

UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER
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Dance Department

***In-Between* dancing and the everyday:
A Choreographic Investigation**

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UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER accredited by THE UNIVERSITY OF
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ABSTRACT

DANCE DEPARTMENT

Doctor of Philosophy

***In-Between* dancing and the everyday: a choreographic investigation**

By Yael Flexer

This thesis constitutes a performative research enquiry the outcomes of which are three live ensemble choreographic works by the author, *Shrink'd* (2005-2007), *Doing, Done & Undone* (2007-2009) and *The Living Room* (2010-2011). These have been documented and are presented on DVDs and online. The written thesis serves as an exegesis of these works by examining the notions of *in-between* contained within an aesthetic of 'everydayness' as manifested in the works and the ways in which these works intersect and dialogue with performance and dance theory, phenomenological, feminist and post-colonial theoretical perspectives. The writing begins by outlining the key choreographic concerns and ideas driving the research, specifically the notion of *in-between* and the works' everyday aesthetic. It continues with a contextual framework charting the practice-led research methodologies employed, the key phenomenological metaphors and theoretical notions underpinning the enquiry as well as situating the works within a historical trajectory of choreographic practice.

The main part of the thesis (Chapters Two to Four) serves as an analysis of the primary output of the research project – the works themselves, bridging distinct strands of critical theory. This section of the written thesis journeys from the 'outside', via an analysis of theatrical framing, to the core of the practice in an exploration of the choreographic concerns and processes that drove the research. The examination of theatrical framing discusses the dramaturgical methodologies employed in the submitted works, including the reconfiguration of theatrical space in *Shrink'd*, the compositional use of space, in *Doing, Done & Undone* and the referencing of the temporal frame in *The Living Room* arguing that by pointing to the performance frame and fraying the fourth wall the works facilitate an *in-between* embodied and reflective mode of viewing between performers and audience members. The investigation of the core of the practice examines portraiture via textual address and the interface of text with moving body, and then moves on to discuss the body as a parallel corporeal form of address, 'a body that speaks'.

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DVD 1: Referenced Excerpts from *Shrink'd*, *Doing, Done & Undone*, *The Living Room* and *The Living Room* guest section (Israel)

Online links for referenced excerpts:

Shrink'd: <http://vimeo.com/album/2927610>

Doing, Done & Undone: <http://vimeo.com/album/2927615>

The Living Room, *The Living Room* Guest Section, Israel: <http://vimeo.com/album/2927625>

Please Note the access code for all referenced excerpts is: Dance

DVD 2: *Shrink'd*: Full Performance

Long-shot video documentation of *Shrink'd* at The Place Theatre, London, 29 April 2006.

Online link for full performance: <http://vimeo.com/99907008>

And <http://eprints.chi.ac.uk/1064/1/FlexerShrinkd.mp4>

DVD 3: *Doing, Done & Undone*

Constitutes two DVDs (under the title DVD3) of *Doing, Done & Undone*

3a Final Performance:

Long-shot video documentation of the final performances of the triptych (with Prologues),

- *Doing* at Heddington Theatre, Oxford on the 12th March 2009 and
- *Done & Undone* at Tacchi Morris Theatre on the 19th March 2009

3b. Premiere with original cast:

Long shot video documentation of the premiere of the triptych (without prologues) at The Showroom, University of Chichester on the 23rd April 2009 (included here as it is performed by the original cast to give a more accurate reflection of the movement quality).

Online link for full performance of Premiere with Original cast:

<http://eprints.chi.ac.uk/1219/>

Individual pieces:

Doing: <http://vimeo.com/99906780>

Done: <http://vimeo.com/99907007>

Undone: <http://vimeo.com/99907011>

DVD 4: *The Living Room*

Long-shot video documentation of *The Living Room* at The Place Theatre, London, 9th March 2010

Online link for full performance: <http://vimeo.com/99907009>

And: <http://eprints.chi.ac.uk/1220/>

Notes on using accompanying DVDs (visual documentation)

The majority of DVD references are short (up to two minutes) and serve to illustrate a particular point or serve as a visual reminder of a particular section or moment in the works discussed. There are two longer DVD references, the 'voting' in *The Living Room* (as the text is too long to reference within the writing and as it was felt useful for the reader to see the text in conjunction with dancers' gestural and facial response) and *The Living Room* guest section as performed in Israel on the 9th April 2010 (to give the reader an understanding of how the guest section further layered the work particularly with reference to the notion of the *unhome*). If the reader has seen the *The Living Room*, or *The Living Room* with guests (live, on DVD or online) it is not necessary to view these entire sections.

Declaration of Authorship

I, Yael Flexer declare that the thesis entitled *In-Between* dancing and the everyday: A choreographic investigation and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- Parts of this work have been published as: Flexer, Y. (2012) Revisiting a Dance History: Traces of the 1960s in Current Contemporary Dance, in Eshel, R. (ed) *Dance Today*, No 22, Aug 2012, Tel-Aviv: Tmuna Theatre

Signed:

Date:.....

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Introduction

***In-Between* dancing and the everyday:**

A Choreographic Investigation

Israeli choreographer Yael Flexer has made a sense both of informality and of intimacy a trademark of her work. Less interested in showcasing the physical prowess of her dancers than in their ability to communicate in subtle, emotional ways, she sets her productions amid scenarios that tread a borderline between performance and the reality of the everyday. (Mackrell 2010)

This thesis constitutes the creation of and a deep reflection on three of my ensemble dance works, *Shrink'd* (2003-2006), *Doing, Done & Undone* (2007-2009) and *The Living Room* (2009-2011).

The thesis is primarily concerned with notions of *in-between* as manifested in my works, while ‘dancing’ and ‘everyday’ or ‘everydayness’ are seen as equal terms which refer to the traversing between a formal choreographic approach¹ and an informal mode of presentation. While the scripted steps in my works involve complex choreographic construction and intense bodily effort, articulation and movement detail, the ‘steps’ form only one part of the works’ intentions and communicative field. As a performative research project the main intention of the practical works is ultimately to ‘do’ to affect and produce resonance for viewers (Haseman 2007, p.150). The written thesis, as a ‘post event’ (Protopapa 2011, p.106), serves as an analysis of the completed works and the creative process, interrogating notions of *in-between* that emerge from the works through dialogue with a variety of theoretical frameworks. These include not only dance and performance theory but also phenomenological, post structural and post-colonial perspectives.

¹ By formal choreographic approach I refer to the way in which the movement sections within the completed works are concerned with rigorous movement development and innovation alongside complex compositional structuring. The compositional aspect concerns the spatial configuration of dancers (and the movement, trajectories and lines they form in space) as well as the use of formal choreographic devices such as repetition, variation, unison and canon, accumulation, acceleration and precise timing.

1. The notion of *in-between*: articulating my choreographic concerns

Valerie Briginshaw (2001) employs the term *in-between* to her reading and analysis of a variety of dances by key dance makers. For her

notions of in-between spaces...problematize, challenge and offer an alternative to the dichotomies of binary oppositions. Bodies and subjects can be considered to be in-between because of a range of ambivalences that are inherent to their construction. (Briginshaw 2001, p.14)

Although she does not specifically write about the space *in-between* formal and informal choreographic presentation her proposition of the *in-between* as central to dance analysis is critical to the reading of my works offered in this thesis.

Elizabeth Grosz's (2001) writing about the space of the *in-between* serves as a useful metaphor for imagining the ebb and flow between performer and audience that I instigate in my works:

The space of the in-between is that which is not a space, a space without boundaries of its own, which takes on and receives itself, its form, from the outside, which is not its outside (this would imply that it has a form) but whose form is the outside of the identity, not just of an other...but of others...(Grosz 2001, p.90)

Using this notion of the space *in-between* I propose a porous or shifting boundary between an audience and performers. My reading of Grosz adopts an opening, a malleable, permeable space, one that moves away from binary conceptions. In my works this suggests a dialogic or dialectic theatrical form that involves viewers and performers in an embodied and reflective exchange. This understanding of the *in-between* was particularly pertinent to *Shrink'd*, which employed a reconfiguring of theatrical space in order to facilitate embodied resonance between performers and audiences members. However, it is important to note that even in works such as *Shrink'd*, my choreographic position does not imply that audience members and performers are interchangeable; rather it suggests a movement back and forth, that dismantles, refuses or points to the fourth wall. The reality and convention of theatre

is referred to and revealed within performance, and is contained through an aesthetic of ‘everydayness’.

Grosz also argues that ‘the in-between defines the space of a certain virtuality, a potential that always threatens to disrupt the operations of the identities that constitute it’ (Grosz 2001, pp 91-92), another reading that is relevant in my work. The notion of the *in-between* in my works offers openings for performers to interject and alter the choreography during performance. Although this may occasionally involve a degree of movement improvisation, it occurs through verbal, facial and gestural commentary and reflection by performers within the performance on their own or others’ performance, on the audience, or on the choreography itself. The weaving of everyday conversational and gestural behaviour into the formal and often strict, precise and intricate composition reinforces the notion of *in-between* formal and informal presentation. The choreography, as a formal construct, is also commented on, negotiated and altered by the dancers through their performance. This suggests another *in-between*, that of the space between the performer and the work. Thus, in the works, meaning emerges through the performers’ somatic and conceptual dialogue with, reflection on and questioning of the work and their relation to it.

The works play with several other key notions of *in-between*, pointing to the slippage between two terms or assumed binaries, as such offering both an opening for multiple readings but, more importantly, a sense of ambivalence, a refusal to adopt fixed positions. All three works (and in particular *The Living Room*) point to the choreographer as author of the work through textual address (prologues). Concomitantly the dancers interject with their own comments during these prologues, offering their own opinion and asserting their authority, thus suggesting that the work is created and mediated (*in-between*) the dancers and the choreographer as well as between the dancer and an audience. Further still, text delivered as prologues or as part of other sections in *Shrink’d* and *The Living Room*, offers descriptions of what the piece will contain or ‘truisms’² and personal information about the dancers or the

²Truisms in the context of *Shrink’d* and *The Living Room*, encompass statements that are self-referential in that they discuss cliché’s about dancers or performance, such as (in *The Living Room*): ‘Because we like to dance, and because we’re good at it. Well, better than thinking about it or talking about it.’ Or ‘There will be no handstands, no headstands...not much standing of any kind, particularly

work. While these contain a grain of truth there is a slippage between what is promised and what is delivered. Whilst the text constantly plays with these slippages of assumed ‘truisms’ or statements, the body opens yet more questions, embodiment getting in the way and at other times verifying and allowing for conflicting positions. This correlates to Ann Cooper Albright’s discussion of the figure eight loop of somatic experience and representation, which performers negotiate and move between (Albright 1997, p.12). Thus the *in-between* truth and fiction, embodiment and representation, are always at play and offered to an audience in the reading of the works.

The space *in-between* presence and absence, the doing and undoing of performance, its trace and erasure, were key in the making, and are manifested in *Doing, Done & Undone*. In *The Living Room* this was further articulated through a reference to the three tenses future, present and past, thus directly referring to performance’s ephemeral nature from potentiality, through presence into ‘pastness’. *The Living Room* suggests a further slippage between presence and absence, making a direct reference to a notion of the *unhome*. The ‘home’ we inhabit on the stage, in a work entitled *The Living Room*, contains an absence at its heart. We enact furniture in the absence of ‘real’ or actual furniture and, in other sections of the dance, particular dancers refer to themselves as *unhomed*. To a lesser degree this is also hinted at in the prologue and ‘manifesto’³ of *Shrink’d*. Through this, the works begin to point towards the notion of hybrid identities, that in themselves are constituted *in-between* (Bhabha 1994/2007, p.313).

The notion of hybrid identities is also pertinent to the ‘author function’ highlighted in all three works. It locates me as choreographer and performer both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the work, occupying the space of the *in-between*. This choreographic tactic highlights my liminal subject position as both Israeli and British, an ‘insider’ and a ‘stranger’. The inside/outside position resonates with Jewish diasporic experience of ‘galut’ or ‘exile’ as the Jewish experience of ‘otherness’ and as such relates to

not me looking at you looking at me, looking at the audience, meaningfully’. For full ‘manifesto’ text please see Appendix Two.

³ The ‘manifesto’ is a textual section in *Shrink’d* delivered in the dark in which the dancers and I discuss and critic the work, as well as offering some information about the dancers. For full ‘manifesto’ text please see Appendix One.

Levinas's discussion of the encounter of the Other, referenced in this thesis (Moran 2004, p.344).

All three works suggest self-reflexivity employing on-stage witnessing and episodic structuring to underscore and reveal the mechanics of performance⁴. In this they point to the *in-between* of rehearsal process and performance. The use of text and humour is more akin to live art practice and the works thus also play between genres of dance and performance as discussed in Chapter Two. Both *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room* employ portraiture in relation to the dancers and myself as choreographer. These further underline 'everydayness' suggesting who we are as 'real' people outside of the stage. The use of portraiture suggests further *in-betweens*, those between private and public, personal and social/political as well as suggesting a complex understanding of subjectivity and is discussed in depth in Chapter Three.

Finally both the works and the writing in this thesis point to the *in-between* of practice and theory through the way in which the works exist within and refer to other discourses, those of the everyday, those of dance and performance practice and those offered by critical theory. The ambivalence and slippages highlighted in the works implicitly suggest a space *in-between* the work and its reading by performers and viewers alike. Rather than a fixed or singular entity the works become porous in that they offer open readings. In this sense the choreography plays with intertextuality: 'through dislocation and defamiliarization, (exposing) the gaps to reveal the free play of meanings inherent in texts.... It opens up and reveals the limits of things such as they cannot be put back together in the same way. It is unsettling' (Briginshaw 2001, p.183).

⁴ Examples from *The Living Room* include referring to solos the dancers are about to or should be performing, which get interjected, or giving lighting instructions to the technician.

2. 'Dancing' and 'everydayness': my movement language as contained within the aesthetic of 'everydayness'

It is important to note at the start of this discussion that, although in this thesis I employ terms such as the everyday and 'everydayness' as well as make limited reference to writing by cultural theorists and sociologists such as Michel De Certeau (1984), I am specifically interested in the ways in which the everyday is manifested in dance performance rather than in exploring the everyday *per se*, or within the discourse of cultural theory. 'Everydayness' in my works as elaborated on in this thesis is thus more directly linked to the 1960s and 1970s postmodern dance investigations of the pedestrian.

Theatre theorist Alan Read sees the body, contained within the everyday, as the ground from which performance can be conceived and understood:

The organs of the body are not organs of theatre before the everyday which gives them meaning. The everyday humanises organs of the body and profoundly affects the meaning ascribed to them...In all situations the everyday has to be known before its theatre can be understood. (Read 1993, p. 10)

Similarly, I argue in this thesis that my works are contained within an aesthetic of 'everydayness', their reading moving *in-between* a formal movement language and an informal 'everyday' mode of performance depends on this understanding and experience of the body within the everyday. Similarly to Read I am interested in the space *in-between* theatre and the everyday, rather than viewing them as opposing binaries '[we should] think not of an inside or outside of theatre but the way theatre is in dialectical relation to the quotidian' Read (2008, p.190).

'Everydayness' in the context of my works encompasses the way in which dancers adopt a quotidian stance in performance, presenting themselves as themselves on stage (rather than adopting a 'role'), as well as incorporating everyday gesture and facial expression as part of their performance of formal choreography. The everyday also refers to the way in which the works disrupt the theatrical frame of performance in order to point to the 'here and now' situation of performance. Additionally, the

disruption of the performance frame in the works serves to reveal and expose the ‘act of performance’, the artifice that is a fundamental feature of performance making. In this sense, ‘everydayness’ expresses the works desire to reaffirm the embodied ‘real’ presence of both viewers and performers.

‘Everydayness’ appears in a variety of ways in *Shrink’d*, *Doing, Done & Undone* and *The Living Room*. Beyond the employment of an everyday stance and mode of behaviour the use of portraiture emphasises performers socio-cultural identity ‘outside’ the stage. In *The Living Room* solos that interface moving body with text highlight the mundane or banal as much as emotive moments in one’s life, using statements such as ‘I was married’ alongside ‘I knitted a sweater’ or simultaneously invoking historical moments and personal reflections (‘Camp David’ alongside ‘the smell of my baby’s hair’). The works metaphorically reference everyday or actual events either through text or images: *Shrink’d* and *Doing, Done & Undone* enact scenes of death or violence, which could be read as both historical and current, particularly in the context of the works being made by a Jewish/Israeli choreographer; *The Living Room*’s ‘furniture dances’ on the other hand reference a ‘mundaneness’ of domestic space.

