ego structure.

N.B. This says something about the passive voice as actually being appropriate for these descriptions. 'I felt' keeps 'me' in place. 'This happened' is more spacious. Something about agency to consider.

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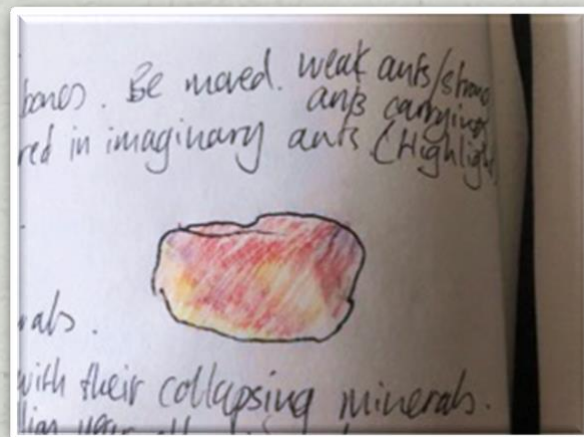
### Three: Stone and Ants

Date: 14/10/20

Duration & Location: 1 hour, RCS room M3

Music: William Basinski Disintegration Loops

*Highlighted text indicates social thoughts intruding on the process; the rest describes the process itself. (The social thoughts are of course also part of the process ultimately - they mark where my social body reannounces itself).*



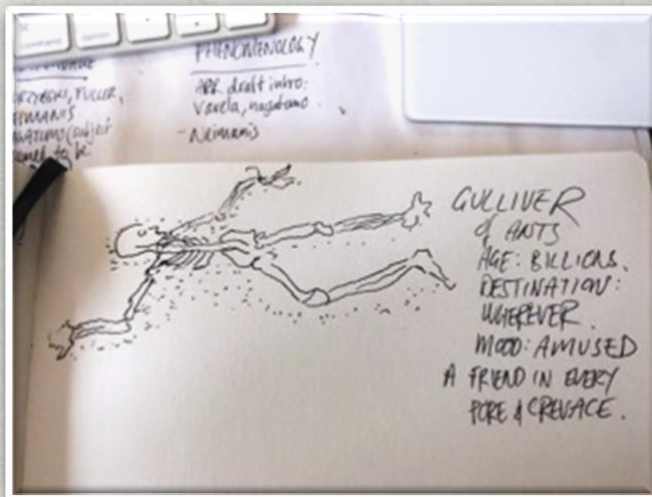
I began with a stone I found in the street after last practice session. It struck me that it was waiting for me, reminding me of millions of years. I've been walking around with it in my pocket since then.

I lay down on a blanket with Basinski playing, and put the stone on my chest. It rose and fell with my breath and I tuned into the minerals in my bones, the origins of my matter being the same as that of the stone. I began to move, keeping the stone balanced on my breastbone. A dialogue with deep time. I sensed that deep time is not something 'other' beings and objects hold over against the human. The stone knows deep time but so does my body; it is composed of it. It may rearrange within a human life span but the constituents are older and wiser.



Since the last session I told my supervisors I would send them my practice notes. A different, more social kind of video camera switched on; will they like this? Will they accept it? Is it PhD material? I recognised this and let it go.

I placed the stone on my forehead. Eventually it slid on top of my left eye (closed). I danced like this, head thrown back to keep the stone balanced. Once I stood up I placed it in my mouth, feeling the minerals of my teeth conversing with those of the stone. I thought of Beckett's *Molloy* and the sucking stones the character keeps in his pockets for comfort.



Unbidden after a while came the image of ants. Hundreds of ants crawled over my bones (my skin and organs seemed to have disappeared). I remembered Hijikata's *Bug Walk* exercise in which the dancer and the surrounding universe are eaten by insects. This felt different, however. In Hijikata's exercise the insects are somehow horrific, an irritant, and eventually a body destroyer. But in this dance I felt the need to care for

the ants, moving delicately, careful not to crush them. They poured over my bone surfaces, spilled onto the floor. I trod carefully and softly with my feet. In this phase the ants were the delicate ones and I cared for them maternally.

There was a shift and suddenly the ants were in charge. They increased in number and started to push my body around. I felt like a bone-toy. They moved me across the floor, recalling times I've seen ants carry objects many times their size towards their hill. I surrendered completely to this, let myself be carried and moved. I thought of Gulliver's Travels and the Lilliputians tying down the giant protagonist.

The ants had staying power: an image that could dance me for at least twenty minutes. They scrambled over and into my eye sockets, down my jaw line. I was 'dancing' (making shapes)



dictated by the ants, and there was often the temptation to dance to my own aesthetics or repeat choreographies I have invented. I resisted this to stay with the ants themselves. No forward-thinking (no thinking at all).

I'm being paid to dance with imaginary ants! I get a stipend to be eaten!

At some point I'd thrown the stone onto the dance floor, noting its total acceptance of gravity and complete integrity. A note to my body.

There was joy in this dancing: I felt myself smiling even as my eyes rolled back and my frame contorted. I remembered Antero Alli's proposition of *movement as nurture*. My muscles were not part of the ant-image but they activated anyway in ways that just felt good. My eyes opened and I saw the studio floor as the same stuff as the stone as the same stuff as my bones.

Over the course of one minute the ants vanished irretrievably. I stood hanging from my spine and felt their leaving, felt this hot body remain - full of sun's energy radiating out. My headache of that morning had not gone away but I felt it as a phenomenon, not something I needed to feel anything about.

I drifted slowly back towards the blanket. The forgotten stone appeared to my vision and somehow I knew that this was the ending of the dance. As I bent to pick it up the Basinski track faded right on cue (1 hour and 3 minutes). This has happened many times to me before; time and space synchronising aesthetically to give completion without my conscious input. The stone, which had felt hot from my mouth on last touch, was dry and tepid again.

Walking through town after these sessions has definitely become part of the research. How do I re-meet the social after such dancing? In my workshops I make sure everyone shakes everything off and comes back to a social *normal* before leaving (for their own safety), but in these solo sessions I have been playing with staying in the Butoh body as I go back out into the street.

I walk very slowly. All sense of deadline or rush or social importance is distant. I saw the cobbles on Sauchiehall Street as billion-year-old star stuff, minerals like my stone. I also felt how unknown



probably-dead hands had shaped them and placed them for me to walk on. In previous Buddhist practices I have used these feelings to prompt gratitude: thank you unknown workers. Now it didn't feel necessary. The stones, the workers, my bones, my thoughts all came from the same place and were expression of one great being. Just take your place amongst it, knowing that nothing can be wrong. Thank you, but also: of course. Of course it's like this. Walt Whitman: *Every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.*

As I sped up I almost overtook an elderly woman with a cane when there wasn't really room to preserve social distancing. I stopped, waited, grateful to her for making me check my returning habits of rush. Another very old woman came out of the bank, struggling with her collapsing minerals; origin stuff starting to leave. I saw the person inside the old mineral body, and felt empathy but not sorryness: this also seemed right. A strange shift when I am used to reaching for compassion when I see struggling (or ignoring it when I forget). I saw a homeless woman on the floor too, smiled broadly but did not give her money. I wasn't sure I had any and still felt too slow and spacious to care about my wallet. A complete lack of concern and worry. Everything billions of years old and gently configuring. We are all the same guy. The leaves were another variation, colourful twist on a theme of stone.

In tinderbox cafe I checked again 'my' selfish impulses: I nearly sat at a table that two women may have wanted. I asked and they didn't, so I sat down. I've realised I'm too exhausted after sessions to write at length, so I jot down fragments on pen and paper to be written up later on the computer. This seems like a method.

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## Four: A Bear in Chains

*Date: 15/10/20*

*Location & Duration: 1.5 hours, RCS room M3*

*Music: Reducing the tempo to zero (part 1) - Ben Vida.*



The last three sessions have been very internal; generating movement somatically and gently. Today I felt the need to put my body through its paces and be more athletic. I began with a 20-minute silent warm up and stretch on the floor. Then I put Ben Vida on and began standing, working initially with bare movement: gravity arcs, ellipses and sudden cuts, fast walking in random directions (the challenge of being genuinely random! The mind constantly seeking to make a plan, execute a pattern).

I immediately noticed that it's more difficult to let go of the outside gaze when the body is more



active. How does this look? Am I performing well? What message am I sending with all this movement? How would an audience receive this?

It took the first 20 minutes of dancing to subdue this voice. It's a reflection of *performativity*, the history of dancing and stages and my own history within it. Constructing a choreography. I started to let it go by making a conscious choice to allow awkwardness, *ugliness*, ungainly movement with no narrative. Not even *Butoh ugliness*, which has become aestheticised itself. Eventually my body started to do what it needed to do. Hijikata's notion that 'in a capitalist, production-oriented society, purposeless movement is a revolutionary act'.

The gravity arcs settled into a series of convulsive, repetitive, obsessive movement involving voice. It felt good to sweat. A lot of muscle work. What is this? Let's get out of the way and find out. You are not in control of this. Pure body stuff: trauma release? Joy? A baby's play?

This very non-intellectual dance was at stark odds with my mind, but by consciously surrendering to it without judgement something began to happen. I did not seek images or landscapes but they came on their own. I started to exude a swamp: mist, muddy water, dark bent trees. This was not really an environment I was in but one that was emanating from the centre of my body; my body's creation. I held myself in the swamp and drifted in the mist. My body rhythm slowed.

There is a constant tension in doing a PhD through this work; an environment where thinking is king in which a practice where thinking is an obstacle must be situated.

Gradually something else arose. I felt my body thicken, my limbs twice their normal width, fur all over my form. Something between a bear and a chimera. Horns, talons sometimes. Great strength. And a chain around my right ankle. I've been reading Don Miguel Ruiz's *The Fifth Agreement* around the shackles words, symbols and culture place on the being that each being is. I think this influenced what happened here. FUCK YOU. FUCK YOU for stemming the tide of my being. Fuck you my mind for chaining my animal. Hijikata's emphasis on dropping the social body took on new force. Fuck you, but not even with anger. Merely: I am stronger than you. A towering bear, calmly pushing back the tide of social forces. A whiff of Godzilla trampling a city. A guttural voice which unusually was not judged and just came forth.



Later this metamorphosed and I became a sun being. My heart leapt through the ceiling and resonated with the sun, energy flowing from my chest back and forth with the Sun god, solar source hidden (I knew it was cloudy and even without the ceiling it would have been hidden to daily eyes). Lava flowed in my veins, and I scooped liquid sun from my chest, pouring from my hands onto the floor.