The desire to point to the connections between performance or art work and the everyday and the use of different modes of pedestrianism in my works echoes the American avant-garde innovations of the 1960s and 1970s, thus these serve as a useful contextual framework for my analysis. A number of key modes of (postmodern) pedestrianism can be found in my work: a (limited) use of pedestrian action (such as running and walking); a functional and concrete ‘everydayness’ in the performance of intricate ‘non-everyday’ choreographed movement and contact work. Significantly, and perhaps in a more pronounced way than the work of early postmodern artists, it is the use of everyday gesture and a ‘non-performance’ stance (Briginshaw 2009, p.188) that signifies the everyday and contains the ‘dancing’ within an aesthetic of ‘everydayness’. This mode of pedestrianism allows for dialogue between performers and between performers and an audience, and is recognised by viewers through their own experience of everyday social space (Duffield 2009, p.35). My movement language and choreographic tactics share a particular affinity and carry a trace of Yvonne Rainer’s feminist and ideological standpoint in their resistance to

and interrogation of representation. The position of *in-between*, political ambivalence and irony articulated in works such as *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room*, like Rainer's work, questions the power dance has within a larger political sphere, although my work locates politics within sociality or as contained within the everyday.

Transposing Rainer's notion of the difficulty of seeing dance (Lambert-Beatty 2008, pp 1-8), *The Living Room*, in a subtle or even 'invisible' way, suggests that the everyday itself is also difficult to see. This echoes Ben Highmore's argument that 'the everyday is hidden and evasive' (Highmore 2002, p.145) and Maurice Blanchot's 'the everyday represents an impossibly evasive terrain: to attend to it is to lose it' (Highmore 2002, p.20).

The Living Room's underlying themes of home, motherhood or subjectivity, like movement itself, are fleeting, ever changing or 'becoming' and thus as difficult to trace within the 'ceaselessness' of the everyday (Highmore 2002, p.21) as within performance. Equally, subjectivity, as a place of change, instability, diverse identifications and embodied sensations is hard to trace within a moving body (Garrett-Brown, 2011, p.65; Dempster, 2010, p.235). The exploration of domesticity as well as its absence or 'invisibility' in a work entitled *The Living Room* critics what is referred to as a feminine position with regard to the everyday: 'though it is not necessarily held by women or self-described feminists, [it] links the everyday with the daily rituals of private life carried out within the domestic sphere (Schor 1992, p.188 cited in Highmore 2002, p.11). These feminist political concerns and choreographic themes like the everyday itself are also often difficult to trace within mainstream dance industry as they are given such limited exposure.

While retaining primarily Rainer and Trisha Brown's functionalist movement aesthetic and performance concerns my work is interested in emotional intensity and variance as sensed internally and expressed externally through the body and in relation to the Other(s). This reflects the era in which I was (and am) making work as well as the influence and dialogue I have with an Israeli dance aesthetic, evidenced in the work of: Ohad Naharin, Nir Ben-Gal and Liat-Dror and my contemporaries: Noa Wertheim (*Vertigo*), Sharon Eyal and Yasmin Godder which more overtly addresses

an audience⁵ than Rainer and Brown. However my movement language is distinctively different from Israeli contemporary movement and performance aesthetics, primarily through its dialogic and wry ‘non-performance’ mode. My emphasis on a dialogic movement language that incorporates everyday gesture and facial expression can be paralleled to linguistic articulation. As such, as discussed in Chapter Four, it can be linked to De Certeau’s writing on the everyday and his notion of enunciation (De Certeau 1984, p.33). This brings a further dimension to a notion of pedestrianism or ‘everydayness’, linked to speech as dialogue or address.

The dancers commentary and use of everyday gesture and behaviour in De Certeau’s terms can be seen as a ‘tactical’ operation (Highmore 2002, p.147) subtly challenging the boundaries of the choreography (as strategy).

Tactics is the inventive employment of possibilities within strategic circumstances; disguise, surprise, discretion, secrecy, wit, play, bluff and so on. Crucially, tactics don’t operate outside a strategy...they are in the ambiguous position of being inside but ‘other’: they escape it without leaving it (De Certeau 1984, p. xiii)

This could equally describe the way in which the dancers negotiate and interpret the choreography ‘in the moment’ using surprise, wit, play, etc. and indeed is relevant to my earlier discussion of the space *in-between* the performer and the work. Viewed in this light, in my work ‘everydayness’ occupies and is in a dialectical relationship to the formal choreography, or ‘strategy’ of theatre (Foster 2002, pp 130-131). This reveals the dancers not only as exceptional, non-ordinary, trained bodies but also as ‘real’ people and affords them agency and the possibility of resistance to representation. In their performance they are pedestrian and virtuosic, ordinary and extraordinary, and seem to oscillate between the two with ease or even occupy both positions concurrently. Their identity within and in relation to the everyday traverses and overlaps with their execution of and reflection on the choreography. Similarly in De Certeau’s analysis of everyday life, tactics and strategies, speaking and writing, are

⁵ Within their distinct individual choreographic styles and movement language these artists use a variety of choreographic tactics and tools to address an audience. These may include directly facing the audience in stillness or while moving, often using a highly physicalized and charged movement language (Naharin, Eyal, Wertheim, Ben-Gal and Dror), use of unison or theatrical games or referencing Israeli folk dancing (Godder, Wertheim, Naharin, Ben-Gal and Dror).

viewed not as oppositional terms but as differentiating terms which ‘fold back on each other’ (Highmore 2002, p.154), in other words, as *in-between*s.

3. Artistic research context

I initially started making dance works in 1992/3 as choreographer in residence at The Place Theatre, where I formed my company *Bedlam Dance Company*. Since then through funding and support from National Dance Agencies and funding from Arts Council England I have continued to create work for the company, touring nationally and internationally. In 2010 the company’s name was changed to *Flexer & Sandiland* to reflect my on-going collaboration with digital artist Nic Sandiland, together creating digital dance works⁶ alongside my own work for stage.

The choreographic concerns articulated in the previous two sections have emerged in part through a trajectory of choreographic practice and a body of works developed over the past 20 years. Signature works such as *Yes?* (1996 and 2002), *No 3* (1997), *In The Third Person* (1997) *Flexible* (1999-2000), *Not So Flexible* (2000) and *Slightly Less Flexible* (2002) already highlight notions of *in-between* in different ways: the space *in-between* the everyday and performance, private and public, using everyday gesture and facial expression alongside the dancing (*Yes?*); revealing the artifice and mechanics of performance making (*No 3*, *In The Third Person*, *Not So Flexible*, *Slightly Less Flexible*). These also make constant reference to the space *in-between* the rehearsal process and its performance, the space between expectation, what is supposed to take place on stage, and its disruption by performers as independent agents. *Flexible* and *Slightly Less Flexible* employ portraiture in their construction to draw attention to the space between truth and fiction, private and public.

Since 2002 I have homed in on key aspects of my choreographic practice, manifested in the works submitted for this thesis. I have focused on movement innovation, the development of an idiosyncratic movement language that is informed by somatic practices such as Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation, particularly in *Shrink’d* and *Doing, Done & Undone*. This also led to new understandings and

⁶ The digital works are not explored in this thesis. For further information on digital work: see <http://www.flexerandsandiland.com>

conceptualisations regarding the relation between audiences and performers, attempting to find embodied resonance (see Chapter One). I have also continued to develop the use of portraiture and text interfaced with movement as well as a dramaturgy that employs episodic structuring, especially in *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room* (see Chapter Two).

All of my works carry a prominent yet subtle feminist and political tone, and are articulated from my position as an Israeli, British, female choreographer and mother. Using text, autobiographic portraiture and movement metaphors they reference Israeli politics and events (*Flexible*, *Shrink'd*, *Doing, Done & Undone* and *The Living Room*). Key works investigate themes around motherhood and domesticity (*Slightly Less Flexible*, *The Living Room* and *Weightless* (2013)). Other works through portraiture hint at relationships and *in-betweens* of liminal socio-cultural ethnic and sexual identities often featuring an all female cast or a predominantly female cast (*No 3*, *In The Third Person*, *Flexible*, *Shrink'd*, *The Living Room*).

4. The submitted works⁷

The context for the submitted works

Shrink'd and *Doing, Done & Undone* were made as touring productions for *Bedlam Dance Company* and *The Living Room* for *Flexer & Sandiland*.

It is of some relevance to the framing of these works as Practice As Research (PaR) that all of the works submitted were primarily made within the confines of dance industry production and funding systems, entailing short intensive creation periods followed by touring. This is distinct from many PaR PhD projects⁸, the works for which were made over longer periods of time allowing for a more reflective process that continuously interweaves theory and practice. *Shrink'd*, as a PhD research project, was situated in the space between these modes of choreographic research. In contrast with earlier works it was made in a more reflective manner through a series of intensive short research/creation periods (though still within the context of dance production and funding). *Doing Done & Undone* was made in two stages with *Done* created during a brief residency at Dansens Hus, Denmark and Chichester University, while *Doing* and *Undone* were created through short and intensive periods of work. *The Living Room* was also created in a relatively short period between Dec 2009 and Feb 2010. Intensive reading and writing was interspersed with choreographic projects and teaching rather than taking the form of continuous research.

Shrink'd (2003-2006)

A full-length choreographic work, *Shrink'd* was performed 'in the round' with an audience seated on the floor and on chairs set around four sides of a square, the latter highlighted through a thin strip of light. The audience is initially lit on all four sides, with audience members able to view one another before and throughout the performance. The dancers perform in the square and occasionally sit among the audience. Towards the end of the work they invite the audience into the performance space and continue moving with the audience around them.

⁷ DVDS and online links of the full works are included with this submission and it is recommended the reader first sees the works. Specific DVD/online sections are also referenced within the writing.

⁸ Such as: Fiona Wright (2005) *Other versions of an uncertain body: writing towards an account of a solo performance practice* and Carol Brown (1994) *Inscribing the Body: Feminist Choreographic Practice*.

Structurally the work has several sections. An introduction, with dancers entering the space and co-witnessing the audience followed by a spoken prologue. The first section of dancing, sometimes reminiscent of military uniformity, is followed by: the manipulations of performers' bodies through contact work and tableaux images; a 'manifesto' spoken in the dark with performers placed on respective corners of the square; a repeat of the opening co-witnessing section performed in reverse order; concluding with the dancers sitting among the audience commenting on solos on view. The following ensemble sections begins with a solo by McConville with Chan standing at the centre of the space with eyes closed and is followed by individuated dances performed to small sections of the audience with audience members holding torches to light the performers. The final section initially performed in a lit square inside the main square ends with the audience surrounding the dancers on stage.

Originally created in 2003 as a trio for Lyndsey McConville, Lisa Kendall and myself *Shrink'd* was later expanded to include a fourth female, Chinese-Swedish performer Bonita Chan, and Kendall was replaced by Indian, male performer Saju Hari. Music was by Nye Parry and lighting by Peter Skramsted. *Shrink'd* was made, and performed, over several stages of its creative process, often alongside a series of interactive digital installation also entitled *Shrink'd* (created by Nic Sandiland and myself). An initial work in progress showing took place at East London Dance on 31 August 2003, the premiere of a short version took place at Woking Dance Festival on 26th February 2005 and, following the change of cast, the full work toured Autumn 2005 and Spring 2006, a total of 14 performances⁹. The work was well received, audiences appearing to read the work in different ways, experienced viewers noting the humorous socio-political references and the change of viewing perspective. Most audiences appreciated the proximal immersive element and the sociality of the work, evidenced by the audience interactions, especially with the installations.

Doing, Done & Undone (2007-2009)

A triptych of works, two ensemble pieces (*Doing, Undone*) and a duet (*Done*), *Doing, Done & Undone* is primarily compositionally motivated. Each work is prefaced by a

⁹ It was performed to different audiences ranging from family and youth contexts through to established theatre venues/festivals such as The Place Theatre, London, Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Art and Dresden Tanz Festival, Germany.

prologue delivered by McConville downstage left and is followed by three distinct and intricate movement sections. *Doing* begins with a driven ensemble section, followed by a section of contact work and tableaux reminiscent of *Shrink'd*, compositionally using two adjacent trios. The final section, places more emphasis on duet work *within* the ensemble composition. Each section is marked by a stillness or a 'line-up', the performers facing the audience, at times in close proximity. *Done* begins with a section which plays with sound and silence, dancers at times moving with the music and at others in the silent gaps. It continues with a section initially performed in silence which also has moments of stillness, dancers assuming a set position or using counter balance between them, followed by the dancers moving from stage left to right and then tracing their pathway back. It concludes with a short section in which the dancers move in response to one another and at times exit the stage.

Undone begins with the dancers grouped together. They break out and perform sections of solos and group choreography followed by the second section which is made as a series of three duets. The last section of *Undone* is a response to the first section of *Doing*, comprising an erasure of traces made by *Doing* in its first half. Like *Doing* the sections in *Undone* are marked by a stillness in which dancers face the audience.

The six dancers in *Doing & Undone* were, Robert Bell, Chan, Aya Kobayashi, McConville, Matthew Slater and Aneta Szydlak and *Done* was a duet for McConville and Szydlak. Music was by Nye Parry, lighting by Michael Mannion, and costumes by Linda Rowell. Created in May 2007 and in January-February 2008, *Done* premiered on the 25 May 2007 at Densens Hus, Copenhagen, Denmark and *Doing* on the 27 January 2008 at Roehampton University, London. The full triptych premiered on the 23 April 2008 at University of Chichester and toured Spring/Autumn 2008 and Spring 2009, a total of 14 performances. The triptych was well received with audiences noting the movement invention and speed as well as the *face-to-face* encounter between the performers and viewers. Critical writing about the work by Alan Duffield is referenced in this thesis¹⁰.

¹⁰ Duffield wrote about *Doing, Done & Undone*, as part of his MA submission to Royal Holloway University.

The Living Room (2009-2011)

Created as a full-length work, *The Living Room* is episodic in structure. It initially involves the company playing a game of follow the leader with my (then) 2-3 year old daughter Alonna. Sections using text include a prologue and epilogue as well as a 'voting' section where performers vote (or abstain), 'confessing' to personal information or affiliations. Two solos for McConville and myself involve movement and text, interwoven together. There are four ensemble sections. 'Section one' has three duets with different configurations of dancers, and a group composition. 'Section two' is primarily based on the use of trios, interspersed with ensemble circular groupings where one dancer's movement seems to ricochet through the group. The central ensemble section, the 'vortex', takes the circle or orbit as its central premise and the 'final dance' includes short bursts of unison with dancers using the entire stage space. Other sections include: two 'furniture' sections, one in which we ironically mime absent furniture and another in which we simply name the furniture; a solo by Kobayashi, obstructed and assisted by Birch as a duet; a duet by McConville and Szydlak or guests¹¹, amplified into a quartet.

The Living Room was created with dancers McConville, Kobayashi, Szydlak, Luke Birch, Hannah Martin and myself. Karni Postel composed the music with Parry and Douglas Evans and would on occasion also perform playing live cello. Other collaborators included dramaturge Gary Stevens, lighting designer Mannion and costume designer Holly Murray. I wrote the text with editing and suggestions from Stevens. *The Living Room* premiered on 4 March 2010, at The Brindley Arts Centre, Runcorn, and toured Spring/Autumn 2010, Spring/Summer 2011, a total of 23 performances including The Place Theatre, Tmuna Theatre, Tel-Aviv, Israel & Working Dance Festival. The production had favourable audience and critical response with previews and reviews in Dance Europe, The Guardian, The Jerusalem Post and London Dance among others with critical writing by Duffield¹².

¹¹ On several occasions through the tour *The Living Room* included guest appearances created with local artists. The guest appearance lasted 20-minutes, with guests appearing as new pieces of furniture, performing in the 'vortex', voting as well as performing a duet and quartet created especially with them. See DVD 1: *The Living Room*, 'guest section', Israel, vimeo.com/album/2927625.

¹² As part of his PhD submission for Royal Holloway interrogating notions of self and space, Duffield is writing a chapter that centres on *The Living Room*.

5. Précis of Chapters

Chapter One: Research Strategies and Contextual Framework

Chapter One delineates the research approach and methodologies used within a wider discussion on practice as research, with particular reference to Brad Haseman's (2007) notion of performative research. It introduces the use of Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation methodologies and examines the traces of 1960s and 1970s dance practice bringing to light key political, feminist, philosophical and aesthetic concerns relevant to my works. The chapter introduces the theoretical frameworks underlying the practical and theoretical research, in particular Maurice Merleau Ponty's notion of the *Chiasm* and Levinas's notion of the *face-to-face* in the context of feminist readings.

Chapters Two to Four serve as a detailed choreographic analysis of the submitted works. The analysis journeys from the outside in, that is from the presentation of the choreographic works to the embodied processes that lie at their heart. This stands in opposition to the journey of the creative process, which begins from embodied improvisatory explorations and moves towards formalised presentation. Yet this journey, like the works, befriends and invites its reader to travel from appearance to the inner workings, from discursive meaning to felt experience, and serves to illuminate the ways in which the work, from its core through to its presentation, is enthused with a sense of its encounter and response to an Other.

Chapter Two: In-between dancing and the everyday: Frames

Drawing on theorists such as: Foster (2005); André Lepecki (2004, 2006); Jacques Rancière (2009) and referencing the work of choreographers Siobhan Davies; Rosemary Butcher; Felix Ruckert; Jérôme Bel, this chapter explores the notion of the frame and the ways in which my works play with and defuse the frame of performance to suggest notions of *in-between*. Specifically, I discuss the reconfiguration of space into a theatre 'in the round' in *Shrink'd*, placing the audience inside the frame; the ways in which *Doing, Done & Undone* play with forward and retreat as symbolic of a malleable and 'felt' relation between performers and audience; and the use of stage right and left and compositional undoing and reversal to bring forward notions of trace, presence and absence. This production and

prominently *The Living Room* suggest the temporal dimension of performance, the present moving into pastness, and the discussion of the temporal frame concludes the chapter.

Chapter Three: Dances that Speak

Chapter Three continues the threads offered in Chapter Two, interrogating the ways in which the dances ‘speak’ or address the viewer, pointing to the frame to reveal the artifice of performance making as well as offering a complex understanding of subjectivity. The chapter discusses the notion of portraiture adopting a feminist perspective on the interface of text and image in women’s autobiographical work (Smith & Watson 2002) and drawing on writings by Ann Cooper Albright (1997) and choreographer Victoria Marks (2003). The analysis suggests a plurality of voices is at play in the works, with portraiture serving to highlight identity representation as an unfixed and embodied *in-between*. An exploration of the use of Brechtian devices such as *Gestus* and *Verfremdungseffekt* or A-effect in relation to my works follows. It highlights the notion of the choreographer/author function as located both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the work and the ways in which text is employed in the works. The chapter also discusses Homi Bhabha’s post-colonial notions of hybrid identities, cultural translation and the *unhome* (Bhabha 1994/2007), which are significant to readings of my works.

Chapter Four: A Parallel Speaking

Section One of this chapter examines the use of bodily and facial gesture in *Shrink’d* and *The Living Room* as a parallel form of speaking which intermingles, disrupts and overlaps with the dance of choreographed steps. This section furthers discussions by Briginshaw (2009) and Burt (2007) on the use of gesture and the aesthetics of ‘non-performance’ in relation to works by Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, and Anna Teresa De Keersmaeker. Drawing on Phillip Zarrilli’s (2009) writing I suggest that the use of gesture can also be seen as an *in-between* negotiating performers’ internal somatic experience and their representation. Section Two of the chapter delineates the ways in which movement material, tableaux images and a compositional approach emerge from an embodied creative process. The writing examines notions of ‘doing’ and ‘being done to’ as embedded in the three works referencing Merleau-Ponty (1962), Levinas (1987/1993,) and Judith Butler (2004a)

and charts the ways in which embodied practice furthers a sense of empathy between performers emanating beyond the stage as well as highlighting the inevitability of difference.

6. Contribution to knowledge

This performative research enquiry contributes to the development of dance practice and dance theory primarily through the creation and dissemination of a large body of dance works and the knowledge embodied within them. Their contextualisation within a wider philosophical and critical framework allows them to be seen as part of other discourses in dance. Further, the artist/researcher position applied in the writing allows the works to be considered from the 'inside' and serves to further writing about dance practice through this informed perspective. It is believed that the thesis will be of relevance to dance students, practitioners and theoreticians alike.

Chapter One
Research Strategies and Contextual Framework

Part One: Research Strategies

1. Performative Research

The research methodologies used in this project are led by, and articulated through, choreographic practices. As such the project comes under Brad Haseman's categories of 'practice-led research' and 'performative research' (Haseman 2007, p.147).

Practice-led research is understood as

...research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners: and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies...familiar to us as practitioners (Gray cited in Haseman 2007, p.147)

Haseman suggests that artistic practice as performative research formulates a third and new paradigm of research (Haseman 2007, p.150). Grounded in Haseman and Robin Nelson's arguments, my intention in creating the works submitted in this thesis is not simply to reflect but to affect, to act, to do, where 'doing' is understood as 'rejoined with thinking' (Nelson 2009, p.122). Thus, as a performative research enquiry, the works themselves constitute both the research and its outputs.

Haseman further suggests that performative research offers other means of understanding and defining research questions and a literature review as well as offering different criteria for the gathering and presentation of documentation (Haseman 2007, p.156). In this thesis, rather than formulating formal research questions or aims I discuss choreographic concerns. Critically these concerns emerged through the trajectory of choreographic practice rather than serving as the impetus for the start of the research¹³.

As a practice-led enquiry this research also employs elements of analytic and qualitative research methodologies alongside studio-based research methodologies

¹³ Although the creation of a work often begins as a response to a certain choreographic problem, question, feeling or image, on reflection this original impetus might not become the key choreographic concern.

that are specific to dance practice. I found two qualitative research methodologies to be of particular relevance to this research, heuristic methodologies as developed by Clark Moustakas (1990) primarily in the context of psychology and reflective practice as developed by Donald Schön (1983/1991) in the field of education. Both have been more widely applied within in social sciences and appropriated within practice as research (Haseman 2007, p.148).

The various stages of heuristics are reminiscent of choreographic practice, in particular the notion of *immersion* and *dwelling*, or the *incubation* of a particular research concern (or choreographic idea). Like choreography this is a process that allows for the application of tacit knowledge and intuition (Moustakas 1990, pp 20-23). In turn this stage leads to *illumination* (Moustakas 1990, pp 27-29) which acutely describes the way in which choreographic ideas begin to find form as they cluster around certain qualities, physical or thematic concerns enabling a coherent structure and internal framework to begin to emerge.

As with reflective practice the choreographic process includes both modes of ‘reflection-in-action’ and ‘reflection-on-action’ (Schön 1983/1991, p.50). This involves intuitive decision making and reflection in rehearsal as part of studio-based research as well as reflections and intuitions formed outside of the rehearsal process through: formal and informal discussions with performers and collaborators; analysis and reviewing of video footage or choreographic notebooks; reflective writing and theoretical investigation. In common with Bannerman and McLaughlin (2009, p.68), I suggest that the edges of the creative process are difficult to distinguish. Thus, within performative research enquiries, an intrinsic connection exists between ‘reflection in action’ and ‘reflection on action’ (Smith 2001), one informing the other, both operating together (in different ways) towards performative action, the creation of choreographic works.

The results of reflection-on-action is also evidenced in this thesis through the relationship between the choreographic works produced successively during the research project, one work informing the formulation of new choreographic concerns or questions driving the making of the subsequent work. Thus, the reconfiguring of theatrical space in *Shrink'd* (2003-2007), saw the audience seated in a square around

the performance space, their placement creating the boundaries of the area in which the performance took place (Figure 1, below). This configuration was a response to a choreographic concern central to *Shrink'd*, the desire to generate a sense of intimacy between performers and viewers.



Figure 1. *Shrink'd* Video Still, The Place Theatre, London, 29 April 2006, audience in view and a square lit border

Similarly, reflection on the outcome or choreographic concern articulated in *Shrink'd* led to the creation of *Doing, Done & Undone* (2007-2009) and *The Living Room* (2010-2011). In these latter two works although viewers are seated within a conventional theatrical configuration (of stage and auditorium) other choreographic and dramaturgical devices were employed to question and re-address the different roles and sense of proximity and distance between audience and performers. These works were more directly concerned with the ephemeral nature of performance and its theatrical and social framing as contained within the everyday.

In terms of this thesis several arcs or loops of reflection-on-action can be identified: the arc of the creative process used during the making of distinct works; the arc or the trajectory of the entirety of works submitted; the body of work that my practice consists of over a period of 20 years as well as the ways in which the final writing of the thesis serves as a further level of reflection leading towards future practice. The

spiral process¹⁴ inherent to reflective practice is thus applicable as methodology to this practice-led/performative research enquiry.

The key performative research methodologies employed in this research include studio-based dance research, performance, *action tracking and fixing*¹⁵, collaboration and dialogue. The studio-research encompassed the use of Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation practice based methodologies, the setting of improvisatory and compositional tasks for performers as well as the compositional process of creating the works. Successive performances of the works provide further reflections and these inform both choreographic changes of existing works and the creation of future works. *Action tracking and fixing* concerns the tracing of genealogy of the choreographic work (Haseman 2007, p 154) through video documentation and choreographic notebooks and aids compositional decision-making.

Collaboration and dialogue are critical to my methodology. While I generate and direct much of the studio-based research, and decide on the framing and mode of performance, the works themselves are created through a collaborative and ‘sociable’ approach which I actively embed and employ through the creative process. The collaborative approach includes discussions and decisions made with artistic collaborators (composers, designers and a dramaturge) and performers alike. In my creative process, I propose that my role as choreographer moves between Jo Butterworth’s terms of ‘choreographer as pilot’ and ‘choreographer as collaborator’ and equally the dancers’ role moves between ‘dancer as contributor’ and ‘dancer as co-owner’ as the process organically changes and unfolds (Butterworth 2009, pp 186-187).

In common with other contemporary choreographers such as Siobhan Davies and Rosemary Lee I explicitly share choreographic credits on programme notes with the dancers. This moves away from the notion of choreographer as generator of material and supports the notion of interauthorship (Bannerman & McLaughlin 2009, p.67; Butterworth 2009, pp189-190). However, I consider that, as a choreographer, my

¹⁴ Reflective practice identifies within research a spiral or stages of appreciation, action, and reappreciation- leading to further action (Schön 1983/1991).

¹⁵ Action tracking and fixing is used as a technical term in this thesis, referring to performative research methodologies, see Haseman (2007).

directorial/choreographic role is ‘to take ultimate responsibility for the material and the ways the material is presented, whether [I] was the originator of that material or not’ (Bannerman & McLaughlin 2007, p.67). Crucially, interauthorship highlights the ways in which my work generates a plurality of material, ideas, voices and identities. It is both a political and aesthetic position that permeates subtly through the work and is relevant to this enquiry in that it supports the notion of performers/dancers as agents¹⁶. It emerges from a casual sociality which I actively foster as methodology within rehearsals helping to unearth nuggets of autobiographical information and simultaneously, generating a collaborative sense of creative investigation and ownership (p.165).

Beyond the dialogue with performers and collaborators the dialogue with audiences during and following performances is critical. A broader notion of dialogue includes post performance talks, spoken testimonies by fellow practitioners and the more formal writing about my work by researcher Alan Duffield and dance critics. A further dialogue occurs through practice and the dissemination of that practice through embodied knowledge¹⁷ (Nelson 2009, p.122). Finally the dialogue with theory elaborated on next is key to my writing and analysis.

2. Dialogues between practice and theory

My works, as research outputs are conceived as the primary form of reportage. My writing operates in conjunction with the works, serving to further elucidate and give primacy to practice as a mode of research. Thus, the written document can be understood a secondary record, echo and reflection of the initial action, the original choreographic practice, and serves to validate the creative research (Barrett 2007, p.160; Jones 2009, p.27).

Artist-researcher Efrosini Protopapa (2011) writes of performance-writing and performance-making as two economies of knowledge. She suggests that performance-writing entails a ‘looking backwards’ (Susan Melrose cited in Protopapa 2011, p.105)

¹⁶ Collaboration and other key performative methodologies are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, which reflects on movement material that emerges from creative process.

¹⁷ Through the extensive educational and professional development activities delivered alongside the touring and exhibitions of the works.

while performance-making is concerned with ‘continuity and futurity’ (Susan Melrose cited in Protopapa 2011, p.105). This position echoes the relationship between making and writing in this thesis as, although periods of making in the studio were interspersed with periods of research and writing, the voice the writing adopts is as a ‘post-event’, a reflection on the submitted works upon their completion (Protopapa 2011, p.106).

Like Protopapa, as an artist-researcher I find I myself caught between two economies of knowledge, that of dance-making and dance-writing as well as between two modes of dance making, practice-led research and the demands of the professional dance industry. I too find the experience of operating *in-between* these knowledge economies and modes of production is not a ‘smooth blending’ (Protopapa 2011, p.113), but rather a process of interruption, collision and ‘incompatibility’ (Protopapa 2011, p.105). However, this does not mean it is not productive, as one form of knowledge jolts the other to form new ideas or choreographic methodologies (as is evidenced in Chapter Four).

The works presented in this thesis engage in a creative dialogue with phenomenological, feminist, post-colonial and post-structuralist thought. These intersect with the practice and are consequently referenced extensively in the written submission. These particular theoretical perspectives were found to be useful in this research project in that they bring into question the separation between subject and object and allow for the introduction of the notion of *in-between* as well as embodied knowledge (Nelson 2009, pp 121-122). However it is important to emphasise that, in both the performance-writing and performance-making process, I have borrowed metaphors from critical theory as a way of allowing for the dialogue and ‘interruption’ (Protopapa 2011, p.113) between practice and theory. Just as embodying and questioning philosophical concepts and images such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s self-touch (1964, p.105) or Emmanuel Levinas’s *face-to-face* (1991/1998) took place in the studio, the direction of theoretical cogitations emerged from the works themselves as they developed. Importantly it is the dance practice that is foregrounded and interrogated in the written submission not the theories. Critical frameworks found to be of relevance to the choreographic thinking as it developed are

employed as instigators of thought/movement to inform the choreographic interrogation.

As a result, the writing in this thesis is theoretically eclectic. It moves from an objective to a subjective voice as it attempts to trace, map and engage in a dialogue with the many meanings, questions, sensations, and reflections that are raised by and negotiated in the works. This self-reflexive form of writing takes as its field not only theory but also wider artistic, aesthetic and pragmatic contexts to which the works respond and within which they exist (Adams, Bacon & Thynne 2009, p.99).

Significantly, the bulk of the writing is dance specific, referring to my own practice and that of others in a way that considers dance as a *body* and *form* of knowledge (Pakes 2009, p.12). Foster argues that the notion of dance as a *body* of knowledge, considers dance making and dance meanings as being located within the context of ‘a group of practitioners sharing a body of knowledge about how dances mean what they do’ (Foster 2000, p.210). This perspective of dance knowledge acknowledges that while dances may refer to other discourses they can ‘acquire their full meaning only through their situatedness within [dance] tradition’ (Foster 2000, p.211). This suggests that dance itself is a valid and unique *form* of discourse that can be pertinent to theory and carries political and critical significance (Foster 2000 p.211; Nelson 2009, pp 123-124). It is this position that has been taken in this thesis.