Yet again, the ending of this dance unfolded as though planned, in synchronicity with the music. My energy ebbed and I sank to the floor, feeling grass and flowers sprout from the ground, between my toes and bones. I sank down through them into the earth: human remains after many months, nature's embrace reclaiming them. I became still and the grass and flowers pushed up through me. The music faded right on cue.

In the street afterwards I again felt no hurry. I wonder how this spaced-out state relates to 'normal' daily life, the schedules and plans and targets. I allowed it and spent two hours in town, wandering shops, drinking coffee and taking notes. Nothing much mattered and everything was vibrating abstractly.

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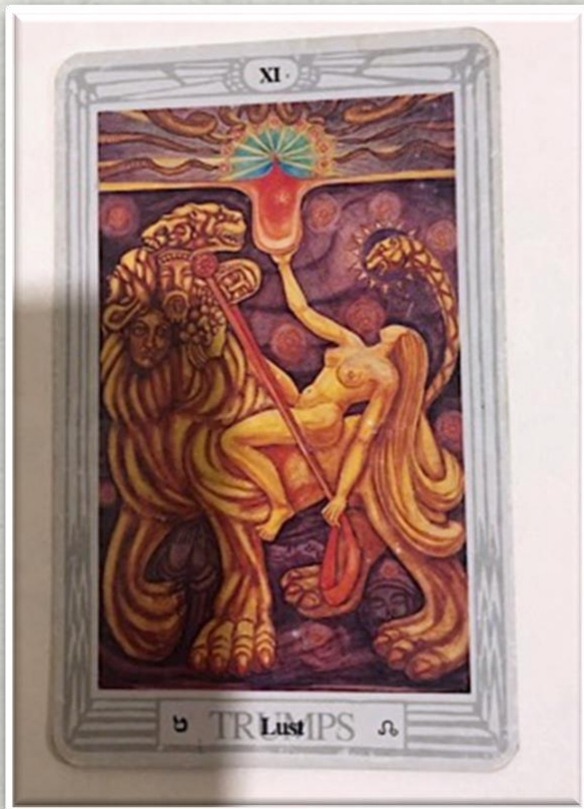


## Five: Caught by a Fish

Date: 16/11/20

Duration & Location: 3 hours, RCS room M3

Music: 'Salt Marie Celeste' - Nurse with Wound



After 20 mins seated meditation in a corner in the dark, which brought me much more into presence and the present tense, I began moving only with the stimulus *One hour Noguchi Feel-good time: presence, gravity, melting, massage*. No music here. I started sitting down, with neck rolls, shoulder loosening, and my body took over from there. I leaned into the joy of movement, movement as nurture (as Antero Alli has it), massaging my face and organs, hanging from my bones. As I've noticed in the past, despite there being no structure to the hour I spontaneously stretched my whole body during the period, as I would in a 'formal' warm up. Simply by giving my body what it needs, keeping my attention down inside it, and letting it tell me what to do

next.

The Lust card from Crowley's thoth Tarot is my symbol for pure somatic surrender, giving up into the body. I laid it out on the dance floor for the warmup.

Then one hour dancing to *Salt Marie Celeste*. I darkened the room, used the curtains and fading winter light through one window, with a single lamp overhead. Shadows cast around the room. I let the music slowly swell up. My only prompt was to empty my body, wait, and use the mantra



*Please come and dance my body. I love you.*

The music and gloom and my own obscure fear evoked an underwater scene in which I floated briefly. My heart floated out of my chest and out into the room, attached by a red umbilical thread to my ribcage. I moved where my heart drifted.

A huge sea creature, a shark or whale, shadowy, crept into the room. It ate my heart and circled the space, always at a distance from me. I tracked this shark as I was linked to it by the heart, waves and turns arising through my body.



Smaller fish drifted through the centre of the space, sometimes through my body, between my ribs and pelvis. My eyelids fluttered. I don't know how or where I moved. The scene / gestalt itself took over and I managed to lose myself in it.

I fell softly to the floor, landing with my legs apart and knees bent upwards, like a pose stolen from Hijikata. I saw red masking tape on the floor protruding outwards in a line from my crotch. I felt I had given birth to something, red blood trail from my innards extending. I was rooted to my position, in fascination, horror, my body bleeding white. Sudden jolts and spasms, wide eyes. I



traced the red line and realised it was a large rectangle delimiting a central space in the room, possibly left by students to mark out the space. As my eyes reached the opposite corner of the rectangle I saw my own double, similarly post-partum, red afterbirth trail extending. We gazed at each other across the space, mirrored each other's movements. I backed away slowly, leaving a trail of blood, leaving my monstrous baby behind.

I stood and began tracing the red rectangle, a minimal score to let my body exist through. Somewhere the shark was still circling the room. It came to rest suspended in the centre of the rectangle like the Damien Hurst shark piece, and I patrolled around the outside. My pelvis was wild and undulating, a strange sexual walk, arms and neck abandoned to the ripples from my pelvis and flailing. This kept on for some time before my energy dissipated and I returned to stand under the spotlight, a fine rain of light on my upturned face.



*In his house at R'lyeh, dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.*

As I stood I felt a larger presence than the shark, not quite there, without definite shape, not in the same spacetime as my body but pervading the room. I thought of Lovecraft's Cthulhu, tentacles and waiting, malevolence and infinite patience. I was not scared but fascinated. I let Cthulhu fill



the room.

I saw my shadow strong on the floor from the spotlight. I thought of David Abram's suggestion that our shadows are our personal night, the part of night that remains in the daytime when the Earth's night withdraws. My shadow/darkness/sleep side of myself persisting beneath me all day in various shades and strengths. I dance with and as my shadow, narcissistically, moving as the dark shadow God inside me, a being from beyond projected into the day.

I sprouted tentacles myself. Became Cthulhu. Tentacles out from my foot souls, under my arms, my hair a Medusa nest of squid growth waving. My physical body moved at the behest of these image tentacles, and my face became strong, sexual, lascivious. As I did this the Nurse with Wound soundtrack reached a section where squelching noises rose up out of the mix, the sound of tentacles, right on time.

Finally I released all these images into the room, my body became empty. I walked with my head hanging down, sightlessly, like Yukio Waguri's choreography at *eX...it!* Berlin. My heart was in the shark, my life and imagination filled the room, and my body was left to wander.

Even this zombie walk left me, and I returned to my cushion in the corner in the dark. As the last of the music played out I watched the room, removed from the scene, all images still hanging in the air. The shark suspended in the centre, water all around, the blood trail of afterbirth, fish flitting. Everything I had cocreated in this space hung there trembling like an installation left by a visual artist. There for no one but me. Music faded. *Arigato*. Refuge in the Buddha. Let go. End.

This session was very intense and after sketching the images above before they left me, I went home and slept for several hours. I'm writing this now late at night, with Salt Marie Celeste playing again. I can still feel Cthulhu and the shark. My position in the cosmos has shifted. I am inside and outside myself. I am dreaming.

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## Six: The Birth of Separation

*Date: 18/11/20*

*Locations & Duration: 4 hours, RCS room M3*

*Music: none*

A very difficult session that taught me about the need to stay off the internet and social media before practice (too much noise in the head, discussion and arguments which keep me locked into a sense of 'me' and 'my opinion / reputation'), coupled with the attrition of lockdown and isolation, obscure emotional vulnerabilities that left me trying too hard to prove something. Ego stuff.

20 minutes' meditation, 20 minutes warm-up, 15 minutes' Noguchi water body exercises. All the way through these I could feel resistance, fear, nervousness about practicing and 'getting there', entering into it properly.

SMOKE BREAK. Feeling vulnerable, emotional and distracted. An attempt to reset out on the steps outside the building.

30 minutes without music, prompted by reading Don Miguel Ruiz' *The Fifth Agreement* (p.126-128): 'The first lie that we believe is 'I am not God''. I read this as the birth of separation, of reflective consciousness that removes 'me' from everything else. I was feeling this separation deeply today and tried to dance through it, to close the gap.

"What makes us bite the apple without noticing the lie is the doubt. Before we have the doubt ... the truth is there, and we just live it". I tried to just dance my being, the fact that I am God like everything else. When this was hard I danced my separation. Grief.

I tried leaving a microphone on for the first time to narrate as I was dancing the phenomena. I haven't listened back yet but it was really hard; almost crying several times, and then feeling fake for wanting to cry but not crying, and also trying to forget the microphone listening. I think it's



probably worth trying the microphone one more time when I'm in a better state, but so far it only added to the distraction, abstraction, resistance and struggle of this session.

Hungry too (I started too late in the session without lunch), emotional and a little despairing. I stuck it out for the 30 minutes then went for lunch.

I tried to let go for the session gently. Sometimes it doesn't work out. Expecting too much.

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## Seven: Resistance Hardens the Shell

*Date: 19/11/20*

*Duration & Location: 3 hours, RCS room M3*

*Music: none*

This session felt like a counterpoint to yesterday's, a healing. I went in late, took my time, was sure to be gentle with myself. On beginning I realised I don't always have to take it on myself. Sometimes I need help. I played a 20-minute meditation by Tara Brach intended for sitting called *Letting Life Live Through You*, but repurposed for standing and moving in the space. 'Notice what happens when you consciously say yes to what's here, when there's a kind of surrendering presence that allows life to be just as it is'.

Tara quoted a poem by Roger Keys:

### **Hokusai Says**

Hokusai says look carefully.  
He says pay attention, notice.  
He says keep looking, stay curious.  
He says there is no end to seeing.

He says look forward to getting old.  
He says keep changing,  
you just get more who you really are.  
He says get stuck, accept it, repeat  
yourself as long as it is interesting.

He says keep doing what you love.

He says keep praying.

He says every one of us is a child,  
every one of us is ancient  
every one of us has a body.  
He says every one of us is frightened.



He says every one of us has to find  
a way to live with fear.

He says everything is alive —  
shells, buildings, people, fish,  
mountains, trees, wood is alive.  
Water is alive.

Everything has its own life.

Everything lives inside us.

He says live with the world inside you.

He says it doesn't matter if you draw,  
or write books. It doesn't matter  
if you saw wood, or catch fish.  
It doesn't matter if you sit at home  
and stare at the ants on your veranda  
or the shadows of the trees  
and grasses in your garden.  
It matters that you care.

It matters that you feel.

It matters that you notice.

It matters that life lives through you.

Contentment is life living through you.  
Joy is life living through you.  
Satisfaction and strength  
is life living through you.