Part Two: Contextualising the Practical Research: Traces of the 1960s and 1970s

My choreographic practice carries residues of the ideological and aesthetic questioning that fuelled the work of some of the more radical dance artists of the 1960s and 1970s. My works bear the imprint of their practice through my own and the dancers' postmodern technical and choreographic training, which encompassed Cunningham technique, release techniques, Contact Improvisation and other somatic practices. Moreover, the choreographic research and writing in this thesis have been informed by the work of current choreographers who began making work in the 1980s and 1990s and themselves carry a trace of the 1960s in their training and practice. Siobhan Davies, Rosemary Butcher and Felix Ruckert can be seen as continuing some of the 1960s investigations into the reconfiguration of theatrical space that was particularly evident in the work of Deborah Hay and The Judson Church artists¹⁸ and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Jonathan Burrows as continuing their minimalist/mathematical approaches to choreography and functional movement aesthetic. Victoria Marks and David Dorfman's use of portraiture¹⁹, text and everyday behaviour continues threads drawn by Judson Church choreographers by exposing both the mechanism of performance and adopting several voices within the work (both personal and that of authors). All these choreographic concerns and devices are central to my choreographic practice and to its analysis in this thesis.

As a contextual framework for the main body of the thesis (Chapters Two – Four), this section discusses the aesthetic, conceptual, ideological and feminist aspects of work by key artists of the 1960s. Specifically it examines the notion of a 'matter-of-fact' (Foster 1986, pp 32-34), pedestrian movement aesthetic and the breaking of the convention of the performance frame (within stage performance), distinguishing

¹⁸ A 'loose' collective of artists, The Judson Church artists or as often referred to as Judson Dance Theatre, grew out of a composition class taught by Robert and Judith Dunn in the early 1960s. Classes focused on avant-garde choreographic methodologies developed through the 1950s by artists such as Merce Cunningham, Anna Halprin and James Waring. Between 1962-1964 the collective produced 20 dance performances including group and individual choreographers' programmes. Judson Church artists included: David Gordon, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs and later Simone Forti and Trisha Brown (Banes 1982, p.67 and Burt pp 44-48).

¹⁹ Victoria Mark's notion of choreographic portraiture is discussed in Chapter Three and David Dorfman's work is also briefly referenced in Chapter Three.

between various pedestrian modes and choreographic tactics employed by these artists.

In particular Rainer's functional movement style, her conceptualisation of the '*problem of performance*' (Rainer cited in Lambert-Beatty 2008, p.8) tied in with her notion that 'dance is hard to see' (Lambert-Beatty 2008, p.1) have infiltrated my approach to my work. It brings to the fore the difficulties inherent to performance, specifically the problems that are intrinsic to the spectatorial dynamic (*Shrink'd, The Living Room*), the ephemeral nature of dance (*Doing, Done & Undone*), as well as the questioning and referencing of wider political frameworks (*Shrink'd, The Living Room*).

1. Pedestrian movement, matter-of-fact bodies

My works echo the desire of 1960s and 1970s artists to blur the boundary between art and life by bringing art closer to life. These artists achieved this primarily through the breaking of theatrical conventions, either through bringing ‘life’ into the theatre/dance using everyday movement, gesture, speech, objects (or non-dancers)²⁰ or conversely taking dance outside the theatre (Banes 2003, p.12; Foster 1986, p.171). Their reframing of pedestrian action and the adoption of a quotidian performance stance re-contextualised the everyday within presentational stage performance, ‘making familiar things strange within the work’ (Banes 2003, p.5). Important for the analysis of my work that follows is the connection Banes makes between the work of artists of the 1960s and the notion of ‘Verfremdungseffekt’, the alienation effect²¹ (Banes 2003, p.4). As will be seen in Chapter Three, I too draw a connection between Brecht’s Verfremdungseffekt or A-effect and my own work, developing Banes’ understanding of how A-effect is applied as a theatrical tactic within my own dance making.

Susan Foster (1986) highlights the contributions of postmodern makers in shaping notions of bodies and subjects within a historical trajectory, noting Cunningham’s ‘matter-of-fact’ approach to the body, ‘present[ing] the dancers as pedestrian rather than fictional or symbolic subjects’ as well as his emphasis on the ‘jointedness’ of the body (Foster 1986, pp 32-34). This approach, termed by Foster as ‘objectivist dance’ offered a new paradigm for dance by making movement ‘the subject matter and message of the dance’ (Foster 1986, p.176). Of interest in this thesis is Foster’s suggestion that:

In its exploration of matter-of-fact style, objectivist dance embodies a seemingly paradoxical relation between human feeling and movement: by focusing on the performance of movement as a neutral activity, *the dance allows feeling to appear tacitly at the margins of the body and the dance...* The individual dancer who is not

²⁰ For example, Rainer’s *We Shall Run* (p.44) was performed by a group of 12 men and women, both dancers and non-dancers. They were dressed in street clothes and the vocabulary of the dance was limited to a jog. (See Lambert-Beatty 2008, p.5)

²¹ Brecht’s Verfremdungseffekt is often translated as ‘estrangement’ or ‘alienation’ effect and is mostly referred to in the writing as A-effect.

expressing archetypal experience can instead express the body *both as a physical structure and as a subject* (Foster 1986, p.181, *my emphases*)

Here Foster proposes the way in which *subjectivity* was (and arguably still is, as can be seen in my own work) expressed within a postmodern dance aesthetic.

This matter-of-factness of the body, the use of pedestrian movement and an objectivist approach to choreography is foregrounded in Rainer's work. In *We Shall Run* (1963), the vocabulary consisted only of running, and in *Trio A* (1966), the facticity of the body, in motion, is emphasised (Beatty 2008, pp 5-6)²². In these two works, and in Foster's discussion of objectivist dance we can distinguish two different modes of pedestrianism, the inclusion of pedestrian 'moves' such as walking and running reframed as dance (as in Banes' notion of 'making the familiar strange inside the work'), and a functional 'task-like' or pedestrian performance stance in the execution of a choreographed movement language (Burt 2006, p.35).

Rainer stripped down the conventional markers of performance substituting virtuosity with 'work-like' action, character and seduction with neutral gaze and a quotidian stance, and movement punctuation with continuity, equality of effort and the impression of repetition. Banes discusses *Trio A* (1966), as 'a kind of catalogue of movement possibilities' (Banes 1987, p.47), the opening of a new movement vocabulary. 'Release techniques' which inform my movement style, could be traced back to this 'catalogue of movement'. Perhaps more significantly, so can Brown's movement style with its emphasis on the trace and trajectory of a movement the *in-between* of shapes, the folding and unfolding of body parts, with movement traveling sequentially through the body, 'wave-like' systematically (Briginshaw 2001, p.156). In contrast to Rainer and Brown however, my work makes limited use of pedestrian action (running, walking, etc.) and has, a much greater degree of effort, 'weight', punctuation and use of floor, or 'horizontal plane' (Brown 2010, p.64). This is comparable to other British dance makers of my era²³ and demonstrates the shift in nuance in movement vocabulary and choreographic tendencies that occurred through the 1980s and 1990s.

²² See Lamber-Beatty (2007, pp127-147) for a wider discussion of *Trio A*.

²³ Such as Jamie Watton, Akram Khan, Fin Walker and Carol Brown.

2. Breaking the theatrical frame

In contrast to the breaking of the rules characteristic of the Judson Church artists my work is more interested in the social, intellectual, emotional and embodied resonance of performance. As an artist active from the 1990s the disruption of and pointing to the theatrical frame in my work serves as a way of bringing attention to the ‘act of performance’, traversing between performance and the everyday and suggesting a feminist non-binary conception of audiences and performers.

The informal mode of viewing (with the audience seated around and on the same level as performers) at the Judson Church in the 1960s and later in the work of Hay and The Grand Union broke away from the perspectival rules of proscenium arch theatres (Wood 2007, p.12). It allowed for movement to be seen up-close in a three dimensional, sculptural fashion. Furthermore, the space in which performances took place was designed as a rehearsal space, which contributed to ‘the process look of the choreography’ (Wood 2007, p.12). Other factors include Hay’s work ‘in the round’, which reflected her Taoist vision of dance as intrinsic to the larger all encompassing movement of everyday life (Foster 1986, p.8). Foster suggests that Hays’s arrangement of the audience fosters ‘a sense of *familial intimacy* [and] promotes a casual and more *democratic sociability*’ (Foster 1986, pp 101-102, my emphases). The Grand Union’s²⁴ informal performance settings implicated the audience within the event by making the audience visible with performers moving into the audience seating area or addressing the audience directly (Foster 1986, p.191). Beyond the reconfiguration of theatrical space, the dances of The Grand Union played with the temporal framing of performance: ‘often, viewers entered to find the dancers already moving around...no specific beginning was announced’ (Foster 1986, p.191).

The reconfiguration of space in *Shrink’d* as an ‘in the round’ performance echoes Foster’s description of Hay’s work as: ‘familial intimacy’ and suggests a casual ‘democratic sociality’. As with The Grand Union, *Shrink’d* (to a degree) implicates its audience. However, in common with The Grand Union and distinct from Hay,

²⁴ The Grand Union was set up by a collective of choreographers, many of who took part in the Judson Church performances. Key members of the Grand Union included Yvonne Rainer, who initially led the group, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown and David Gordon. See Foster (1986).

Shrink'd (and *The Living Room*) play with and point to the theatrical frame of performance rather than suggesting or enacting ritual. This disruption of the temporal frame is also prominent in *The Living Room* (see Chapter Two).

The Grand Union dramaturgical and improvisatory²⁵ devices disrupted a linear and unified reading of work. Their episodic structuring, shifting from movement sections to sudden dramatisation and characters stepping 'out of role' to comment on the action bears some resemblance to the dramaturgy of *The Living Room* and *Shrink'd* moving between the genres of dance and live art, between composed movement sections and sections that foreground text. Equally in both of these works, the dancers move between abstract or functional performance quality and commenting on each other's performance, or on the performance itself (for example interrupting my prologue). This echoes Foster's term 'metacommentary' in her discussion of tactics used by the Grand Union (Foster 1986, p.194), which she suggests brought forward notions of reflexive viewing. The audience is implicated in the action physically but also in trying to determine the meaning of a work which is intentionally averting definition. In much the same way in *The Living Room*, by constantly shifting the context, perspective, or 'voice' of the work and commenting on its own making, the dance occupies the space of the *in-between*, highlighting a back and forth, two-way relation between performers and audience. The choreographers/performers take up the audience position in evaluating the work as it unfolds (Foster 1986, p.225).

A further device used to point to the theatrical framing of performance was the inclusion of onstage witnesses. In Grand Union performances as well as in Rainer's *The Mind is a Muscle*²⁶, performers would watch each other while they were not directly involved in the action (rather than disappearing into the wings as in conventional proscenium performance). Through the use of onstage witnesses, the act of observing performance was underscored (Foster 1986, p.65; Lambert-Beatty 2008, p.67). This device is evident through all three works submitted in this thesis.

²⁵ Whereas the work of The Grand Union was primarily improvisational, with interventions being 'unscripted', my works are choreographically constructed.

²⁶ Rainer staged *The Mind is a Muscle*, in 1968 at the Anderson Theatre, New York. The programme was clearly billed as Rainer's own work as distinct to her work with The Judson Church artists or The Grand Union. The programme was purposefully presented within a proscenium, emphasising and problematising the act of performance.

The theatre-in-the-round alongside the use of direct audience address, episodic structuring and commentary engendered a proximal and informal mode of presentation. These choreographic tactics first formulated in the 1960s and 1970s, offer another mode of pedestrianism, a casual ‘everyday’ performance style or using Briginshaw’s terms a ‘non-performance’ stance that is associated with the everyday (Briginshaw 2009, p.188).

3. Political, aesthetic and feminist discourses at play in the 1960s and 1970s of relevance to my work

The use of pedestrian action, the aesthetic of ‘work-like’ dance, of a factual and functional movement language as in *Trio A* (1966), or Brown’s signature style alongside the incorporation of everyday behaviour and gesture and The Grand Union’s use of metacommentary (Foster 1986, p.194) offer different modes of pedestrianism and point towards the quotidian. Banes and Foster both suggest that the aesthetic of the pedestrian had social and political significance, the emphasis on the everyday not only reflecting pedestrians’ movement on the street but also ‘serving as a metaphor for radical democratization’ (Banes 1994, p.xiii). One cannot overlook the correlation between the ‘breaking of the rules’ in postmodern dance and the political upheavals and ‘breaking of the rules’ associated with the era in which it was developed, namely the protests against the Vietnam War as well as the emergence of the civil rights movement (Banes 2003, xiii). However, Catherine Wood suggests that Rainer’s work specifically can be seen as non-committal, a refusal to adopt any socio-political ideology (Wood 2007, pp 73-74). She proposes that Rainer was aware that ‘participation and democracy were already co-opted concepts’ (Wood 2007, p.21). Although I would agree with Wood that Rainer had an ambivalent relationship to politics or the political as embedded in her choreographic work, one cannot overlook the overt political significance of works like *War* (1970) and *Flag* (1970) created in protest to the Vietnam War.

Albeit entirely different in context, works such as *The Living Room* and *Shrink’d*, which reference my position as an Israeli dance maker with all that this implies historically and politically, equally maintain both ambivalence and political significance. Directly referencing Rainer’s ‘manifesto’ of ‘no to spectacle’ and

evoking a 1960s and 1970s aesthetic, they could be seen to purport a more sombre or even cynical position, reflecting my political position in terms of Israeli politics (see Chapters Two and Three).

Beyond democratisation, the blurring of boundaries between life and art in the 1960s carried an aesthetic, social and feminist dimension, which is of significance in my practice, for the matter-of-fact vocabulary, the re-framing of everyday action as performance and the compositional and dramaturgical procedures of episodic structuring, commentary and in *Trio A* (1966), aversion of the performer's gaze, point to and reveal the act of making and viewing performance (Banes 2003, p.12)

Whilst Banes suggests that Rainer's 'no manifesto' operates as a strategy of denial, 'demystifying dance and making it objective' (Banes 1987, p.43), Ann Cooper Albright extends this analysis. She argues that Rainer's attempts at objectification can also be seen from a feminist perspective, resisting the 'male gaze'

...by emphasising the earthy materiality of the physical body...Rainer was trying to demystify the female dancing body and refuse the traditional position of the dancer as an object of desire by making visible what was previously elided by showing the process of the dancing, the effort, decision making, even its awkwardness.' (Albright 1997, p.20)

Albright argues that rather than only achieving body-as-object Rainer's aesthetic sees embodiment (or in Albright's words 'experience') as intertwined with representation, and offers the performer agency in the making of their identity on stage: 'Rainer's casually internal movement style brought to the audience's attention the process of making and remaking the self through movement' (Albright 1997, p.20). This feminist formulation bears traces in my work, which holds true to Rainer's manifesto of 'no to seduction'. However, in my work (female) performers deal with the 'problem of performance' by 'looking back' (Albright 1997, p.15), which, as is argued by Albright and other feminist dance scholars, carries political significance within a historic context of being 'looked-at' (Mulvey 1975, cited in Thomas 2003, p.164)²⁷.

²⁷ See Thomas (2003, pp 160-166) for a wider discussion on feminist positions and critic of representation.

In common with Albright (1997, p.13) I argue that dance exists as an *in-between*, as an overlapping between subject and object, performer and audience. Similarly, Burt, notes that *Trio A*'s insistence on 'disappearance' suggests an overlapping between subject and object and presence and absence. The act of objectification (in performance) is paradoxically and intrinsically tied to the disappearance of the object. As such, performers are not merely objects but subjects who have the ability to resist and form their own reading.

Seeing the work of the 1960s and beyond through these prisms begins to point to a choreographic conception of the performative, the performance of everyday behaviour and identity set against the framing of performance. The works developed from the 1960s onwards begin to suggest a more complex understanding of performance and re-envision an active and overlapping subject-object relation between performers and audience, for they

sought to reappropriate traditions and conventions in ways that revealed the conventions' essence to be an illusory fabrication of alien forms. Through the fragmentation of these forms, they opened up the various levels on which theatre dance operates as a signifying practice in such a way as to make it necessary for spectators to engage in creating their own readings of the performance text. (Burt 2006, p.31)

As will be seen in Chapter Three the notion of resistance or subversion by the performer operates in all three works submitted as part of this thesis, most prominently in *The Living Room* and *Shrink'd. Doing, Done & Undone* makes reference to dance's ephemerality, presence and absence, emphasising trace, the appearance and erasure of movement. All three works submitted carry a trace of the 1960s emphasis on functional, movement as well as the incorporation of a pedestrian performance stance and attitude to the body (and other bodies) that insists on dancers representing themselves as themselves. Similarly, the employment of dramaturgical tactics (as well as the reconfiguration of space in *Shrink'd*) can be traced back to the Grand Union, disrupting linear viewing.

A number of key modes of pedestrianism can thus be found in my work, (a limited use of) pedestrian action, a ‘task-like’ ‘everydayness’ in the performance of complex choreographed movement and a prolific use of everyday gesture and behaviour. Significantly, it is the use of everyday gesture and a ‘non-performance’ stance that holds the pedestrian grain. As distinct from dance artists of the 1960s, rather than seeking to break theatrical conventions my works point to an *in-between* that suggests a malleable sense of boundary between performance and the everyday, between audiences and performers and between subject and object in the making of representation. An examination of the ways in which *Shrink’d, Doing, Done & Undone* and *The Living Room* disrupt the performance frame in different ways, and using distinct choreographic and dramaturgical devices (Chapter Two), will follow the ensuing discussion of the theoretical framework of the research.

Part Three: Thinking Around the Choreographic Research

Serving as a contextual framework, this section explores the prominent concepts, metaphors, theoretical and practical discourses that are of relevance to my practice and writing. The theoretical enquiry initially revolved around two distinct fields of theory, Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation as research methodologies, and phenomenological theoretical frameworks which consider the encounter of Self and Other/s that emerged from the practice discussed in this thesis. It is for this reason that phenomenological philosophical metaphors (specifically Merleau-Ponty's *Chiasm* and Emmanuel Levinas's *face-to-face*) were used as instigators for choreographic research and written reflection. Nevertheless, although useful in opening the discussion around my works, phenomenology is not the central premise of the thesis. The written discussion sees phenomenology as one mode of reflection alongside wider theoretical contexts that encompass performance and dance theory, and which serve as the key analytical tools throughout the thesis. These include writing by: Peggy Phelan (1993); Tim Etchells (2007); Philip Zarrilli (2009); Valerie Briginshaw (2001, 2009); Ramsey Burt (2006, 2009); Susan Leigh Foster (1986, 2002); Ann Cooper-Albright (1997, 2003), alongside post-structuralist and feminist perspectives, sociological, cultural and post-colonial theory sources.

1. Choreographic appropriation of Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation methodologies and notions of the encounter between mover and witness, self and Other/s

Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation were particularly relevant for the making of *Shrink'd*, and *Doing, Done & Undone*²⁸. Both invited attention to the intimate engagement between mover and witness, self and other/s in the studio research. In terms of spectatorship they also suggest the possibility of conceiving audience members as empathetic witnesses as well as instituting a 'social' form of viewing (through the reconfiguration of space) that is reminiscent of contact jams. Key writers on and practitioners of Authentic Movement examined included Janet

²⁸ Authentic Movement studio-based investigations and theoretical research took place between Nov 2004 and Feb 2005 during the making period of *Shrink'd*, and between Jan-Feb 2009 during the making period of *Doing, Done & Undone*. It also took place through professional workshops as part of the touring of *Shrink'd* in 2005-2006.

Adler (1999, 2002), Mary Starks Whitehouse (1999), and Stephanie Cohen (2010). Key dance theorists referenced who discuss Contact Improvisation include Cynthia Novack (1990) and Albright (2003).

Authentic Movement practice²⁹ fundamentally involves a dyad of mover and witness. The mover moves with eyes closed and is observed by an outside designated witness. The witness acts as a conscious support, holding what (following Jung³⁰) Authentic Movement practitioners would refer to as the ‘unconscious’ material of the mover (Adler 1999, p.142; Haze & Stomsted 2002, p.56). Its main premise is that:

The core of movement experience is the sensation of moving and being moved...ideally both are present at the same instant...it is a moment of total awareness, the coming together of what I am doing and what is happening to me (Whitehouse 1999, p.43)

It is of interest that this notion of ‘moving and being moved’ and the oscillation between them as described by Whitehouse, as well as the intertwining between mover and witness described by Adler (1999, pp 143-158)³¹, resonate with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological understanding of the *Chiasm*, the overlapping and intertwining between subject and object, self and world, and similarly with my own work.

Contact Improvisation, like Authentic Movement, centres around the idea of moving, listening and being attentive to another whilst simultaneously being attentive to one’s own internal sensation (Stark Smith 2005: online³²). It differs from Authentic Movement in that it primarily focuses on the physical and sensory experience of touch and weight (rather than emotional or therapeutic motivations for movement) and its form, ranging from subtle tactile investigation to highly athletic expression, is not restricted to a duet (as in the dyad)³³. However, Contact Improvisation is similarly

²⁹ Mary Starks Whitehouse originally developed Authentic Movement, then known as ‘movement in depth’ in the 1950s.

³⁰ Authentic Movement was initially developed using a Jungian theoretical framework it has since evolved as an independent practice.

³¹ See Adler (2002) and Adler ‘Who is the Witness’ (1999) for a further discussion on the intertwining between mover and witness

³² See: www.contactquarterly.com/cq/webtext/Harvest.html.

³³ In contact jams, duets and group improvisations organically develop and subside. In Authentic Movement the dyad is maintained throughout improvisations, although, the possibility of witnesses

concerned with presence in the sense of one's 'in the moment' experience, readiness and willingness to move and be moved (Pallant 2006, pp 32-34). As a performer, in Contact Improvisation

...the experience of middle-voicedness is perhaps most palpable when improvising with another person. Many of us have enjoyed the experience of neither leading nor following, but instead moving with, and being moved by another body. One body's weight and momentum flow into and with another body's shaping trajectory making a double bodied co-motion. (Foster 2003, p.7)

Albright suggests Contact Improvisation offers and actualises the experience of an 'intersubjective' space: '...in which one can be penetrated by sensations both external and internal, the heretofore unquestioned separation of individual and the world (or me and you) becomes more fluid' (Albright 2003, p.262). This bears some similarity to the notion of intersubjectivity or intertwining suggested by Adler (1999, pp145-146), although Albright is referring to sensations emerging from touch while in Authentic Movement the notion of intersubjectivity (although rooted in embodied sensations) refers more to a reflective connection between mover and witness. Nonetheless, both forms prioritise the internal experience rather than the external manifestation or shaping of movement (Novack 1990, p.119).

In our Authentic Movement investigations, while some improvisations rigorously followed the principle of the dyad, others often incorporated elements of Contact Improvisation, involving extended contact between mover and witness. As witnesses, we became aware of movement impulses, a desire to act on what is seen, and the emergence of interpretation in relation to the mover's material. We felt connected and to a degree responsible for containing the mover. In practicing both forms we found that the boundary between self/other became more porous. This prompted us to reconsider our experiences and position as audience members. Grounded in Albright's notion of intersubjectivity, Natalie Garratt-Brown suggests that 'somatic-informed dance not only removes the subject/object distinction between performer and audience

beginning to move together in relation to and in physical contact with one another is acknowledged and used in group practice.

via a denial of the visual as primary mode of engagement, but also offers an intersubjective space for the audience' (Garrett-Brown 2011, p.69).

This stage of the research informed the decision to reconfigure the theatrical space in *Shrink'd*, the audience being placed in a square, seated on the floor in close proximity to the performers. This decision consciously evoked the sociality of 'contact jams' (Novack 1990, p.16) and the avant-garde and informal modes of viewing of the 1960s and 1970s discussed earlier³⁴. However, while *Shrink'd* consciously evokes the communal informality of Contact Improvisation, in tandem with developments in dance through the 1980s to the present, it also problematises it. As will be seen in Chapter Two, *Shrink'd* references and at the same time questions the notion of a 'shared space' coined by Novak (1999).

³⁴ Contact Improvisation: '...has recognizable roots in the social and aesthetic revolutions of the sixties. Contact at once embraces the casual, individualistic, improvisatory ethos of social dancing and the experimentation with pedestrian and task-like movement favoured by early postmodern dance groups such as the Judson Church Dance Theatre' (Albright 2003, p.205).

2. Phenomenological metaphors

The central premise of Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation of moving and being moved (or touching and being touched) can be usefully compared to phenomenological concepts, in particular Merleau-Ponty's notion of the *Chiasm*. Similarly, the insistence on proximity, embodied viewing, direct eye contact and relationality between performers and audience members in *Shrink'd* (and to a degree in *Doing, Done & Undone* and *The Living Room*) can be further elucidated in dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas's notion of the *face-to-face*. These two guiding phenomenological metaphors are examined here via the writing of post-structuralist and feminist theorists such as Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 2004), Elizabeth Grosz (1994) and to a lesser degree Luce Irigaray (1984/2004).

Merleau-Ponty's Chiasm

Merleau-Ponty (1964, 1968) asserts the embodied imperative in our perception of the world: 'he demonstrates that experience is always necessarily embodied, corporeally constituted...[e]xperience can only be understood between mind and body – or across them – in their lived conjunction' (Grosz 1994, p.95). His notion of the *Chiasm* as an intertwining between mind-body, subject-object, interiority and exteriority (Merleau-Ponty 1968, pp130-150) moves away from Cartesian binaries towards an inherently relational understanding grounded in lived experience (Grosz 1994, pp 86-111). He explicates the *Chiasm* through the experience of touching and being touched, seeing and being seen: '...for if I can, with my left hand, feel my right hand as it touches an object, the right hand as an object is not the right hand as it touches' (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p.105).

He discusses the passage from inside to outside, or the way in which inside and outside meet, through the 'flesh' (Moran 2004, p.432). The term 'flesh' is seen as a porous element of being rather than simply the physical flesh or skin. Merleau-Ponty assigns the interdependence of subject and object exemplified through the tactile sense to vision: 'seeing entails having a body that is itself capable of being seen, that is visible. This is the very condition of seeing the condition of embodiment' (Grosz 1994, p.101). Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh proposes that there is not a fusion but an overlapping between subject and world, subject and object:

...this occurs because a sort of dehiscence opens my body in two, and because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we may say that things pass into us as well as we into the things (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p.123).

As is argued by Irigaray (1984/2004, p.144) and reiterated by Grosz (1994 pp 103-107) and other feminist theorists, Merleau-Ponty does not truly acknowledge the Other and the irreversibility of sexual difference he: ‘did not consider whose bodies and which sexualities were at stake; nor did he acknowledge his own corporeal complicity in the way in which he viewed the subject’ (Rothfield 2010, p.304). The Other is in some way subsumed and understood only through the subject’s own sense of self.

Nonetheless, Grosz suggests that as a non-binary ontology, the *Chiasm* aligns Merleau-Ponty with feminist thinking, in that it aims to occupy the space of the *in-between*, which ‘makes possible the binary terms insofar as it precedes and exceeds them, insofar as it is uncontainable in either term. Perception is, as it were, midway between mind and body...’ (Grosz 1994, p.94). Grosz reads Merleau-Ponty’s notion of flesh as a porous boundary, and emphasises the reversibility inherent in the ‘double sensation’ of touching and being touched, seeing and being seen. In relation to Merleau-Ponty’s example of the left hand touching the right, she suggests that

[it] is not the case that I have two contrary sensations at the same time (as one might feel two objects at the same time); rather each hand is in the ambiguous position of being capable of taking up the positions of either the toucher or the touched... [thus] the subject is implicated in its objects and its objects are partially constitutive of the subject (Grosz 1994, p.100)

As will be seen in Chapter Four, this physical explication of the *Chiasm* fuelled the choreographic investigation of *Shrink’d* and *Doing, Done & Undone*. Irigaray critiques Merleau-Ponty, by suggesting that her own description of the hands touching at the palms might be more suitable to describe the indeterminacy between toucher and touched (Irigaray 1984/2004, p.135) than Merleau-Ponty’s example of ‘one hand grabbing the other’ (Grosz 1994, p.107). She also argues that Merleau-Ponty

privileges the visible (the most distant sense) over the tactile, rather than recognizing the tactile as the primary sense (Irigaray 1984/2004, p.175).

Merleau-Ponty's oscillation between subject and object and his notion of the 'flesh', as porous boundary are resonant with Adler's description of the intertwining between mover and witness, of moving between internal sensation or experience to reflection on and kinaesthetic empathy with the Other as an overlapping or interdependency between self and Other (Adler 1999, p.145). Irigaray's image of reciprocal touching and a privileging of the tactile aligns more to the experience of intersubjective space in Contact Improvisation. The moment of 'flow', the reciprocal exchanges of weight and directional reaching into space that emerges spontaneously between the dancers without either mover consciously leading or following (Pallant 2006, p.110). Both informed the improvisatory exploration and are consequently choreographically manifested in the works.

Of most importance to this research, perhaps, is Grosz's reading of Merleau-Ponty's *Chiasm* as a non-binary in which subject and object are implicated and constitute by one another. This is critical to my works, which are rooted in and keep referring back to this feminist understanding of the *in-between* and the centrality of the body in our perception and formulation of knowledge. In common with Philipa Rothfield (2010) I am interested in integrating the phenomenological concern with immediate, lived experience with a post-structuralist view that sees subjectivity as 'constituted through discursive and representational practices' (Rothfield 2010, p.309). Her notion of 'somatic attention' as attending through the body whilst recognising cultural and social specificity³⁵ is useful in examining empathy as embodied experience in my works.

Bringing together Authentic Movement, Contact Improvisation and phenomenological insights my works (and *Shrink'd* in particular) embed a connection between visibility and tactility in the making of choreographic material and the mode of viewing employed, reconceiving spectatorship from a corporeal feminist position (Garrett-Brown 2011, p.65).

³⁵ Rothfield (2010, p.311) adopts Csordas's notion of 'somatic attention' in her discussion of phenomenology and dance (Csordas 1993, p.138).

Levinas and the face-to-face

Levinas continues Merleau-Ponty's investigation in his work, but refers more directly to the encounter between self and Other. His philosophy and specifically his notion of the *face-to-face*, discussed in light of Judith Butler's reading of the latter, is especially relevant to the ways in which my works dismantle the fourth wall, creating an open space between performers and their audience that seeks a response and dialogue.

One of the sections in *Shrink'd* literally involves a *face-to-face* encounter with audience members, performers standing or sitting and making eye contact with specific members of the audience (Figure 2, below). This section is repeated in reverse at a later point in the work with performers seeking out and trying to re-establish eye contact with the same audience members. Similarly, *Doing, Done & Undone*, and to a lesser degree *The Living Room*, also involve distinct moments of direct eye contact or facing of the audience. These are marked out from the more abstract, primarily compositional movement sections of the works, through relative stillness (performers standing in an everyday stance) and silence, allowing for resonance in the encounter between performers and audience members.



Figure 2. *Shrink'd* Video Still, The Place Theatre, London, 29 April 2006, *face-to-face* encounter.

Although the choreographic image of the *face-to-face* in *Shrink'd* was developed prior to reading Levinas it exemplifies the way in which the *face-to-face* as an embodied encounter insists on the spectator's presence, 'summoning' the viewer and disallowing passive spectatorship. In Levinas's terms, '[the] face signifies in the fact of summoning, of summoning me – in its nudity or its destitution, in everything that is precarious in questioning...' (Levinas 1983, cited in Hand 1998, p.5). Levinas argues that an ethical imperative is inherent to the encounter between self and Other. This, he suggests, comes to light through the face of the Other or in the *face-to-face* encounter with the Other. As Hand argues, Levinas rejects ontology³⁶,

...to understand our situation in reality is not to define it, but to be in an effective state... To think is no longer to contemplate, but to be engaged, merged with what we think, launched – the *dramatic* event of being-in-the-world. (Levinas 1991/1998, p.3, my emphasis)

Thus existence (as is embodied in the facing of the Other) is bound with expression and engagement with the Other rather than a form of intellection, it is a 'dramatic' event that unfolds and over which we have limited intentional control³⁷. Our understanding of the Other is not separate from our perception of and engagement with the Other, the two are interwoven for 'the Other is not first an object of understanding then an interlocutor. The two relations are merged' (Levinas 1991/1998, p.6). In other words, addressing the Other is inseparable from understanding or thought.