He says don't be afraid.  
Don't be afraid.

Love, feel, let life take you by the hand.

Let life live through you.

I didn't worry about what I was doing much during this; just that I could feel, and feel joy, and feel present. I thought of Eckhart Tolle: *Why make a self out of it?* I realised that in yesterday's practice I was taking things too personally, how am *I* doing, why can't *I* get it to work? So much resistance. I resolved to try the opposite today. After 20 minutes' sitting meditation I started

dancing.

One hour with no music: *No Borders Dance*. No resistance. Relax all perceptions of a boundary (a boundary of myself). I considered the world as happening inside my body. I drew everything into me. The room is inside my body. I have no boundaried self. I leaned into this.

“I have abandoned I who have abandoned”.

Everything INSIDE ME: timpani down the hall, traffic, the whirring fan from the PA amplifier, students’ laughter in the corridor, creaking wood like a ship. I let all sounds happen *inside* me, not arriving to my ears from outside. They moved my body, echoed inside it.

My body is inside my body.

I am moving inside my body. I who have abandoned I who has abandoned.

I have no others, having no self boundary. I have no Others.

Everything is me and is happening inside me.

I felt this dancing. I felt this, dancing.

No noise in the head.

Just being everything and letting that move me.

This was very effective in enlarging my sense of self and becoming more present tense.

Sounds are particularly good to work with for this exercise. They don’t arrive from outside, but arise from within and reverberate there into movement (sometimes).

I perceived a *double movement*: to let go of my skin as a limit and expand outwards into the room is also to draw everything inside me. An embrace in both directions. I got out into the world and the world comes in to me. ‘Total mixture and immersion’ (Coccia re. The ontology of plants) means that *nothing is outside me*.

What could be wrong?

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## Eight: Oxygen and Light (a Secret Agreement)

Date: 25/11/20

Duration & Location: 1.5 hours, RCS room M3

Music: none

20 mins seated meditation: the void I am looking from (Adyashanti). Attention from the void on the whole breath-process. Witnessing. Then one hour dance in silence: *my ancestors' breath*. Stimulus: I breathed in at birth, continuing the chain of my father and mother's breathing. My lungs pulsed, and have been doing so ever since; my parents' breath continued that of my grandparents', an unbroken process of breathing backwards into the ocean and backwards into the void.

My ancestors sustain me with every breath, and my lungs and organs pulse in a secret agreement with them, a pact shared by all of life. Feel deeply into this, dance it more and more deeply every moment, worldbreath animating my frame. Connection overcomes separation. Not the void I am looking at but the void I am looking from.

Oxygen and light. Sinews, muscle. A focus on the actual organs of breath, the lungs that are my father's lungs. I BECOME A LUNG. Waves and spirals rippling out from here to the rest of the body. Follow energy lines, chi from the breath and centre. Tree structures growing out of me. The spotlight feeding me light, oxygen and light. Ironing out the body. Everything slow and inevitable, muscles and sinews working. Slow waves and twists. Being lead from the back of the head into the neck.

I have been thinking about this breath-chain since yesterday, in meditation and walking around. I can see others as their breathing process, imagining the lungs inside their chests as I pass them on the street. We are in a secret agreement. From this place a small ego self can relax, become just activity on the surface. Underneath there is a deeper centre, the chain of being through breath: *the basic activity of the universe* (Shunryu Suzuki).

## Nine: What Grows Me Also Grows You

Date: 15/02/21

Duration & Location: 1.5 hours, RCS room M3

Music: Nurse with Wound 'Salt Marie Celeste'

NOW, with inheritance

NOW, becoming

NOW, with possibility

Thank you for sharing Being with me. *What grows me also grows you.*

Ocean inheritance in the breath and fluids: all life.

The chain of breathing: genealogy, my grandfather's lungs.

No crown, no top of the head, body extending upwards and out in all directions. Do not clamp down on thy crown. (It will cause headaches and inhibit perception).

60 minutes' dancing to *Salt Marie Celeste*. The beginning was on the cushion. An initial urge to feel the ocean evolution in me, all history immanent NOW in the body, all time collapsed *without losing the content of the past*. It's here right now, as inheritance, and going forward as possibility. It exists now, in the body, immanent. Watery depths, on all fours with weight of the ocean on the back and spine.

Fish swim between ribs and skeleton.

Slow vanishing of small self, revealing BODY and WITNESS.

Automatic movement from immanent history of the body, human and non-human, all familial and living in body. Nearer to you than your jugular vein. Inseparable from that which constitutes you. *What grows me also grows you.*

Stubble was felt as grass, the same immanent spirit which grows the grass grows the stubble on



the face. Bones were felt as rock and mountain; the same immanent spirit grows them all.

No personal body, not *mine*. Doesn't belong to me (Hijikata). Each body part a volition of its own, with ma-space surrounding.

Hands extremely hot, overheating, radiating. The realisation of all heat in body as legacy of the Sun. Sun in the body, flesh burnt off (no pain), flaming skeleton dancing. Movements *pushed out* by this (Mikami).

The need to run; burning ball in front of forehead, body rushes towards it retreating in circles round the room, like a greyhound following meat on a racetrack. Heavy breathing, sweating, the wish for *more, more*.

Strange running on the spot dancing, powered by the sun. *Volition has been left far behind*.

Lying on the floor, trembling spasms, body burnt.

Flaming skeleton walk: fire path trail behind body, burning in front cutting a path. Body follows the flame-path.

The personal has been left far behind. There is only the flaming skeleton body and the Witness. Fingers pulling the flesh from right shoulder blade from behind, causing body to turn back and face towards the room. An imagined audience. Music dies down. END

## Afterwards

Michael has left the building. Buying sushi and coffee is impersonal. I realise the cashier is **me**, so is everyone else on the street. I am meeting myself. The cobbles hold the history of spirit growth, *what grows you also grows me*, including human hands that placed and shaped them. I am spaced out but functioning.

Eating sushi: all ingredients are me. Fish flesh not different than my flesh, rice grew in fields as the hair on my head. Coffee from beans from Earth. Everything Earth and Sun, recycling. This

is where my grandparents are hidden, and where I will go when I drop this form.

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## Ten: Bubbles and Care

Date: 18/02/22

Duration & Location: 2 hours, RCS room DS4

Music: Mynoise preset (in utero, binaural beats + osmosis)

### **Framing**

Plan for today: voice work, Noguchi, stretching and muscles.

Then Petitmengin take 1: empty, move according to the pulsing of organs (breath, stomach, lungs, heart) ..... Connected to primordial life, bivalves.... Move, record on video then write interview style: how, what, who?

Then Continuum style movement (perhaps.... see what happens). But the important thing is to FALL IN LOVE with it, vanish into it.... Maybe 30 mins?

### **Notes after practice**

Warmups and voice work: Noguchi water exercises, then high energy cardio dancing. Then two dancing sessions of 25 mins each (I film the second session). Each time I use the same Mynoise preset. I try to ignore the camera in the second session and let the practice be uneventful on the outside if that's what happens - not using dance or stage training to perform for the camera, just documenting.

I deliberately use womb and oceanic sounds, and have been thinking about my organs as similar to bi-valves in the ocean. Pulsing, like my breath, *the universal activity of the cosmos* (Shunryu Suzuki). I also go in with the intention of falling in love with the situation, pitching myself into it affectively and becoming immersed fully, without conceptual decision making or really any consideration of form; the idea here is to see what actually emerges when intellectual or formal ideas are not imposed. Most of this is written in a cafe around 40 mins later. But firstly I write some key phrases not to forget right after practice (still in the studio):

Bubbles, fizz, fish between the bones, hands pushing inside and out, care with palms laying on, dispersal through the limbs (disarticulation, polydynamics), liquid tilting, immersion, love of the scene/images, ignoring camera and mirrors. Time to let go of PhD / social concerns (janitors outside the window), harsh lights, music support enables letting go, listening to music with whole body not ears.

I'm finding it's impossible to fully journal right after practice as I'm in a very expanded, wide state of being, vulnerable and with little ability to focus academically or descriptively. So the following is done a little later, with headphones on playing the same music. I am exploring Petitmengin's notion of *evocation state* to plunge myself back into the practice in memory in order to recount it. I will aim for **what**, **how**, and **who** of the practice, with consideration of the **synchronic** and **diachronic** aspects of the practice, as well as what happened afterwards when I closed the session and left the studio. I will also use the present tense, and be aware of what sort of 'I' is being used (perhaps none).

## What

I begin by letting the sounds in, emptying my mind and body and becoming receptive. The feeling of an immersed wombspace become present first, and a pulsing from the heartbeat on the soundtrack. I am aware of verticality; drooping downwards on edges of my body like a weeping willow, while my central structure thrust upwards like the trunk of the tree.

Water becomes more present, with bubbles fizzing through it. My body begins to be moved by the water and the bubbles. They are around me in the womb of the room, but also inside me, causing limbs to levitate and sink back. I move from standing to lying to sitting to stretching out ... My hands and arms are the principal movers though I keep them connected to the rest of my body.

Later I put my own hand to my cheek, a mothering gesture bringing emotion, relief but also the urge to cry. I move towards this and let it flow through, falling in love with what is happening. Soft hands come from all around me, pushing my body lovingly into new shapes. Hands arise from



inside the body too.

I use the tilting weight of liquid in my body, rolling with the tilting in my head, organs, torso. This combines with the bubbles and ocean movement, and the heartbeat, and I sink further into the scene, allowing myself to disappear into it.

Sometimes my breath comes spasmodically, shallow and fast, in a panicky way but one that was very enjoyable; something releasing emotionally.

Later I become aware of my bones and the flesh fell away. Small fish appear, swimming in between my ribs and through my eye sockets. My movements become quieter and listening in respect of these delicate creatures. I become a skeleton observer of the scene, letting the fish and bubbles and waves move around me and moving only to facilitate this, allow the fish through me.

Later, on the floor, my body hardens and becomes a coral reef. My back arches upwards to let a large crab make its home underneath.

I end sitting, letting the music fade. I try to let the state subside organically, tuning into the *normality* of the room; lights above, turning off camera and stereo, becoming a more functional being again. As usual I have the feeling that I could force this transition, but that it would be a violence, a disrespect of what has happened. I am playing with the threshold between two worlds. I pack in a daze, smoke a cigarette outside, drive carefully to the cafe in recognition of driving a ton of metal in a wide open dream state. Delicate to achieve.