Levinas's understanding of the encounter of the Other as an effective or dramatic state suggests that corporeality is fundamental to and inseparable from being and knowing. His metaphor of the *face-to-face* therefore acutely describes the embodied encounter between performers and audience members that emerged from the choreographic research, and that *Shrink'd* in particular wished to emphasise, as both parties inevitably and primarily respond to one another through their embodied presence.

³⁶ This non-ontological definition can be seen as a critique of Heidegger's explication of Dasein: being-in-the-world (Hand 1989, p.4) and his 'intellection of being', and can be linked back to Husserl's unintentional perception and 'syntheses of sense as non-conceptual act' (Moran 2004, p.117).

³⁷ Intentional here uses the phenomenological sense of intentionality, that is, a knowing directed towards objects.

Butler's reading of Levinas as 'a body that speaks', or an address which is not 'strictly speaking, linguistic' is fundamental to my works and the writing in Chapters Five and Six. It acknowledges the way in which performers address or 'speak to' the audience through their moving body as much as through facial and bodily gesture and text (Butler 2004b, p.134).

Someone or something else speaks when the face is likened to a certain kind of speech; it is a speech that does not come from a mouth or, if it does, has no ultimate origin or meaning there...The sounds that come from or through the face...end with a figure for what cannot be named, an utterance that is not, *strictly speaking, linguistic*...(Butler 2004b, pp 133-34, my emphasis)

Of significance to my works is Butler's suggestion that Levinas's *face-to-face* illustrates the way in which our identity is formed in response to an Other, in response to an 'elsewhere' that is not of our doing. It is not a question of will or internal conceptualisation but emerges inevitably in the encounter of the Other.

[I]f we accept not just that we address others when we speak, but that in some way we come to exist, as it were, in the moment of being addressed, and something about our existence proves precarious...what binds us morally has to do with how we are addressed by others in ways that we cannot avert or avoid. (Butler 2004b, p.130)

Butler therefore reads Levinas's *face-to-face* as an ethical command through its recognition of the vulnerability of the Other: 'To respond to the face, to understand its meaning...to be awake to what is precarious in another life or, rather, the precariousness of life itself' (Butler 2004b, p.134). Butler's leading assertion of gender performativity (Butler 1990, 2004a) follows through in her reading of Levinas, in that she argues that our identity and sense of self is inherently tied to our encounter of the Other/s within a sociality.

This notion of the *response* to an Other permeates the works submitted for this thesis, from the improvisatory and choreographic methodology by which they are constructed (that is, the way in which movement material is formed by physically imagining and thinking of the Other) through to the ways in which performers assert their agency as 'an improvisation within a scene of constraint' (Butler 2004a, p.1).

Performers are party to the formation of their representation on stage, their ‘improvisation’ in this sense implies the way in which they respond ‘in the moment’ to other performers, the audience and the situation of performance by adopting an everyday stance of behaviour and facial expression. Furthermore, Butler’s notion of response to an Other serves as a theoretical basis for understanding the insistence of the works on addressing the audience, requiring and desiring their active response.

Butler, however, discusses the relevance of Levinas today in terms of the image of the face as a humanising (as well as dehumanising) force within a politically mediated context (Butler 2004b). To some extent *Shrink’d* and *Doing, Done & Undone* call for and question this political dimension of the encounter through: a tableau, images of bodies which could be read as corpses (Figures 3, below); the physical manipulation of performers’ bodies, and, in *Shrink’d*, through subtle textual references to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.



Figure 3. *Shrink’d*
Video Still, The Place
Theatre, London, 29
April 2006, images that
can be read as corpses

All three works also employ a form of portraiture in their offering of nuggets of autobiographical information about performers (and myself as the choreographer). Levinas reminds us, within a performance context, of the power of the face as a portrait and countenance that directly and profoundly addresses and touches an audience, demanding their presence. Further, Levinas’s recognition of the uniqueness of the Other, the Other that is different to me, also plays a part in the works submitted

for this thesis. In conjunction with Butler's notion of performativity, as well as writing by post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1994)³⁸, it offers a way of understanding how hybrid identities and alternative representations are negotiated and formed between the choreographer, performer and audience in the performances of my works.

³⁸ Bhabha's post-colonial understandings of the Other are elaborated on in the discussion of portraiture in *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room* and the notion of the *unhome* in *The Living Room* (Chapter Three, pp 32-33)

3. Judith Butler - performance and performativity

As discussed in the previous section, Butler's reading of Levinas's *face-to-face* as a response to an Other, to an exteriority or an 'elsewhere' that constitutes me as a subject, goes to the heart of this research through the works' embodied imaging of an Other and through their direct address to an audience or viewer/participant. In this section Butler's notions of gender performativity are also applied to my work through her writing and that of other dance and performance theorists.

Janelle Reinelt (2002) charts the historical and contextual uses of the terms performativity and theatricality, distinguishing between Performance, Performative and Performativity. She aligns *performance* with avant-garde practices, including performance art (or live art), and their rejection of traditional theatre's narrow understanding of theatre as 'play' (with its characteristics of scripted plot, character, etc.). Performance she suggests: '...stages the subject in process, the making and fashioning of certain materials, especially the body, and the exploration of the limits of representation-ability' highlighting 'the singularity of live performance, its immediacy and its non-repeatability' (Reinelt 2002, p.201)³⁹.

Drawing on Richard Schechner (1988), Reinelt defines the *performative* through a broader notion of performance as cultural performance which 'gives equal status to rituals, sports, dance, political events, and certain performative aspects of everyday life' (Reinelt 2002, p.203). In theatrical performance, this broad notion of performance was key in bringing awareness to cultural differences and in turn developing a body of work through the 1980s and 1990s that addressed notions of identity within performance (Reinelt 2002, p.203). As will be seen, it has relevance to the exploration of identity, primarily in *The Living Room* and to a lesser extent in *Shrink'd*. Schechner's understanding of performance draws on Erving Goffman's (1969) notions of performance in everyday life and frame analysis, and in this respect is also relevant to my works, which tread the borderline of performance and 'everydayness', just as Reinelt's definition of performance is relevant to the ways in which *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room* play with genre. Although mostly read, and

³⁹ In this definition she is primarily citing Phelan's (1993) position seeing performance as 'staging disappearance'.

conceived of, as dance works, they employ dramaturgical devices and text that draws on live art practice.

Reinelt's final category of *performativity* refers to the philosophical discourse that has emerged in response to Austin's (1962) linguistic formulation of the concept of the performative utterance or speech act. Austin argues that the speech act not only describes, but also brings about a new state of being. Reinelt discusses both Butler and Derrida's discussions of performativity. Here I will focus on Butler's notion of gender performativity and its different interpretations and usage by dance theorists. I will also invoke De Certeau's (1984) notion of strategy and tactic and his appropriation of the speech act.

Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity applies Austin's performative utterance to the body, suggesting that gender identity is culturally constructed through the repetition, or citation of stylized bodily acts (Butler 1990, p.33). The adoption of bodily behaviour is performative, a 'doing' that in turn constructs gender identity, a performative utterance. Writing on De Keersmaeker, Briginshaw sees the element of repetition in *Rosas Danst Rosas* (1983) as demonstrative of Butler's gender performativity, the dancers: 'distinctly feminine gestures...repeated rhythmically and absorbed into the repetitive unison choreographic patterns...vividly illustrate... Butler's (1990) claim that gender is a performative act that is learned' (Briginshaw 2001, p.197).

Briginshaw notes, as do Reinelt (2002) and Schechner (2002), that it is important to distinguish between the terms *performativity* in its philosophical sense and theatrical performance. She recognises that in theatrical or dance performance the 'act of performance' is an integral feature, framed within the context of the theatrical event. Her suggestion that a performer's sense of identity and agency (in the Butler sense of performativity) 'exists alongside and interacts with the dance performance' (Briginshaw 2001, p.81) opens the possibility for resistance by the performer. Moreover, in the context of my own research, this illustrates the ways in which the works draw attention to performativity within everyday behaviour also playing a part within the performance. Further, the performers are allowed a degree of decision-making regarding the formation of their onstage identities.

Grounding his discussion in Butler's later writing, Burt (2006) also highlights the potential for performers to assert their agency, rather than passively complying with choreographic identity representation, noting that:

There were signs that there might be a gap between what was demanded of the dancers in *Rosas Danst Rosas* and their performance of these demands. Their complicitous looks suggested the possibility that, although the dancers were conforming to their script, there might have been unfaithfulness in the way they were doing it, compliance, on one level, creating, on another, *an ideological space for subversion*. (Burt 2006, p.156, my emphasis)

This too is present in my work. Butler's (2004) re-evaluation of her notion of gender performativity, 'undoing' some of its original assertions, considers gender as formed through and in a sociality and, like Burt, she describes an opening for agency in the formation of identity:

If Gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of *improvisation within a scene of constraint*...the terms that make up one's own gender are, from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in *a sociality that has no single author*. (Butler 2004a, p.1 my emphasis)

Agency for Butler emerges as an 'improvisation within a scene of constraint' (Butler 2004a, p.1&15). When appropriated in the context of a discussion about theatrical performance, this is crucial in two respects. First, agency as *improvisation* (as in Butler's usage of the term) is negotiated and dependent on others and thus involves some form of reciprocation. Applied to the situation of performance, agency as improvisation can therefore refer to performers spontaneous on-stage responses to one another as well as to the reciprocal live exchange between performers and audience members. Secondly, as discussed by Burt (2006, p.159) and as can be seen in my work, as a performer one is not simply passive or complicit in the performance, agency is a place of reflection and resistance. For the performer, this implies the ability to move beyond objectification, to respond, reflect and alter their identity representation, for

[t]hat my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible...the “I” that I am finds itself at once constituted by norms and dependent on them but also endeavours to live in ways that maintain a *critical and transformative* relation to them (Butler 2004a, p.3, my emphasis).

Butler’s usage of the terms improvisation, in relation to agency, evokes the way in which improvisation emerges and operates in *Shrink’d* and *The Living Room* as pre-determined, rather than improvisational, choreographies. The improvisation lies not in the creation of new material or form (Rubidge 2009, p.365) but has a more restrictive sense. As in *Rosas Danst Rosas*, the improvisation lies in the interaction with other performers and the audience, through reflecting, responding and commenting on one’s own performance, on the performance of other dancers, or on audiences’ reactions as one performs. These interventions do not modify the choreography, rather, as performers our improvisation recognises and makes use of the two senses of performance discussed above, bridging and incorporating both theatrical performance and the performance of identity in these improvised actions. By pointing towards the act of performance and to the gap between our identity as performers and our identity as ‘real’ people (who we are outside of the theatre) we reveal the mechanism and paradox of performance and, in line with Phelan’s position, refuse a finite reading⁴⁰ (Phelan 1993, pp 171).

Susan Leigh Foster (2002), in her discussion of Michel De Certeau (1984), applies the notion of performativity to theatrical performance as a form of resistance, transformation and agency for the performer, for ‘in his analysis of resistance is a framework within which to theorize theater as strategy and theatricality as a possible tactic – [he offers] a framework that accords the body and its movement a central role’ (Foster 2002, p.131). Burt’s suggestion of dancers moving between the poles of compliance and subversion in *Rosas Danst Rosas* (Burt 2006, p.161) is analogous to De Certeau’s notion that tactics occupy the same space as strategy: ‘The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organised by the law of a foreign power’ (De Certeau 1984, p.37). This echoes the way in which, in *The Living Room*, the theatrical framing of performance and the

⁴⁰ Phelan’s writing in *Unmarked* (1993) discusses the gaps within representation, or the failure of representation. Her position is reiterated and illustrated throughout her writing in reference to a variety of works by artists from different disciplines.

‘scripted’ choreography itself are recognised (and almost declared as a strategy or ‘rule’), yet as a tactic the dancers (and myself) continually work to subvert it through interruption (‘the play within a play’) or the inclusion of everyday behaviour and gesture (Chapter Two).

Furthermore, De Certeau emphasises the enunciative element of speech, arguing that linguistics is only one aspect of the speech act, which crucially relies on ‘a way of speaking’ that correlates with his notion of ‘ways of operating’ within the everyday (De Certeau 1984 p.37). He suggests that language is always appropriate by the speaker, arguing that the speech act requires ‘The postulation of an interlocutor (real or fictive) and thus the constitution of a relational contract or allocution (one speaks to someone)’ (De Certeau 1984, p.33).

In common with Albright (1997, p.10), I find Butler’s notion of performativity limited in its account of the body. In their ‘subversion’ performers are always addressing an Other/s, thus performativity, within a performance context at least, implies a conversation, and thus goes beyond Butler’s notion of sociality. In the case of my work, as outlined in Chapters Three and Four both a bodily and a textual address act in parallel. Further, as a dancer, one develops an awareness and embodied consciousness of both internal somatic experience and its exterior potential for identity ‘performance’. The dancer’s experience of the body in a variety of choreographic contexts intersects, actively transforms or in the least expands one’s sense of gender or socio-cultural identity through this growing sensitivity to bodily stylization of behaviour. Equally, forms such as Contact Improvisation offer other ways of being with others, cultural codes of behaviour, particularly in terms of gender, that fall outside of normative everyday behaviour (Pallant 2006, p.79; Novack 1990, p.11). The works try to negotiate between these two senses of identity, of the everyday and the somatic, the internally felt and the outwardly expressed and the traversing between them. They rely on dancers’ sensitivity and negotiation of internal experience and its representation, their ‘dancing’ selves and their ‘everyday’ selves intersecting. Albright’s formulation and insistence on somatic experience as intertwined with representation is critical in this respect.

4. In-between somatic experience and representation

Reinelt argues that:

The poststructural critique of the sign, of representation, and of the subject is the philosophical backdrop to performance theory's concern with performance processes and its deliberate rejection of totalized/completed meanings. (Reinelt 2002, p.205)

This emphasis on a rejection of totalized meaning is consonant with the works submitted for this thesis. *The Living Room* and *Shrink'd* in particular highlight ambivalence, on the one hand committing to a kind of 'authenticity' of the body and dancers' representation whilst at the same time placing doubt at the heart of that representation. For the performers, referring directly to the audience is a way of resisting being subsumed or objectified by their gaze. Thus, while the works employ portraiture and on first appearance seem to make 'true' claims about the work and its performers' identities, those claims are always bracketed, delivered through ironic or skeptical commentary. This is an overt, performative recognition that what is represented in the performance fails to represent the whole or the 'real'.

In conflating identity politics with visibility, cultural activists and some theorists have also assumed that 'selves' can be adequately represented... 'the Real-impossible', which is unsayable, unseeable, and therefore resistant to representation, is ignored in the full fling forward into representation. (Phelan 1993, p.10)

Phelan's notion of the failure of representation has a bearing on the discussion of Authentic Movement, Contact Improvisation and Levinas's *face-to-face* regarding the encounter between self and Other.

Identity emerges in the failure of the body to express being fully and the failure of the signifier to convey meaning exactly. Identity is perceptible only through a relation to an other ... In that declaration of identity and identification, there is always loss, the loss of not-being the other and yet remaining dependent on that other of self-seeing, self-being' (Phelan 1993, p.13)

Phelan's suggestion of the failure, or sense of loss in the process of identification,

inevitably tied to our seeing and being seen by the Other, echoes both Levinas's sense of difference, the 'infinite' in the face of the Other and Butler's notion of identity constituted in response to an other. However, her writing articulates the ways in which performance operates as a site of both representation and its failure, and as a site for intimating the 'unsaid' or 'unseen', which she terms *unmarked* (Phelan 1993, p.19). Although she focuses on performance art, her notion of what evades representation is appropriated in this thesis to refer to the way in which dance or embodiment offer both the visible and invisible, simultaneously interior and exterior, subjective experience and its objectification, or in Albright's terms moving between somatic experience and representation (Albright 1997, p.13). Albright equally recognises the failure to fully represent, and the tension between dancing as internal somatic experience and the inevitable fact of being seen (within performance). In *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room* in particular, when traversing between the everyday and the formal choreographic construction of 'dancing' we continually and consciously enact a double role of performers and 'real' people through our inclusion of everyday behaviour alongside the scripted choreography.