## How

I am emptying. I do this by tuning into my skin, in front and behind, my whole soma extending out to meet the room. I do this by intention - a mobilising of my desire. As I feel an enveloping, a massaging *other thing* arise within and around me, I lean into it with my intention.

I quickly notice blocks in the form of thoughts such as:

- Am I going to manage this? Will this be proper PhD research? How will I record it and report back later? Am I doing good?

- Is anyone watching? The janitors often burst into the room, and I hate the window in the studio door.

- The lights are harsh; who the fuck would build a beautiful dance studio and fill it with overhead strip lighting?

I deal with these blocks simply by intending to drop the thoughts, refocussing on the emptying. I use the music to support this, a bath of sound that does not recognise these thoughts as relevant. As I lean into the emptying, the thoughts gradually fade from awareness.

I start to notice details of my body state and of the music. These prompt movements, and as they begin I lean into them too with my intention. I fall into them. I fall in love with them. This helps them grow. I am in relationship with these phenomena and need to care for and respect my attitude towards them. It feels like if they know I love them they will love me back and stay, increase.

Periodically I notice the urge to sculpt what is happening in terms of:

- Doing something that will look impressive and dancey from outside.

- Recapitulating a previous habit or choreography.

- Thinking 'I know, I can head to the floor now / this is a good position to stand up from'.

I deal with these impulses simply by recognising them as different in kind from the image-practice I am pouring my intention into. So I let them go and do not act on them, staying with my body as it is and not directing it with my ego. I jettison concerns about whether I am documenting something interesting to others, or whether I am dancing well. I intend into honesty, staying-with, my ego's only job to attend and nurture.

At times I do shift my posture or front-face in recognition of the camera and the effort to capture what is happening, but I do so only if it can be done without disrupting the process. If the camera doesn't capture it, tough shit. It would not be honest to perform for it.



I close my eyes when this feels necessary to nurture my *intending into* the images. I open them wide when this feels possible without adopting a *face* for the camera / world. This I know from performance work. How to stay honest with eyes wide open and letting others in without dissembling.

The sense of life within my body, and the music, are sources to return to when ego-phenomena intrude. I can fall back in love with them through my intention. This is my job.

## Who

I am an uptight anxiety hound who has arrived late at the studio. I have been reading up on my hypermobility and connections to dyspraxia, mental health, fatigue ... Trying not to take them too seriously or medicalise myself, but cognisant of the context they give to my life (descriptions of hypermobility and dyspraxia sound in places as if they were written specifically about me).

I am socially beleaguered and feel I don't have the right to this studio space. That I will be intruded upon at any moment. That I'm supposed to be doing something else. I am adjacent to the ballet leapers. I am in a *ballet* studio. The lights are horrible and no Butoh dancer would ever use them. I feel guilty for being late. I am trying to go easy on myself. I am trying to keep my spirits up.

Then I start to move and practice. Now I am this first person above, meeting a more expansive thing; nature, or energy, or primordial soup. This primordiality is expressed in the music around me, and the life in the body. The ocean and the womb pulling me into the before times, the after times: before my *somebody training* as Ram Dass would say. Two mes in a dance. The first me is somewhat afraid of the second; barriers fences protection. A third thing, a third me: the one who has trained, in Butoh, in meditation, in being no one. This me mediates between the others; smoothes the feathers of anxiety-me, guides it towards primordial-me. There are three mes.

As I go on anxiety-me dissolves, never entirely but strikingly. Anxiety me finds a bed to lie down in, and it is dancing, it is falling in love. My intention springs from the third me: not anxiety or

primordial me. This other one who can see the anxiety, can see the ‘goal’ of the practice, and can gently nudge anxiety me with encouraging words of safety.

### **And Afterwards?**

When I go deep I have to take time to come back. I went deep this time. It’s like the end of a meditation retreat, a ritual, a drug trip. Welcome back to the grey functional world. I respect this transition, highly emotional as it is. I do it in stages; I have learned to do that. My framework is ritual. The practice happens in the ritual space - imperfectly when there are janitors and windows and bad lighting, but I get there. The end of the practice is the marker of the end of ritual space. I want to carry what I found in the ritual into grey-space, but it is delicate. There’s a functionality to grey-space: drive the car, watch the traffic and the pedestrians. Remember how to speak and adopt the position of a *person* so I can order at the cafe. I feel very happy with today’s practice because I am here now, writing, back in society, but I know where I’ve been. I am exhausted, cleansed, unable to do much but be this state, between the worlds, in need of rest and restoration so I can try again.

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## Eleven: A Pre-historic Swamp

*Date: 21/02/22*

*Duration & Location: 2.5 hours, RCS room R5*

*Music: Mynoise 'sleepy Noguchi, 'polyrhythms & ice' presets,*

*Nurse with Wound 'Salt Marie Celeste'*

### **Framing**

20 minute wave-spiral Noguchi warm-up and stretch - Mynoise 'sleepy Noguchi' preset.

12 mins muscles and cardio - MyNoise 'polyrhythms & ice'.

15 mins voice work.

30 mins dancing to *Salt Marie Celeste*. Starting with the thought of the billions of years inheritance of my body: black hole big bang stardust galaxies dinosaurs prehistoric vegetation dust storms lightning chain of breathing and pulsing all arrive in me dancing.

### **What**

I am sitting cross-legged on a yoga block. My attention is already wide within my body. I have put on a track I know will fade in slowly. I remember my initial prompt: the billions-years legacy of the materials of my body. I start to see dust-clouds in space, swirling, spirals, buffeting. My body starts to move with them. I work with spiralling upwards and drooping down, sequentially and simultaneously. The music builds in swells and I let this inform the images. Repetitions come to the fore and continue throughout the session: arcs of the arms and hands, twists of the torso back, forth, up and down. This is something I get lost in, decreasingly concerned with what it is. I just let it happen.

I am off the yoga block now but still seated. My arms move in waves. I almost rise over and over but let myself settle back down into different seated positions. Sometimes my legs raise ... My

balance is rooted in my coccyx and sit-bones. I am ‘sweeping’, back and forth in different spirals. My eyes close often to ignore the camera. My hair is in my face. I do not move it as the only reason to do so would be personal vanity, *human* concerns or trying to show my face more to the camera. I continue.

Later, heat builds in my body, images of pre-historic swamp steam. I lean into this, my body heat increasing, muscles loosening. I note an influence on my movement from the camera position. I know I cannot go too far whilst staying in shot, but I try not to let this influence me.

More articulated finger movements come. I note the creeping in of *dancerly* movements, things I have trained in before. I do not fight them too hard but try not to lean into them. This means movements can keep starting anew without concern for choreography, narrative or time-building. At one point on all fours, I feel Seisaku’s *beast* choreography arriving (the one he taught me in Tokyo). I play with it for a moment but leave it. It would be an external intrusion from another time and context.

I get very busy later, aerobic. This has come out of what I was already doing, simply an expansion. When my arm is raised straight for example, I am picturing pillars of cosmic dust such as I have seen in Hubble telescope photographs. I let my arm be that, while the rest of my body swirls and undulates below.

Later something almost spasmodic arrives, once while standing and once more while lying on my back; like a fish flopping on a boat deck. I note the possibility of something highly emotive, possible trauma-release movements. I do not reject them but do not indulge either. They do not build massively.

When the timer goes off I am quite easy about coming back to the room. I know I have to tidy up and leave the studio but I do not capitulate to the violence of suddenly putting on a social, institution-bound self. I tidy efficiently but let the music play out for a while.



## How

I start quite centred and embodied, and this is possible because of my earlier warm-ups and meditation: I sit on the yoga block in meditation before beginning, then set up the music and camera and return to the same spot to dance. This means I do not have the shock of transitioning into something practice-worthy.

I dialogue with the tendency to worry about the camera, about the PhD. With familiarity I am learning to let go of these concerns faster. I also nurture this side of my ego with encouragements like my plan to video *a lot* over the coming months, so that no one session becomes too important in terms of documentation. I can be free to sink into the images, the music, the body.

I remember to *fall in love* with what is happening; to mobilise my heart, intention, joy and emotions, and have this be *the most important thing* until other concerns fade. I (who?) dialogue with the notational, intellectual self, commenting on what is occurring, generating ideas from training and past choreography. This is delicate and I simply note, even give a little attention to, such urges, but let them slide. This helps me to return to what is spontaneously arising in me: the images of stars and dust, the swirling, the swamp heat.

I find steadiness again in the notion that this is *my practice*, that today's session (Monday) is not the be all and end all of anything. This is navigating between different aspects of self, making space for Butoh body or ecological dreaming self by soothing and pacifying ego (skin-bound, PhD-aspiring, me-not me) self.

## Who

On the spectrum of individual to ecological self, this session leaned towards the former. I did expand myself however, and got lost (a term I am tempted to use for ecological selfhood: the small self gets lost and vanishes into the endeavour), but not in a particularly intense way. In the midst of dancing cosmic dust swirls, the deeper I got into it, the less reference I made to my individual self. The intellectual arranger (choreography), the administrative-researcher (worrying about the

camera, how to write it up afterwards, memorising what's going on so I can type it out): these aspects are perhaps intrinsically part of my individualist self. This makes sense in as much as academia is a competitive, fairly individualistic institution, run like a business, and my conducting of the PhD links directly to my animal survival (money). The fact that I ventured towards ecological selfhood but without, this time, vanishing very deeply into it is quite ok. It indicates that these things truly are not a binary between individualist and ecological, but a spectrum to be navigated with interest and care and patience, different from day to day. Holding water variously.

As noted in my last practice, there are actually perhaps three distinct selves operating:

1. The individualist self (academia, money, self-presentation, anxiety)
2. The ecological self (diffused, porous, flowing)
3. The witness: the awareness going through these changes but also observing them. I feel that this awareness is the same awareness that is in everything, that which was perhaps designated God in certain times and places - the animating principle in everything that chimes with animism, panpsychism and so on.

### **And Afterwards?**

Afterwards I am more able to re-enter normal sociality than last session; possibly this relates to me not going quite as deeply into the ecological?

I speak in the car park with a nice guy who gives me tips about discounts on parking. Only after I leave him does it occur to me to consider him as billions of years old like me, but when I do it is an easy leap to make. Now, sitting in tinderbox writing this up, I still feel a somatic hum from the practice – an ease and peace.