Contrary to Phelan's claims of disappearance and limited represent-ability Alan Read argues for appearance or show making through his term 'Showciology' (Read 2008, p.22). My interpretation of his 'theatre of appearance', grounded in his citing of *Forced Entertainment*, is a theatre that admits to artifice, in the sense of revealing its modes of performance making, or what I refer to in my writing as 'the act of performance'. Appropriated to my works, this describes the way in which the works offer a visibility, or more precisely unashamedly declare their appearance (through direct address of the audience and the use of the facing of the audience) and at the same time are conscious of their artifice, the way in which this representation is, in Phelan's terms, incomplete. Its admission to failure also holds the grain of its humanising appeal, its inviting informality.

Chapter Two

***In-between* dancing and the everyday: Frames**

Chapter One examined the methodological and theoretical frameworks relevant to my research situating my works within a historic trajectory. In the following three chapters I undertake a discussion of the choreographic research that starts from the ‘outside’, with an analysis of the theatrical framing of the work underpinned by a dialogue with theory that I have found useful in helping to further articulate my choreographic thinking, gradually moving to the ‘interior’ processes of the choreographic research in the final chapter.

1. Introduction

Semiotics and genre

The writing in this chapter and in Chapter Four borrows elements of semiotic theory and dance analysis that are relevant to my practice. Dance theorists acknowledge that while semiotics is useful, in that it prioritises the body as ‘bearer of signs’, the structural, linguistic or literary model is problematic in that it does not fully acknowledge ‘contextual or socio-political frames’ or the somatic imperative at play in performance (Fensham 2009, p.27)⁴¹.

Thus, my analysis applies semiotics in a sense that is broader than linguistic. In common with Andrew Hewitt, I take the position that ‘[b]odies are not writing...[although] they clearly signify’ (Hewitt 2005, p.8). Although, I often use the terms ‘reading’ of performance, ‘writing and erasing’ or ‘drawing and erasing’ of performance, these are not used to validate performance as an utterance in linguistic terms, but to understand the act of ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ of performances as a corporeal mode of signifying and addressing, as well as interpreting, performance. This perspective is grounded in Levinas’s non-linguistic formulation of ‘address’ or ‘greeting’ of the Other in which thought is inseparable to expression (Levinas 1991/1998, p.7) or, in my own terms, of dances and bodies that ‘speak’.

The use of text in my work places it between the theatrical and choreographic in terms of genre. Rachel Fensham’s (2009) proposal of corporeal genre analysis and Susan Leigh Foster’s writing on choreographic framing (1986) are useful models for examining the theatrical framing operating in my works and in particular in the discussion of reconfiguration of space, genre switching and onstage witnessing employed in *Shrink’d* and *The Living Room*. Fensham reasserts the notion of genre analysis informed by a corporeal perspective:

While the semiotician often dispenses with the real body for the purpose of analysis, performers and audiences meet under the pretext that a real

⁴¹ Furthermore, linguistic analysis ‘can impose on movement an inappropriate static framework with a unit-and-structure technique’ (Whatley 2009, p.26).

exchange is taking place: that somewhere in the darkness, there is a palpably felt experience of another person that exceeds representation. (Fensham 2009, p16)

Fensham places corporeal or 'felt' experience in the situation of performance as central to the act of interpretation or reading of performance and sees genre as a 'navigational tool' (Fensham 2009, p.16)⁴². Susan Leigh Foster places an emphasis on the dancer's corporeality and its stylisation by the choreographer in defining genre and the framing of performance (Foster 1986 pp 76-77).

Theatrical framing

Frame in performance sees the performer and spectator taking clearly assigned roles. The performance is normally viewed as an 'alternative and fictional reality' and the viewer adopts the position of 'a privileged 'onlooker' (Elam 1980/1993, p.88). Fredric Jameson argues that the division of roles between audiences and performers is a social contract, which genre helps to mediate in terms of expectations of 'rules and roles' (Fensham 2009, p.29).

Schechner (1988/2003) and Counsell and Wolf (2001) adapt Erving Goffman's sociological notion of frame and performance within everyday life to theatrical performance 'the frame indicates the nature and purpose of a behaviour, and hence how it is to be interpreted' (Counsell & Wolf 2001, p.25). Schechner goes further and suggests, that 'simply framing an activity 'as' performance – viewing it as such – makes it into a performance' (Schechner 1988/2003, p.22). Grounded in his reading of Goffman, and his wider understanding of performance (see Chapter One pp 63-64) he suggests that we carry the frame with us in terms of our expectations and the roles and behaviour we adopt (Schechner 1988/2003, p.22).

Elam notes that the division of roles between audience and performers is further reinforced through the spatial and temporal frames of performance: 'the stage, the dimming of the lights, the curtain...etc. which allow a more precise definition of what is included in and what is excluded from the frame in space and time' (Elam

⁴² Fensham draws on the work of Susan Melrose and Susan Leigh Foster. Melrose places equal weight on the dramatic text and the 'bodywork' of the actor and the 'intensified gaze of the spectator upon the somatic activity of the performer' (Fensham 2009, p.37).

1980/1993, p.88). Similarly Foster discusses theatrical framing as ‘the way the dance sets itself apart as a unique event’ (Foster 1986, p.59). Like Elam, she delineates external framing devices or markers such as the site for the performance, publicity, titles and programme notes, staging, lighting, costuming and musical composition⁴³ as well as ones that are embedded in the work itself, for example the configuration and choreographic use of space, the temporal frame of performance (‘beginnings and endings’), and the use of the gaze by the performers (Foster 1986, pp 60-64).

In the following section(s) I chart the ways in which the different works submitted for this thesis disrupt the performance frame or ‘re-frame’ the work through the use of choreographic and dramaturgical devices. I predominantly examine the reconfiguration of space in *Shrink’d* and the ways in which *Doing, Done & Undone* continue this exploration through a compositional use of space that highlights facing, advance and retreat. I then examine the way in which *The Living Room* (continuing from where *Doing, Done & Undone* left off) plays with the temporal frame of performance.

2. The reconfiguring of space: spatial framing in *Shrink’d*

Proximal space: including the audience in the frame

Much [post]modern theatre has tended...to transform architectural fixity as far as possible into dynamic proxemic informality. The centre of the theatrical transaction has become...less an absolute stage-auditorium divide than a flexible and, occasionally unpredictable manipulation of body-to body space (Elam 1980/1993, pp 63-64)

The proximal ‘body-to-body’ space in the case of all three works served to emphasise the corporeal reality of the performance event: ‘a bunch of people in a room, some performing some watching’ (Marks 2000). This stands in contrast to traditional theatre conventions which tend to exclude the audience from the frame. As Counsell suggests

⁴³ While external framing devices operate in my works they are not central in the context of the thesis and have thus only been noted briefly where relevant in Chapter Three and in Appendix Five.

[s]itting quietly, still and in darkness, for example, we effectively remove ourselves from the readable whole of the event...our behaviour signifies that the audience is non-signifying, excludes the spectator from the frame of what is interpretable. (Counsell 1996, p.21)

Shrink'd disrupted this convention by incorporating the audience within the frame, intentionally revealing the audience and placing them 'in the light' (Woodhouse 2005). At times, performers sit among the audience and discuss the work and, at the end of the work, the audience is invited on to the performance area thus physically dissolving the initial spatial demarcation (Figure 1, p.35). Placing the viewer within 'the frame of what is interpretable' (Counsell 1996, p.21) was further reinforced by the interactivity invited by the *Shrink'd* installations prior (and following) the show involving the viewer performatively⁴⁴.

Proximal space: embodiment and viewing perspectives

Shrink'd was concerned with engendering a sense of intimacy and informality that was rooted in corporeal experience. Changing the audience's bodily situation, angle and proximity of viewing was primarily motivated by the desire to emphasise an embodied perception of dance, one that directly involves and is grounded in kinaesthetic sensation and empathy (Brown 2010, p.64). The proximal viewing situation developed for *Shrink'd* brought into play other modes of perception besides the visual (Brown 2010, p.72), for example, touch, smell and sound (using 'surround sound' as well as performers directly talking to or sitting among the audience). Placing the audience on four sides presented a fundamental shift, both in choreographic and in viewing terms, inasmuch as it surrendered the notion of a single front, instead suggesting multiple viewpoints and perspectives of the movement. As is argued by Brown (2010, p.64-65) and Garrett-Brown (2011, p.69), by exploring different models of dance presentation (in the case of *Shrink'd* one more akin to the situation of studio rehearsal) new non-binary and less stable relationships between audiences and performers can be found. Furthermore as suggested by Brown and pertinent to *Shrink'd* this type of presentation can better serve contemporary dance's

⁴⁴ Performativity in this instance refers to the way in which the movement of the viewer in interactive dance installations initiates a 'radical modulation of scripted events...bringing new states of affairs into being' (Rubidge 2009, p.365).

engagement with the horizontal plane (as distinct to the perspectival privileging of the vertical plane):

The horizontal is connected to landscape, reciprocity and being-in-relation to another; from a somatic perspective it is highly integrative as I gain a sense of my whole body and its expansiveness as it reaches across space' (Brown 2010, p.64)

Indeed in *Shrink'd* the horizontal plane became particularly important as the dance entailed much detailed floor works as well as images of dancers lying down. The audience was placed on the floor, on the same plane as dancers, thus changing their bodily relation and perspective, emphasising this 'landscape' view.

In terms of these choreographic concerns *Shrink'd* shares an affinity with the works *Plants and Ghosts* (2002) and *Bird Song* (2004) by Siobhan Davies, *Scan* (1999/2000) by Rosemary Butcher and *Ring* (1999) by Felix Ruckert. Both Butcher and Davies share a choreographic concern with the physicality and multi-faceted articulation of the body and its intersection with space (Cools 2008, p.1). Butcher's work is often described as sculptural and minimalist (Parry 1989, cited in Landsdale 2005, p.90) or formalist (Dodds 1997, cited in Landsdale 2005, p.90) by virtue of its continual exploration of intricate set movement material in relation to improvisation, as well as the placing of the body in space or site (Landsdale 2005, p.90-92). Equally, Davies's work has been primarily concerned with movement research and innovation, working in close partnership with her dancers to continually extend movement vocabulary and possibilities (Whatley 2002, p.2). In the last decade or so (from 1999 onwards), in common with Butcher, she has also been interested in reconfiguring the spatial relation between dancer and viewer and the implications of aligning her work with the visual arts (Whatley 2010, p.4).

As in my work, Butcher is interested in an intimate perspective, '[f]rom a distance the information is completely unconnected. You can gaze at it and say, 'Oh they're just moving around' but there is a physical reason for everything, which needs to be seen' (Ayers & Butcher 2005, p.61). By placing viewers close to the dancers in *Scan*, they are not so much included in the frame but afforded a closer inspection. Ayers equally

comments how viewing Butcher's work 'requires an intensity of gaze which is very different to watching something happening in a proscenium or any kind of theatre setting' (Ayers & Butcher 2005, p.61).

Butcher discusses how viewing dance from a visual arts perspective made her shift her attention from an exploration of space and movement as 'unprocessed' towards an intricacy of bodily composition (Cools & Butcher 2008, p.4). Davies equally talks about how working on *Plants and Ghosts* changed her attention to detail, sharing the same space with the audience, 'the same air', as distinct from the distanced situation of stage performance (Davies 2010). She comments on how the situation of being viewed from all four sides makes the dancer more acutely aware of their three-dimensionality: 'you become conscious of the volume of your presence (your back, the back of your head)...the space behind you become vitally important' (Davies 2010).

These same choreographic concerns underlie the research in *Shrink'd*, an interest in the physical and anatomical intricacies of the body experienced at close proximity as well as the three-dimensionality and sculpting of the body offered within an enveloping viewing situation. In terms of movement language the 'in the round' framing 'democratised' all parts of the body, the back of the body equally important to the front, the detail or 'close up' of a hand equally important to viewing the whole of the dancer.



Figure 4. *Shrink'd* (publicity shot) Photography: Chris Nash
Left to right: Kendall ('Kitty'), McConville ('Ducky') & Flexer

This three-dimensionality also freed me compositionally, creating complexity of angles and lines, both those contained within the dancer's individual architectural or skeletal frame and the intersecting lines and trajectories created through their moving bodies viewed in relation or in contact with one another. In addition the 'horizontal plane' offered a revealing intimacy, an almost 'private' view, which is difficult to achieve within conventional presentational performance (Brown 2010, p.64).



Figures 5 & 6. *Shrink'd* (publicity shots), Photography: Chris Nash. McConville & Kendall

Shrink'd both offered close inspection, as its title suggests, but concurrently and paradoxically, in viewing one realises that it is impossible to capture the whole, the audience's view is overwhelmingly fragmented by the proximity and the abundance of movement material performed by four separate (and connecting) bodies. The perspective offered to the viewer is thus both utterly revealing and continually concealing, which suggests a viewing that is *in-between*, emanating and oscillating between the visible and the hidden. While the audience gets a privileged close up look of the dancer's body and the body in movement, parts of the choreography and other bodies are constantly hidden from view, or only available to those sitting at the other 'fronts'. Thus, the audience becomes increasingly aware of the way in which the work is perceived differently by each respective side and equally by each individual.

This notion of revealing and concealing shares an affinity with Butcher's preoccupation with presence and absence, visibility and invisibility. Regarding *Scan* she states '*Scan* is crammed with visual holes' (Butcher, Pollard & Melrose 2005, p.69). However, *Shrink'd* goes beyond Butcher and Davies's strategies by physically

engaging with the viewer, with performers crossing the frame and entering the area demarcated for the audience as well as inviting the audience onto the central performance space.

The social (political) and critical implications of 'in the round' viewing

Elam suggests that the designated seat, and the anonymity offered by the darkened audience area highlight personal perception 'within an experience which is collective in origin' (Elam 1980/1993, p.65). In contrast, *Shrink'd*, by reconfiguring the theatrical space, carved out a sociopetal (Elam 1980/1993, p.64) embodied space through its emphasis on making the audience visible to both the performers and other audience members. This is similarly evidenced in Davies's *Plants and Ghost* (2002) 'the audience seated on four sides...reinforcing a sense of circularity... The removal of the proscenium arch abandoned the 'them and us' relationship between performer and audience' (Whatley 2005, p.90). In *Scan* (1999/2000), Butcher suggests, 'the philosophy was that it was seen on four sides – everybody saw everything but not in the same order' (Cools & Butcher 2008, p.5).

The notion of informal viewing or, as Whatley somewhat problematically suggests, no 'them and us', was further reinforced in *Shrink'd*. Although still seated within a designated area, at the start of the show the audience is lit on opposite sides of the square before the performers enter and thus can begin to acknowledge that they are included within the frame both as individuals and as a group - an audience (Figure 1, p.35). The heightened sense of embodied perception in *Shrink'd* was thus connected and interwoven with a sense of collective viewing. The informality afforded by the seating suggested the *in-between* of process and performance, or the 'process look' (Wood 2007, p.12), hinting at the studio situation and the act of production of the art work, thus broadening the conceptual frame.

Notably Foster links the four-sided viewing positions in Butcher's *Scan* to the way in which Cunningham revolutionised choreographic conceptualisation through his use of the grid: 'Cunningham...with his multi-focused array of bodies randomly strewn throughout the space...[c]ommanded the viewer's undivided attention' (Foster 2005, p.110). She suggests this purports reflexive viewing whereby 'viewers also watch

themselves watching, choosing where next to look’, and concludes that ‘[t]he grid systemises dancers while retaining their individuatedness’ (Foster 2005, p.110).

Shrink’d similarly equalises all points in the space. However, as proposed in Chapter One, the reference to the 1960s and 1970s is more conscious and ironic than reminiscent in that it highlights ambivalence and scepticism in relation to the role and political potential of art. The prologue section in *Shrink’d* highlights the initial self-consciousness, tension and claustrophobia evoked by the reconfiguring of space, addressing the audience as airplane passengers, with performers, as air stewardesses noting the emergency exits (DVD 1: *Shrink’d*, clip 1, vimeo.com/album/2927610). Equally the manifesto section, spoken by all four performers in the middle of the work is self-reflexive, commenting sardonically on the notion of freedom associated with the work of the 1960s and could be seen to hint at Rainer’s ‘No Manifesto’,

Bonita: Why are we doing this?