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## Twelve: Shut Up and Get Out of the Way

Date: 22/02/22

Duration & Location: 1.5 hours, RCS room R1

*Ben Vida 'Reducing the tempo to zero'*

*Music: MyNoise (white waves preset)*

### **Framing**

I arrive late today, fatigued and feeling harried. I do 2 minutes voice work while moving around, then decide to dance immediately without warming up. I have been thinking about flowers, how each concrete situation in the world is a confluence of causes and conditions, like the blooming and fading of a flower, replaced by another bloom. My intention is to dance this, though by the time I start my energy is quite high, a little frustrated by time pressures, and something else takes over (below).

Formal practice is 30 minutes dancing with Ben Vida layered with white noise. Unusually, I kept a hat and hoodie on mostly. Camera recording via GoPro.

### **What**

I am already walking; I start without starting. I find myself walking, and start to empty and tune in from that. My energy is high, with no desire to sink slowly down inside or meditatively in a quiet-stillness sense. I have already been playing with loose-limbed *digging* movements, arcs and swings, in my voice practice, and I let this emerge again. These movements propel me all the way through the whole practice session. I have the feeling of just launching into a state, ignoring calls to rationalise or plan the session. The dancing is already happening.

My emotions are quite balanced throughout; my overwhelming sense is of simply being interested, fascinated in what this state is and how it is self-propelling. My limbs are poly-directional, an octopus flailing gracefully. A sense of abandon. I am, above all, riding momentum today: both the

literal momentum of my swinging limbs and how it rearranges me into different teetering balance points, and the momentum of the body-intention which started this process in the first place. A high energy, a need to move. I use the comfort of the feeling of my hoodie fabric and hat to scooch into movements.

Later I rub and pat my face and whole body in a way that is rough but without great force, and feels very good. Everything is free, movements thrown away and others arising effortlessly. Very aerobic. A lot of play with balance and connection between the dying of one movement and the arising of another. There is a strong through-line as if it's all one thing, one state. I do not need to switch gears or look for new impulses, and there are no very strong images other than primate ones gradually emerging. The sense of being a loose-limbed player in the physical realm. I might have been leaping from tree to tree (though this was not a specific image I have; more just the primate sensation).

## How

I quickly, non-verbally assess my own state in beginning the practice. I know my energy is high, stress is on the horizon, time is pressing. I decide to *launch*. This means I catch a wave of impulse, of intention, to swing and move, and I go straight into it – no time to lose. This propels me into a state, and I guide my intention to accept this and follow it. *No-thinking*. Later I remember Tadashi Endo saying something like ‘don’t be too quick to impose anything on your body. Let it dance for a long time, dance for one hour till you become crazy’. I go into this mode. No real concepts. I simply train my interest and attention in what my body is playing out, with a sense of pleasure and remembering to fall in love with it.

## Who

At the outset I am Paul, self-flagellating at arriving late to the studio without completing my other tasks for today, emerging from a swamp of fatigue. But I am also determined to make the best of it, to lift myself out of this state. I am not a minutely sensitised being in this practice. I am someone riding a general wave and simply watching the body do what it wants to do.



I am increasingly aware of being a loose-limbed primate in dialogue with the whole environment, with energy to burn. Monkey like. Not imitating anything, not tied to specific or intense images. More a body work-out. In this sense everything is easy, and I am not a highly emotional being. Simply one who accepts the situation and assents.

### **And Afterwards?**

I am still the primate, walking down the street, loose, enjoying no tension in the body. I am faced with how this feels like breaking the rules: being a being who is a monkey of body, getting away with this because those who pass by don't seem to notice my strange gait and lack of tension. I am devil-may-care in the mind and in the body, even now writing this in a cafe.

Video notes: glancing at the footage I notice I'm very stable and held in the torso, even as my limbs are thrown around. Am I holding a *self* here, a safety? Could I let go more and let the movements travel through the torso more fully? This would probably lead to great loss of balance but what would happen to me if I allowed this to happen? There's a fear barrier to cross but that should be interesting.

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## Thirteen: Broccoli Head

*Date: 25/02/22*

*Duration & Location: 1.5 hours, RCS room R6*

*Music: Binaural tones, white noise and Tibetan choir drones.*

### **Framing**

This is an earlier morning practice than I'm used to. I still feel I'm not finished with yesterday's practice: loose-limbed swinging, arcs, and losing-refinding balance. Not thinking so much in images but just being guided by body reality. I do 25 mins vocal and gentle physical warmup, then 30 mins formal dancing with video recording. Having glanced at yesterday's footage I find my torso is not going with the movements so much; something held in the torso, a self perhaps. So I want to explore letting impulses reverberate through the torso more. I like this room as it's high up in the building and more isolated, so I feel less overlooked when I'm here.

### **What**

I am on my feet in the centre of the room; or I walk to the centre of the room and let the momentum that takes me there reverberate. I am already tilting forwards and backwards. Noguchi gravity introspection. Loose-limbed as yesterday, primate like, but with a *dancer* feeling like being on a stage. I am aware of the camera but not intrusively so.

White noise sweeps on the soundtrack encourage the tilting of my body. I work with the fluids inside in polyvectoral space, segmenting my body and letting the fluids travel throughout as they will. I call this *lava lamp* dancing, the feeling of liquid suspension, rising and falling viscosity. I stay easy with it, keep working.

I notice dancer moves I've learned arising. I open and close my eyes as necessary. There is a



definite state being evoked, underneath any particular movements I make or thoughts I have. It's supported by the sound. As I can, I pitch into this, favouring the state over considerations of dancing or camera.

Later, on the floor, I grow a sort of broccoli head. Bulbous, gentle, and crenelated at the edges, heavy but surfaced as with moss. This moss feeling spreads to the rest of my body but is still centred in the head. I move more slowly with a moss body. Sitting up, I feel a dark sky and moon (even though there's daylight from the windows). I am broccoli-head dancing in moonlight.

## How

I work with fluid tilting by feeling into the body. I do not think much about the next moves I'll make. Gravity and sloshing liquid tells me simply, in fact gravity and liquid *do me*; I just do not get in the way. I am gravity lava lamp at varying speeds and intensities. I use music and tuning into it to spur me on. I use reminders to navigate obstacles (*don't mug for the camera; don't think ahead and do something you've done before [but don't refuse to either if it's an inevitability in the body]*).

How do things happen? Like broccoli head/moss body/moon? How do images arrive? I feel a connection with body posture and images arising. I feel that broccoli head arises when I land on the floor and come to rest lying down for a moment after a lot of activity. It urges a slowing down and expansion of attention into broccoli space: fronds reaching out beyond the skin. There's no need to move so much from here. Similarly, moon-darkness connects to sitting back up again. So the body travels and images arise and they feed each other reciprocally it seems.

I deal with goal-fixation when it arises by reminding myself of Hijikata's purposeless movement. This is a sort of redirecting of focus and intention. It's a choosing what to fall in love with, and a righting of the ship when it teeters towards something else habit-driven (like the camera capture, the PhD).

## Who

I am struck several times with the paradox of researching-with-a-goal something which does not want to have a goal or a purpose. The self who wants to get something done (like a PhD) is different from the immersed, present self simply *being a shifting something*. This requires a lot of balance, ritualised boundary marking, and consistent staying-with to live with the paradox without it impinging on my practice.

I am thus navigating multiple selves in this practice: the ego self with a day to wage: appointments before and after practice; the dancer self who draws on past experience and training; a process-self who is devoted simply to following what is arising, open-endedly; and the Witness who may not be aware of itself all the time but is the one watching these other selves, the one who feels the body, sees the thoughts, the one who experiences all the other selves and experiences. How exactly does this relate to the notion of an ecological self?

### **And Afterwards?**

I go straight to RCS cafe to write up. On the way I meet my friend Sanjay who is chatty and very socially oriented. I'm pleased to find I can be easy with him, not lose the state I found in the practice, and still function with amiability but a sure sense of boundaries about what I have to do now. I write in the cafe and confirm that re-playing the soundtrack from practice helps to enter the evocation state. It also creates a barrier to the cafe bustle (headphones on) so I can return to practice state.

I feel a sense of the long-haul nature of this work; not simply the length of a PhD but the length perhaps of my life. If I want to stay aware of and able to cultivate selves, I have to visit this space regularly. The blocks will change, the situations will change, my life-stage will change, and I must return again and again to these sources of how I'm experiencing myself: meditation, dancing, writing, *immersing with awareness*.

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## Fourteen: Subject-Body

*Date: 04/03/22*

*Duration & Location: 2.5 hours, RCS room R1*

*Music: Thomas Köner 'Permafrost',*

*Mynoise in utero, vinyl and white noise sweeps*

### **Framing**

I begin with 20 minutes meditation then 20 minutes vocal warm-up. Then 50 minutes dancing, beginning lying down with my head on a cushion. The camera is setup in what is probably too-low light to capture much; I make the decision that this is less important than going deeply into the practice, and the low lighting helps me do that. R1 is becoming a favourite room of mine because it feels less potentially over-looked than many of the other studios. It's also quite black box-like, giving a ritual enclosed space sense. The music is droning, thick, earthy and complex enough to keep difference in play.

### **What**

Purposelessness, repetition, core (stomach / intestines / psoas / heart). Stay close to the body, don't watch it. Be inside the brain, look through the eyes. Keep devoting back to that, 'my' only job.

I am lying flat with my torso zipped up and the long back of my neck resting on a black cushion on the black floor. My knees are up and start to swing from left to right, taking my legs with them while my spin stays flat. I am sinking myself into my body: this means I am becoming merged with the brain, the eyes, the blood, the human form in which sensation is at play. I am intentionally collapsing the distance between me and the body, not looking or relating so much as becoming it and merging. I'm not sure if I ever completely vanish into this, a total fusion, but I recognise when I'm closer and when I'm further away.

I don't give instructions to the body (if I did that would be a separate me giving prompts and orders). Rather, the part of me that would give instructions is given another task: devotion to merging. Movement and dancing is happening, sloppy, playful. I do not watch this from outside much, but rather be it. There is absolutely no relevant goal here beyond this. All body dancing comes from body. Body has its own agenda. Camera is ignored.

Sometimes I am very active as body, shaking, swooping, jogging on the spot. Sometimes very very still - I am in many moments in the womb. I never left the womb – if womb is the world – and I am foetus drifting. The blood is evidence for this. I am being dense and heavy in embodiment, a sort of meat and blood dance. There's a calm steadiness to the endeavour: again and again I devote myself to becoming the body.

I recall several times Nagatomo's distinction between subject-body and object-body. To merge with the body is I think to become subject-body. To become the body, brain, form, lungs, stomach, heart is a very clear thing, but what is not clear is where these things stop. Their modality is to *radiate*, from a somewhat-determined centre (co-incident with the object-body?) outwards into the surrounding ambiance. The floor, the air, all objects, space, and time. Sometimes an evolutionary sense comes in: the memories, not clear but announcing themselves, of my bloodbonesatomswater. They have their histories throughout the cosmos and time, and if I am becoming them then I am also tuning into what they say, what they whisper about where they have been, their cosmos-long journey to form me.

I am finishing quietly, protective womb-space I am and am in. Density and meatspace more than usual; less light and flimsy than I sometimes am in dancing. No extremes of emotion, but a warmth of *life* in the body which has its own ideas about what to do. I follow this to the end, even in cleaning up the studio. Steadiness.

## How

I navigate a lot of fear in beginning this session. I am afraid of two whole hours in the studio, trying to prove something. I soothe this by welcoming it, overtly recognising *here you are my fear; come on, let's do something together*. Not a rejection or suppression. This is how I navigate fear.



My other strategy is to tune my will, my devotion, tending it like a pilot light powering the session. 'I' keep reminding and urging myself into this only job: devote to becoming the body, which has life, and watch and be with what the body does.

So two main intentions in this session: welcoming fear into the warm space of practice, letting it be convinced on its own terms of the worth of what's going on and its safety in taking part, and secondly, tuning my devotion to becoming the physical body.

### Who

I am at the outset double at least: the one who is there to practice, the one who is afraid to practice. The one who is there to practice is not necessarily free from fear, as it is the one who is also time-bound and doing a PhD. The motivator. The one who is *afraid* is certainly the child in me, the small one facing tasks too big for it its own life. Poor Paul. He warms up slowly as things go in; he is becoming more convinced that his being is valid. He is coming home to the body and the body is coming home to him.



I am becoming a steadier one, more embodied in the way of density, hereness, concreteness, now.  
I am carrying this with me out of the studio and into the street.

### **And Afterwards?**

I am keeping the devotion to being-body slowburning in the street. I am smoking a cigarette on Sauchiehall street with the feeling of density within me, inhabiting my eyes and brain and posture. I am looking at a tree growing out of the concrete, thin and grey. I'm putting my hand on it and feeling *its* density, its interior embodiment. I am speaking with the tree through my hand and my devotion to being my body, which lets me (through my body) meet the body of the tree. The tree is real. I am real. The world is real. Fluid does not mean fly-away. There is weight in life. There is gravity and self-dignity in being solid.

I think of the Islamic notion that God is *nearer to you than your jugular vein*. The subject-object split **starts in the body**. I am training to heal this split. If I heal it in the body, if 'I' become the embodied one, this also shifts the status of 'you. I can feel this in talking to the barista in the cafe, in looking at the wallpapered wall opposite me as I write. Rolling density of the world.

\*



## Fifteen: A Japanese Ghost Leaking Moonlight

*Date: 07/03/22*

*Duration & Location: 1.5 hours, RCS room R1*

*Music: Carmen Villian 'Only Love from Now On',*

*Mynoise white sweeps, ocean sounds*

### **Framing**

I begin with 30 mins stretching, warm-up and voice work. I decide to go back to Butoh basics today: walking, tuning into the fine sensations of simple images. I also want to address something I've noticed creeping in: a tendency to abstract myself and watch the body dancing too much, rather than really *being* it with the whole of myself and therefore transforming more deeply. Trying to re-insert myself into my body deeply, head to toe. I think this tendency bears watching through the PhD, as the need for later analysis can lead to a detached approach to what's happening which can prevent depth of transformation.

I dance 40 minutes to Carmen Villian and white noise sweeps/ocean sounds. I do not use the video camera. This helps a lot in feeling free to practice.

### **What**

I am standing in the dark room. My fingers start dripping water onto the floor. Rain falls on my crown. Gradually I am drenched. I feel my torso and upwards detach from my legs.... My legs are those of a Japanese ghost (I have no feet). From behind I feel a push. It is life pushing me forwards, the past and all of history and cosmos. I am the leading edge of a process of life. I do not even have to walk, for life makes me walk. I walk forwards slowly, from the pushed torso. My feet find their way. I am navigating technique all the same: how to be sure the thing that is walking is the life pushing me, steadily, so that my torso doesn't waver left or right. This means difficult foot technique, precise movements of the hip sockets.... I find the best way to do this is rather than focussing on the legs, to focus on the floating torso and feel life pushing me forwards. My legs

and feet will figure out the rest.

I am walking across the room four or five times, turning slowly. I am continually drenched. Later I am still in the centre of the room. Rhythm from the music instils a wave upwards from my feet, which I allow to move me only as much as it will, minute and precisely up through the torso, neck, head. A libidinal rush infuses the wave, ecstatic, and I am vanishing into it. I am sinking down now to the floor. My hands and arms are charged with misty electricity.

I am moving in a seated position, surrounded by foliage. I move the leaves and the space around me, and the leaves show me how I can move. My third eye is alight, my vision circling three-hundred-and-sixty degrees. My back is an eye.

I am on pebbles now, a shoreline washing backwards and forwards; the white noise sweeps in the music support this. I am moving on all fours, a quadruped connected through the spine. Suddenly I can feel the moon above me and to the right. My hand is extending to catch it. Revelation: my hand thought to catch the moon but instead *the moon pours its light into my hand and through the rest of my body*. I am filling with moonlight, milky liquid flowing through where my blood was. In the dark room I am full of white moonlight, moon being resting and traversing wet pebbles as the tide washes in and out.

The moonlight is spilling from me, pooling on the black floor. I am leaking moonlight.

The bell rings, my time is up too soon. I am lying on the floor, wishing I could go on, slowly letting go and finishing. I let the soundtrack keep playing till the last moment of leaving the room, a wish to keep this experience alive.

## How

I am staying with my intention, which is simply to get closer to my body, to really live it, to be it and all the images in it. I am re-inserting myself each time I abstract my mind to watch the process. I can feel each time I re-insert (an effort of intention) that my dance gains intensity and transformation. I do this by disappearing into the dance.



I am balancing technique (the difficulties of walking as the cosmos, inevitably) with image immersion. I am finding they can support each other. I need a well-trained body to sustain the transformations I'm going through without fumbling, stumbling, losing intensity by being distracted by technique. So technique needs to be so well grounded that it can disappear into the background. If I am at a loss, I use music or remember my original impulses to go deep again. I am feeling this as a process deepening over time, and the wish to dance for longer in future.

## **Who**

I am shifting between selves; there is the researcher, close to the individual me, concerned about getting it right, doing something worthwhile, getting a PhD. There is the technical dancer, mindful of training, rediscovering how to walk in a Butoh body. There is the being, the one who vanishes into the dancing and is penetrated by the music, permeated by moonlight and leaves and endless shore waves. When I find the moonlight enter me I reach a synthesis of some kind, lit up and dancing with moon-blood, but quite secure at the boundaries of daily concerns: studio time, tidying up when the session ends. I tidy up as a mixture of moonlightdancer and functional human, ready for the world outside. The synthesis can certainly be deeper, but first I will have to dance longer and vanish more thoroughly.

## **And Afterwards?**

I am calm and unrushed going to the cafe. I purposely remember the moonlight in my blood as I wait in line. For a moment this makes me feel like something alien to the social situation around me, but then I remember that what applies to me also applies to these other beings. We are moon people, fractal fragments of moonlight playing out this cafe situation. As I finish writing I feel it still: a moon freshness, a wide awareness, an insertion into my body, and a *nowness* of presence. The moon is up there behind the blue.

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## Sixteen: Resonance Bath

Date: 11/03/22

Duration & Location: 1 hour, RCS room R7 and outdoors in Ruchill Park

Music: Mynoise drones, noise, and rain

### **Framing**

By the time I am settled in the studio there is only 30 minutes left. I dance immediately a *resonance bath*, with drones, noise and rain from MyNoise, plus a lot of voice work. When time is up I don't feel finished, so I drive to Ruchill Park, and meditate in the car for 15 minutes outside it, then spent 20 minutes walking and moving in the park.

### **What**

I am not thinking beyond the phrase *resonance bath*. I am resonating with my voice. I am feeling resonances between the room, the floor and my body. The music vibrates through all of these. The word *bath* is encouraging an immersion, a sinking in. Mists of resonant energy, whorls and spirals, arising from within my body and moving out into the room. My body temperature is high. I loosen my crown and the mask of my face to let the steam escape. I am on the floor a lot, stretching and muscles working and singing all at the same time. My eyes and brain go very soft and wide; no narrow point of focus. I am wave walking, impulses that come mainly from the hip sockets, a backwards tidal moonwalk and then the same forwards. My hands and arms float in the resonances of the air. Everything radiates out from itself and mingles with everything else.

Later I am meditating in the car. This simple phrase resonance bath has triggered so much, and I am not ready to get out of the car yet. I watch my wide awareness, somehow spherical and radiating. My forehead is wide and smooth. I feel ease, warmth, suspension in the liquid of the resonant world which does not ask of me anything but to be with it and dance.



Later I am walking in the park. The green is speaking to me first: resonant frequency of various green, from grass leaves bushes. The concrete path is doing the same but in its own modality. The same with the ginger cans and ring-pulls on the path verge, and the dog walkers. We are singing to each other through colour and shape, the way a binaural beat (two frequencies close together) create a third thing in the space between. I resonate with grass, with concrete. I am Taurus-calm. The shapes of some trees, long brown arms dance gesturing up and out ... I feel this, lean into the directions the branches are pointing. There is nothing to be gained, nothing to reach for. Just singing to each other.

## How

I make the firm decision to stay simple, not to try to achieve, because time is short. Only the phrase *resonance bath* and how that reverberates into my bodymind, into the room, from the speakers. These two words trigger an unfolding that is the practice; they are all that is needed. It feels natural to sing; it feels natural to go to the floor. I am in love with suspension in the resonance world. Because this is clearly working I simply lean into it, dedicate to it, until the music stops.

## Who

I am easy today. Even before I started, knowing time would be short, I did not panic; I did not nurture the slight anxiety. I am joyful and calm in dancing; tickled that it could be this easy. I am in rapport with the resonating everything around, including the body. This co-resonating keeps the differences moving but also breaks down the barriers. We are resonating together and so we are all the same person. I feel real *surrender*, melting the shell of my me and my story and my fears into the nowness of pingpong between surfaces and forms, and the energies which whirl through them and keep things moving. I'm in the net, a node of the net, Indra omnireflecting. The blooming of peace with nothing to do but float is stronger now than any remaining anxiety (dukka). It's a percentages game, and I am now more immersed than separate.

## And Afterwards?

I still feel wonderful writing in the cafe. I am disinclined to take things too seriously. I am

marinading in open resonance still. I would dearly love to maintain this all the time, a connective bathing backdrop to my life amongst life and the world and other beings. Might this be a short daily practice even when there's no studio time?

\*



## Seventeen: A Garden Blooms in my Pelvis

*Date: 21/03/22*

*Duration & Location: 45 minutes, RCS room R5*

*Music: MyNoise isochronic tones, grey noise, and perception cloud*

### **Framing**

My starting points today:

Breathing in, I feel grateful

Breathing out, I give my love back to the world

I am the loving world

Closer and closer

My brain is included

My point of view is inside and with the loving world

(Not looking in from outside)

I become part of it.

(Kimmerer, Thich Nhat Hanh)

(Also byakko-sha if yr stuck:))

Pelvis-core generation: psoas muscle flexion.

*I have discovered a garden blooming in my pelvis. It throws shoots and blossoms, pods and vines out from my core through my torso, becoming my head, becoming my hands and arms, becoming my legs.*

### **What**

I am entering the room. I have an enthusiasm, something building I discovered last night whilst sitting on the couch at home: deep rotations and flexings in my pelvis, from lower abdominals through to my back and down into my buttocks and thighs. I think it's centred around activity (stretching, flexing, spinal waving) centred on the psoas muscle. I am sitting down on a yoga block cross-legged and I am feeling into this again. My pelvis starts to move. I forgo the temptation to question this and launch into the process that has begun.

In the back of the process is the mantra I discovered yesterday: *Breathing in, I feel grateful. Breathing out, I give love back to the world.* But the main engine of my dance is my pelvis, a kundalini-like awakening that propels. I circle my pelvis, rock it back and forth, and my spine waves in response. My muscles are activated. I am on all fours now, still flexing from the psoas, and it is sending waves, sudden shocks, streams of motion back down to my legs and up through my spine, enveloping my torso. My head and arms, and gradually my face, are taken over by this. My small self, locked in the face, gradually gives up into a weird ecstasy and lets itself be absorbed. I keep my eyes wide open, able to let them be windows, not Butoh glaukiness but open to transformation; no mugging for an imaginary audience. The soundtrack is perfect; the 'isochronic tones' give a pulse that keeps my pelvis moving. This is *energetic*: a feeling of joyful work being done. I am sweating (the room is hot) and I am leaning into this.

I am standing, wave-walking deep from the pelvis, hanging, arms floating while my pelvis gyrates sensually. I feel the pelvis as the bed of a garden. A garden blooms in my pelvis, sends tubers, leaves, shoots, stems, blossoms, spores up into my body (torso, head, arms) and down into my body (legs, feet). This garden image is *good to eat a thousand years* (Ginsberg). It keeps giving and giving and I keep giving myself to it. Ecstasy and no concern with being a human. Sometimes I sing too, with the root of my voice coming from the same pelvic origin.

## How

My focus for the entire session is the in the pelvis, the psoas. Everything else becomes empty to receive the impulses from here. Torso limbs head face, all in submission to the garden blooming in my pelvis. The pelvis is so far from my social centre (face, shoulders) that when I keep my core



of attention there anything can happen. No real decisions need be made, just a firm planting of attention in the pelvic bowl, the psoas and muscles surrounding it. They have their own agenda and I am finding it a joy to be led by them. Growing this joy and attention overrides anything else that might get in the way. 45 minutes dancing passes in no time at all.

## Who

I awake late and miss half of my studio slot, but I am an easy being nonetheless. There is an inkling, an enthusiasm, a drive to going to the studio and I protect that and put it foremost. I am the being who thinks that something is going to happen. In the studio I do not even stop to consider, I just plug in the stereo, change, sit on the yoga mat and GO: my enthusiasm finds its process. There is a straight line from this beginning to the joyful opening I find in the practice. Something wants to bloom and I give it all my attention and assistance. As it blooms in the pelvis I keep opening to it, until the pelvic garden becomes the core from which the blossoms of my limbs, torso and head grow. I become a garden being, plugged directly into *life*, growing without preconceived ideas or targets, *expressing* through form sheer aliveness, which has its motion, which has its qualities and shifts. *I am alive.*

## And Afterwards?

I drive haphazardly, intuitively, out to Bishopbriggs, find a grey shopping precinct with a cafe in which to write. I am still a pelvic being, walking from the pelvis, sensual and confident. My attention is wide, time has ceased to matter. I am writing with an open body, free in the torso, *nowed* by my *hereness*. I wish to nurture this continually now that practice is technically over. I will go to the necropolis to keep feeling it, dance some more, watch the city from this place of Taurean aliveness and peace.

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## Eighteen: Vanishing into Gratitude

Date: 23/03/22

Duration & Location: 1.5 hours, RCS room R1

Music My Noise pelvic garden

### **Framing**

I have kept the pelvic garden alive since my last practice on Monday, and it has kept giving. I have also kept with the simple mantra I recently hit on: *Breathing in, I feel gratitude. Breathing out, I return my love to the world.* This becomes abbreviated to: *Gratitude (inhalation). Returning love (exhalation)*

These prompt the notion of *vanishing into gratitude* for today's practice, with the strange appending of a focus on the pelvis for energetic reasons I don't yet understand. I meditate for 20 minutes, and then dance for one hour straight - soundtrack 'pelvic garden' preset on MyNoise with a twelve-hour time-stretched version of Schubert's *Ave Maria*, which at this speed begins to sound like the Ligeti choral music used in 2001: a Space Odyssey (Kubrick).

### **What**

I am cross-legged on my yoga block. My head is sore. I remember how I drank in the sunlight on the walk here, asking it to bless my head. I feel the sun from the window behind me. I am bending forward to lay my head on the studio floor, and experiencing immediate relief. The submission of my head, source of my thoughts and intellect, to the earth, with my heart higher than my brain, is transforming me. I am rolling my skull left and right on the floor, feeling my way. The rolling of my head is activating my spine, and I tune into my pelvis at the other end of the chain. I am moving.

I am rolling forwards onto all fours, my hands and the skeleton of my arms light but just strong enough to support. My pelvis and my head, two ends of the snake that is my spine. No thoughts. Gratitude. I am feeling wonderful, cradling my headache within a larger expanse. With my



attention emphasising my pelvis, psoas, coccyx, I move only in ways that are suggested by this region. In this way I am discovering surprising, non-habitual ways to progress the movement of this body. I anticipate twisting, turning, standing in a particular way, and my pelvis says *no, this way*. I gratefully comply. The whole hour of dance unspools from this orientation.

I am frequently on the floor, twisting, sometimes upside down on the back of my neck or in a headstand. My face does not originate in my face. When I begin I lay hands on my face, cradling my eyes, my brow, my skull. I erase my face and now instead my face grows from my pelvis. My face is the result of the garden blooming down below. Likewise my arms, hands, fingers.

I am on my side, thigh and pelvic bones in the earth. A cry, a *caw* like a crow, erupts from me several times. I am no longer human. I become crow until it leaves. I am luxuriant in this process. Nothing makes sense, for sense is no longer present or necessary. When the hour is up the mynoise preset fades, but Ave Maria is still ringing out and I cannot finish just like that; I let my gestures unfurl and complete to the song, and turn the volume down slowly rather than cut sharply. I am calm and unhurried dressing and tidying up.

## How

My main techniques are a focus on the pelvis and an opening to gratitude, a vanishing into what comes. To go deeper I ensure that I am not holding myself apart from what is happening in the body, but vaulting passionately into it. I know how deep I have gone when I find my face is no longer *mine*, but a result.

## Who

I am a being who says *thank you*. A being who has replaced *I need* with *thank you for what is already here and continually coming*. I am a being sinking into a bath of empty fecundity. Michael has left the building. I am in endless immersion. I am still a being in time, but time is no longer a measurement but a cradle; likewise space.

## And Afterwards?

I keep my discoveries with me leaving the building, walking the street, ordering coffee, sitting. I am wide, with no narrow focus. I am immersed. I feel it now writing these words with the music in the headphones. Nothing is mine and everything comes to me, undeserved and without conditions. I do nothing by myself. I just say thank you and life opens me. *You are being opened* (Rumi).

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## Nineteen: My Face is a Result

Date: 25/03/22

Duration & Location: 1 hour, RCS room R5

Music: William Basinski, Lawrence English 'Selva Oscura'

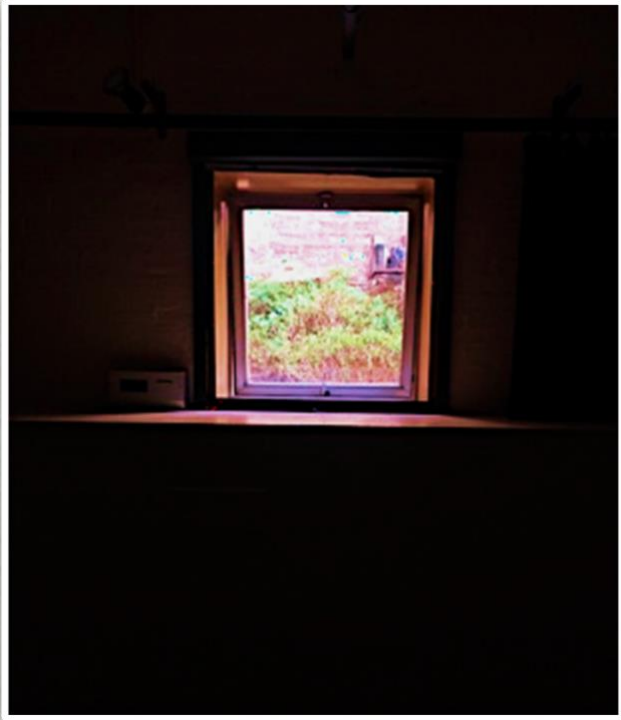
### **Framing**

*My face is a result.* I have been working with this in tandem with the focus on the garden in the pelvis. When the pelvis is felt as a fertile garden, a source of the plants growing up and down to become the rest of the body (legs and feet as roots below the ground), and the face is encouraged to be nothing (*I do not have a face*), then the face that appears is a natural, guileless result of blossoming from the pelvic garden. This is some weird, beautiful shit. From where is the pelvic garden nourished and fertilised? From the world. Thus *Breathing in, I feel gratitude. Breathing out, I return my love to the world.* Giving love to the world is a returning because the love came from the world and infused me. I am a nothing infused with love, from which my garden grows to give love back. **This is an ecological selfhood.**

I dance one hour to Basinski and English. I do not warm up or think much before beginning. As has been happening recently, I arrive in the room with an intent, a drive, a *something* already waiting to happen, so I simply set the room and myself and lean into *the dance that is already happening* (Atsushi Takenouchi).

### **What**

I am standing in the room vibrating. The music is swelling up. I am revolving softly. My arms are rising as they like to do, floating above my shoulders. I am walking from my pelvis, erect and inevitable. I am turning, and I see through the square window green plants rising:



They are speaking to me greenly, saying *up* and *down* and *grow*. I am remembering Atsushi's teaching with the trees in the forest in Italy. *You look at tree. Tree looks at you. When you see the tree, the tree sees you.* I see the plants and I know that they see me too. I am greening, I am upping and downing. I am being overcome by the dialogue. I do not become the plants exactly; I resonate with them and exchange energy. I am vibrating green. I am dancing plant.

I sink to the floor, and through the window the plant also sinks. I am below in the earth.

I realise everything below my pelvis when standing is below the earth, so when I sink down I am descending into the soil. I lose flesh and I am a skeleton, bones moving in soil spilling from my edges. Sometimes worms cover me. When I raise a skeletal arm high enough it breaks the surface of the soil. I am dancing in the earth.

Now I am on all fours, my back horizontal, and I feel I am Atlas supporting the sky. It is not a trial, but it is a responsibility. The sky is soft, cloud-edged, not a burden. A responsibility. I move with my back straight, careful not to disturb the sky.

Now I am drawn to the window ledge, the better to resonate with the plants outside. I climb up onto the ledge, clavicle height, without thinking how I'm doing it. It is very easy to do. I am sitting cross-legged on the window ledge, facing the window. I see these are urban plants, a space of green and soil surrounded by red brick. Briefly I resonate more with the red brick, sandstone reddening my body deep inside.

Now I am turning to face the room, red brick and green at my back. I see the ceiling rigging, a sturdy metal pole extending across the room:





I know I have to climb along it. A probably human urge, or primate anyway, the same one that prompts me to climb rocks and hills and trees. I am grasping the pole and raising my legs up to curl around it. I am shimmying along, my head and hair hanging down, maybe nine feet from the floor. I stay there until I am done, then drop.

Later I have to pee. I put my boots on and my mask and go out into the corridor, trying to keep the dance going. I say hi to a colleague teaching students outside. When I get back to the studio things have dissipated. I do not worry about this. I empty my face and start to move. Something new will happen. I am doing floor work; not much will to stand today. Lots of muscle and twining and twisting. Imagistically fairly contentless. Perhaps the intense thing for today has already happened with the plants.

The time on my phone rings, the music fades. I stand and bow to the plants. I take my leave.

## How

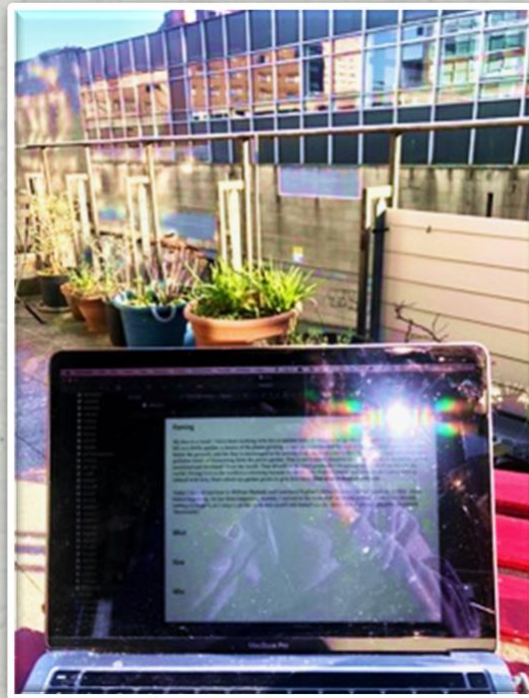
I do all this by being easy and open. I am building trust in my body's connection to the infinite again. An open body, a de-socialised body, can dance like this. No amount of thinking or commentary really helps. Sometimes the commentary arises, and I don't think it ever deepens things; I intend instead into the images arising deep within my body, the plants and stone and earth. The difference between thinking/speaking internally, and just offering and opening into the process, is palpable. Also: no amount of force or efforting helps. Sincerity, intention, patience, and opening are far better tools for what I am doing.

## Who

I'm the one who lives now in the garden, quiet and sensitised. To be active I have to be quiet. I am confident open thank you. (Bjork: *I am grateful grapefruit*).

## And Afterwards?

I've come to the Locavore cafe along from RCS, and wonderfully it is outdoors in the sun, but not so sunny I can't see the laptop screen. As soon as I begin to write I see just beyond the table potted plants. When I look at them, they look at me:



Like this it is effortless to recall the practice, because it's still going on. When I look at the sunlight and blue sky, they look at me. All of the signage around me seems to be green. I am greening still. I feel calm and quite happy.

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## Twenty: Inner Muscles

*Date: 31/03/22*

*Duration & Location: 2 hours, RCS room M3*

*Music: Tomasz Bednarczyk, Mynoise 'suspension'*

### **Framing**

*Inner muscles:* initiating nothing but what comes from the deepest muscle layer and following those impulses to grow outwards. Externalising the nervous system and inner muscles - moving and walking around inside my body. Very little decision making needed from the ego.

One hour dancing: first half-hour in silence (birds chirping, plumbing, traffic), second half with Tomasz Bednarczyk and 'suspension' MyNoise preset.

### **What**

I am meditating. Pure awareness and life is flowing up and down, inside and out, making form and collapsing back to radiant void, and I am paying attention to it. This state is resistant to thought but open to devotion. I am devoting to this. Breath anchor and tripod knees and coccyx, spine long and erasure of the face. Halfway through I break the mudra of my hands and I am nurturing my face with them, soft backs of the hands against cheeks jaws eye sockets forehead, mothering childing softening into gladness. Meditation bell rings but I am already dancing.

I am remembering my only plan: a focus on the inner muscles for today. Conceiving of the body in its manifestation of layered stacks of twisting muscles, the outer surface ones normally getting the most attention. Today not. Simply by resting attention into the hidden muscular system it starts to respond and move. By the time I am visibly moving externally I have already rooted the movement deep inside; muscles and ligaments and tendons networking around my organs and torso down into my root (pelvis), networking out into my arms hands fingers in inner layers

beneath the more obvious external ones. They are coming alive and moving me. I sit lie stand twist dance in unusual, non-habitual shapes, prompted by the inner muscles. I stand up in impossible ways. There is tension but it is in-tentional tension residing in muscles I normally do not consciously use, so I levitate up from the floor without obvious use of external muscles. I am fascinated and know how to grow the fascination. I am disappearing into it.

Later I am an inversion: I have externalised my nervous system. I move from the image of my capillaries, nerves and networks alive and moving me inside, to them being outside in the room, so that I am walking around and dancing inside my own nervous system. This is polymorphic and polysomatic: my tongue a snake with its awakening agenda, and simultaneously my legs and toes, arms, jaw and forehead, shoulder joints and rib cage moving with their awakened priorities. Nothing to do but get lost in it. Calmness fascination and endlessness.

## How

I am learning the trick of taking the enthusiasm that is with me as I travel to the studio and running with it immediately; not overthinking. In general the evening before I will be working with a feeling or idea, such as the inner muscles, and I simply take that idea in and put it to work in the studio next day. Like this everything unspools easily and no less deeply. The *tuning of my devotions* seems once again to be the master key to this practice (Tara Brach: *Intention + Attention*). Like this I can open into genuinely being moved, by pitching my ego into devotion.

## Who

Really kind of no-one.

## And Afterwards?

I am walking very slowly from RCS to Sauchiehall street, still led by the inner muscles. I feel I'm presenting a different being to society (now back in my face on the street), and I'm realising nobody around me knows what I'm doing with myself, what I think I am, where I'm moving from. I can perform *walking along the street, sitting down at a table*, an innermuscle activated body and



no one is any the wiser; but I'm *being* from a different centre. I feel rejuvenated by this and wish to live in it more often.

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## Twenty-One: Arctic Drift

*Date: 14/04/22*

*Duration & Location: 1 hour, RCS room M3*

*Music: Llyn Y Cwn 'Du Y Moroedd'*

### **Framing**

No thought or pre-planning, except for one notion: the inner winds of Buddhist philosophy, and the tree-like conception of my pelvic basin that has been present with me over recent weeks. The notion of energy channels rising up tree like from the pelvis through torso, limbs and head, and reaching roots down through the legs, circulating and drifting as they swell. I'm impelled by this thought as soon as I arrive in the studio, and begin dancing joyfully. I use Llyn Y Cwn as a soundtrack (field recordings from the arctic, ship's bells, wind-like drones).

### **What**

I am pitched into arctic drift, no time even to consider; the energy shifts through my body are insistent that they know what to do, and I am devoting to them with immediate joy and relief. Now I'm bending and flowing dustwinds through me, spilling through channels of the body and out around in a haze. Now I'm making movements I've never made before; each time I rise or fall, turn or twist, I'm surprised by the route the body takes. I am spilling over.

Now I'm sitting like a crab on the floor, but I'm only hollow bones beneath a waterfall. Freezing water cascades over my crown, down through the body, sweeping it clean. A water emptiness articulated through contact with a skeleton.

Now the nostrils have become caverns, rock veins and acoustic space echoing in each one like the cathedral cave on the isle of Eigg. I am vast spaces bounded by skin and bone.



## **How**

Sudden and willing capitulation to a dance that is already happening. A feeling of YES which is all that is needed to dance; no thinking, but a reflection that this dancing is so much more peaceful and engrossing than how I spend so much of my day.

## **Who**

Self-vanishing is almost immediate today. Whatever quotidian being (with the bills and the deadlines and the emails and the dinner planning and the guilt and anxiety) leaves as a puff of smoke, leaving a dancing cosmos full of rain, tides, ice and rocks. A cold being dancing warmly, or vice versa. There is no real *I* here at all, though something or someone is in love with the world as it moves through.

## **And Afterwards?**

The feeling of never needing to speak again. The world is so full and I am suspended within it, an empty vessel through which energy winds are conducted (or self-conducting). I am very *NOW*. Nothing matters and everything is open and glistening.

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*How do you know but every bird*

*That cuts the airy way*



*Is an immense world of delight,*

*Closed by your senses five?*

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