Yael: This is an act of freedom

Ducky: That’s a bit slippery

Bonita: Freedom is a lifestyle

Saju: I feel my freedom diminish by the minute

Yael: I come from a place where they’re building a wall

Bonita: Which they call fence

Ducky: You share earthworms

Bonita: I come from a place where they think I’m a tourist

Ducky: I come from Cheshire

Bonita: What are we doing?

Yael: This is a manifesto

Ducky: It’s a dance rant

Bonita: It’s a rant dance

Ducky: It’s a ratatatat.

Thus, while Bonita Chan and I reference possible political implications for the work, both within and outside of the context of dance, this is quickly undercut by Ducky (McConville) as a ‘ratatatat’, simply a ‘show’, entertainment.

In *Shrink'd* the dancers move between unison, almost military, sections which divide the space in geometrical, at times regimented fashion (DVD 1: *Shrink'd*, clip 2, vimeo.com/album/2927610) to sections which emphasise the individuality of the dancers and employ more organic and rounded spatial configurations or physical contact between the dancers (DVD 1: *Shrink'd*, clips 3 & 4, vimeo.com/album/2927610). Foster recognises the potential for dancers to act as independent agents within the system of the grid: '*Scan*'s dancers do not move identically...their individuated statements suggest togetherness, rather than regimentation' (Foster 2005, p 114). Furthermore she suggests Butcher's aesthetic carries political significance in that

...it invites the possibility of working together...not buying into that romantic proposition that we could change the world by looking one another in the eye...Complicit with the grid's specifications of spatial orientation, the dancers nonetheless conspire together to negotiate difference. (Foster 2005, p.114)

This tension and *in-between* is reinforced in *Shrink'd*, which purposefully employs regimented movement and compositional structuring to evoke and signify military and/or medical operations on the body to bring into question notions of freedom. Thus, while the aesthetics of an embodied presence and collective 'shared space' (Novack 1990), or Whatley's suggestion of an abandoning of 'them and us' are evoked, a sombre and wry ambivalence is placed at their heart. This choreographic or directorial position considers Jacques Rancière's notion of the emancipated spectator:

The spectator also acts... She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of places...She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way...They [the spectators] are thus both distant spectators and active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them. (Rancière 2009, p.13)

Thus, rather than viewing the audience as a community to be mobilised into action, in *Shrink'd* the audience members are also seen as independent agents and in this sense are placed on an equal footing with the performers. This is reinforced through the *face-to-face*, the direct eye contact between performers and audience members

emphasised in *Shrink'd*, and facilitated by seating the audience at the same level as the performers. The eye-to-eye or *face-to-face* engenders an informality and intimacy with audience members. Drawing on Levinas's notion of the *face-to-face* as an active addressing of the Other it suggests and brings into question the ethical relation. In conjunction with the content of a dance that brings into question notions of freedom, the *face-to-face* in *Shrink'd* therefore does not function as a 'romantic proposition that we could change the world by looking one another in the eye' (Foster 2005, p.114) but rather asks how do we proceed? What is our responsibility to one another?

The initial *face-to-face* section presented at the start of the show is repeated after the manifesto, so that same eye-to-eye looking becomes laden with residual meaning in its new context. The *face-to-face* here demands more of its audience. Rather than simply befriending the audience, it suggests the audience has to formulate their position or relation to the events preceding this repeated looking, in particular the manipulation and dragging of bodies and the 'manifesto' which through text makes direct reference to notions of boundaries and freedom, both specifically relating to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict (Yael: 'I come from a place where they building a wall which they call a fence') and a wider discussion of migration and hybrid identities (Bonita: 'I come from a place where they think I'm a tourist').

The *face-to-face* is amplified through the use of on-stage witnesses; the performers do not leave the stage until the end of the work and stand either within the performance area or on the corners of the square in full view. These witnesses consciously observe both the action taking place and, during the manipulation of bodies, the audience. The on-stage witness serves as an additional frame, or a frame within a frame, bringing to the forefront the act of watching within the spectatorial dynamic (Wood 2007, pp 64-65)⁴⁵. In *Shrink'd* it also acts to underscore or question the ethical imperative in relation to the images of corpses presented. The use of onstage witnesses appears in all three works but only in *Shrink'd* does it more clearly carry this ethical residue.

⁴⁵ See Wood (2007 pp 64-65), for the use of on-stage witnesses in Rainer's *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968).

As argued by Freddie Rokem, on-stage witnessing:

...establishes the hermeneutic perspective from which this performance implicitly “invites” its spectators to watch and interpret...[t]his invitation... subliminally induces the spectator to reflect or react to his or her own role and experience as a spectator. This mechanism transforms the passive theater-goer into an active spectator. (Rokem 2002, p.171)

Thus through the use of on-stage witnesses in *Shrink'd* (and in the other two works), the act of spectating and the mechanism of performance become elements of content in the reading of the work. The witness becomes a mirror image of the spectator, which in *Shrink'd* is doubly mirrored by the audience sitting on the opposite side of the square. Performers actively looking at the audience in *Shrink'd* reminds viewers not only of their active engagement in viewing but also the vulnerability and exposure of being on view that the ‘in the round’ situation of viewing instils. This vulnerability of the viewer coupled with the vulnerability of the manipulated dancers on stage intensifies the ethical dimension and the *face-to-face* encounter that follows.

As suggested by Fensham (2009, p.11) the frame within a frame, the looking-in on the performance is aligned with a feminist construction of theatre. It offers ‘a refusal of the observer’s stable position, a fascination with re-presenting presence, an ability to stage its own staging, to rethink, reframe’ (Freedman 1991, p.73 cited in Fensham 2009, p.11). This implies that the performer has agency within the spectatorial dynamic and was certainly a prominent (if not conscious) driving force in including on-stage witnesses in all three works.

Paul Willemen’s discussion of the fourth look contributes to an understanding of the use of on-stage witnesses: ‘[t]he fourth look is an imagined look experienced by the audience as a sense that it is seen in the process of seeing...theatre not only foregrounds this fracture but entangles us with its paradoxes...[and] shows that it knows that it is showing’ (Willemen cited in Freedman 1991, p.69). The on-stage witness’s looking at the audience in *Shrink'd* can thus be understood as ‘the fourth

look⁴⁶ serving to further complicate and fracture the gaze in a play of continual reflection, distortion and displacement.

Playing close to and across the frame: performance and participation

Whilst Davies and Butcher are interested in the contextual and aesthetic possibilities of the audience being in view, the audience members remain confined to their seats and their role as observers. In contrast, in Ruckert's *Ring* (1999) audiences are invited to both observe and participate⁴⁷, and the dance is primarily constructed through individuated contact between performers and audience members. *Ring* bears a similarity to *Shrink'd* in that it places the *in-between*, the traversing of the frame and the encounter between performers and audience members, at the centre of the work. Ruckert's participatory construction places the work firmly within the genre of immersive performance. As Burt suggests, both Ruckert's earlier work *Hautnah* (1995) and *Ring* (1999) 'opened up new possibilities for experience, or redefined... aspects of the audience performer relationship that are usually tacit or invisible' (Burt; online, no date). Certainly the 'theatre of seduction' enacted in both makes explicit the negotiation that is implicit in the audience/performer exchange.

Shrink'd shares some of the characteristics of *Ring* (1999), most prominently in terms of the directness with which it approaches its audience. *Shrink'd* also makes the tacit relationship between performer and audience more explicit and a central aspect of the content of the work. The establishing of individuated eye contact between performers and audience members and the dances performed to individual members of the audience (holding torches to light the dancers) also bear a marked resemblance to *Ring* (1999), not only in formal presentation but also in style and length (DVD 1: *Shrink'd*, Clip 5, vimeo.com/album/2927610). The performers in *Shrink'd* similarly 'befriend' the audience establishing an intimate and informal exchange. Where the works clearly diverge is in the ways in which they move towards participation.

⁴⁶ The fourth look makes a reference to Laura Mulvey's notion of the gaze. She proposes three looks 'the look of the camera that records the event, the look of the audience at the film, and the look of the characters within the film at each other' (Freedman 1991, p.69).

⁴⁷ Audience members are invited to sit in a circle of outward facing chairs which equal the number of performers. The remainder of the audience is invited to either sit in the auditorium to view the performance or move around the performance. The dance includes individuated contact between performers and audience members, performers whispering or massaging audience members or performers dancing for and with audience members. The entire sequence is repeated several times, giving other audience members the opportunity, if they so choose, to also participate.

While *Ring* directly activates the viewers who choose to sit down as participants, making them move within a duet form, *Shrink'd* demands less interaction from the viewer. Instead, *Shrink'd*, throughout, plays with the physical edges of the spatial frame, performers coming close to the audience as well as teasing the audience as to whether they will come close or not. Elam's suggestion of four divisions of proximity within an informal mode of theatrical viewing: '... 'intimate' distance (physical contact and near touching positions) to 'personal' distance [1.5-4 feet], 'social' [4-12 feet] and, finally 'public' distance [12-25 feet]' (Elam 1980/1993, p.65) are played with directly by *Shrink'd* in its fraying and crossing over of the frame.

This happens in the first section of the dance when performers reveal writing on their skin to three sections of the audience, whilst purposefully avoiding the fourth section of the audience (DVD 1: *Shrink'd*, Clip 6, vimeo.com/album/2927610) as well as in those sections of *face-to-face* where performers make direct eye contact with audience members and eventually sit in close proximity to them. It continues in the second section of the dance, where performers manipulate each other's bodies, presenting them in close proximity to the audience as corpses or inert, compliant bodies, and when performers sit among the audience to view some of the other performers whilst also whispering their thoughts to audience members. It also takes place in the section of individuated dances 'dedicated' to members of the audience who are asked to hold the torches to light the performers as described above.

In these ways *Shrink'd*, like *Ring* (1999), plays with seduction and makes explicit the exchange of gaze as well as bodily consciousness between performers and audience members. However, while *Shrink'd* employs seduction it does so in a knowing and ironic way, whereas it could be argued that Ruckert's work (certainly his more recent works⁴⁸) simply re-enact and reinforce the notion of seduction as the only way in which audience performer relations can be conceived. The final image of corpses or bodies lying on top of one another that appears in *Shrink'd* is also present in *Ring*

⁴⁸ Later works such as *Secret Service* (2002) and *Pain and Presence* (2007) further disrupt personal and private boundaries and are even more overt in their exploration of sexual and voyeuristic exchange.

(1999). In both it can be read as symbolic of the Holocaust⁴⁹. However in *Ring* (1999) this image can also be read as having sexual overtones, due to the seductive dimension in the corporeal encounter between audiences and performers in this work, while *Shrink'd* avoids such representation.

As mentioned earlier, the ways in which *Ring* (1999) and *Shrink'd* employ performativity and participation is quite distinct. Burt describes his experience in *Ring* (1999) and other works by Ruckert as 'caring attention'. However, as a participant/viewer in the duets in *Ring* (1999) I felt I had to be entirely compliant in order to enable the performer to move me as part of the overall choreographic design. I also felt the connection with performers was superficial in that its momentary nature rendered it impersonal, as the performer had to quickly move on to the next audience member. This is contrary to Burt's claim that 'The pleasure of participating in his [Ruckert's] pieces is the pleasure of receiving an intense, intimate, caring attention that is analogous to the attention of a lover' (Burt; online, no date).

Although at the end of the work I was invited to initiate a one-minute dance, I felt my passivity throughout the work did not entice me to suddenly improvise my own dance. Choreographically Ruckert's circle or ring appeared to me to enact Foster's description of a romantic desire to 'change the world' (Foster 2005, p.114) rather than offering irony or critique. Conversely, Burt argues that in the context of a post Aids and DNA testing era, Ruckert's dances 'exemplify a new kind of bodily closure...Both the dancers and the participants in Ruckert's work seem vulnerable...the situations in which they engage require an openness that obligates them to the responsibilities of this newly complicit morality' (Burt; online, no date).

Here there is an echo of my earlier description of the vulnerability of both the audience and performers in *Shrink'd*. However, in *Shrink'd* even when invited onto the performance space, the audience is ultimately not required to dance, simply to continue observing from a non-static seated position (DVD 1: *Shrink'd*, Clip 7, vimeo.com/album/2927610). The active participation or performativity of the

⁴⁹ This was more clearly pronounced in my work *Exit Plan* (2005) which was based on *Shrink'd* and performed in Germany by a predominantly German cast.

audience was assigned more directly to the integral interactive installations that were part of *Shrink'd* rather than to the live performance *per se*.

Burt's and my contrasting experiences and interpretations of the spectatorial experience in *Ring* (1999) could stem from the fact that while I, as a choreographer and performer, am accustomed to moving in and out of participation, improvisation and performance of set material, Burt, as an expert spectator (and academic), is more accustomed to the situation of distanced viewing. Thus while for him the experience of *Ring* (1999) is novel, offering an element of performativity on the part of the viewer, it is a more constraining experience for me.

Shrink'd and *Ring* (1999) through their attempt to enforce embodied viewing and participation could be seen in Rancière's terms as aligned with an Artaudian stance, immersing the audience as a way of dissolving its position as spectator altogether (Rancière 2009, p.5). Certainly, as choreographer I felt that, whilst the playing at the edges of the frame served to engender intimacy and an informality (and thus suggest 'everydayness'), once the audience crossed over the marked/lit line and moved into the performance or 'stage' space the intention and meaning of the work became confused (for both the audience and myself as choreographer). On reflection, I felt that at this point the work lost the power of the *in-between*, that is the playing and teasing between distance and proximity. The departure from the frame, whilst logical in terms of the progression of the concept underlying the work, offered an entirely new mode of viewing, which required greater dramaturgical attention and which would equally require a different kind of choreographic construction, one that in terms of genre or theatrical conventions (as with *Ring*) is more aligned with immersive dance performance or installation. This insight ultimately led to the decision to return to a single front or more conventional framing in the subsequent works *Doing, Done & Undone* and *The Living Room*.

I felt the audience in *Shrink'd* continued to 'carry the frame' (Schechner 1988/2003 p.22) throughout the work (even though they moved into the performance space). *Shrink'd*, offered a three-dimensional corporeal mode of perceiving and experiencing performance. However, as suggested by Rancière distance is an inevitable element 'built-in' to the viewing and reading of performance, regardless of actual-physical

proximity or distance (Rancière 2009, p.10). Thus abolishing the traditional spatial division of audience members and performers does not necessarily change the process of reading or reflecting on the performance,

It is in this power of associating and disassociating that the emancipation of the spectator consists...Being a spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into activity. It is our normal situation. (Rancière 2009, p.17)

This realisation is akin to Rainer's transition from 'in the round' or three-sided presentations employed in her early work and her work with The Grand Union, to her decision to stage *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968) within a proscenium frame. Lambert Beatty argues that this shift is a continuum which represents Rainer's on-going interest in spectatorship: 'The space between interest in performative communication and resistance to exhibition, between body and beholder' (Lambert-Beatty 2008, p.7). She suggests that rather than a philosophy of negation (which is often attributed to Rainer due to the 'No Manifesto') 'her choices...suggest that spectatorship as such was the social phenomenon to be, not negated, but explored' (Lambert-Beatty 2008, p.14)⁵⁰.

Similarly the choice to return to a frontal framing in my work did not stop my investigation of a traversing of the frame between audience and performers, it simply recognised Rancière's (and Rainer's) understanding of the relation between proximity and distance, spectatorship and participation (Lambert-Beatty 2008, p.225) as well as underscored a feminist stance to spectatorship as discussed earlier. Thus, while Davies has increasingly moved towards presenting her work in gallery spaces and/or within a visual arts context⁵¹ and Ruckert is more preoccupied with the slippage between performance and participation within immersive performative environments or the line between ritual and voyeurism, the public and the private, I was more

⁵⁰ 'Rather than coercive activation of an audience Rainer always maintained a separation between performers and audiences, even when encouraged to move around or between performance spaces, viewers 'remained just that: viewers' (Lambert-Beatty 2008, p.224).

⁵¹ As can be witnessed in her recent works and commissioning programmes *The Collection* (2009) and *Rotor: The Score* (2010), see Whatley (2010).

interested in continuing to unearth the *in-betweens* that are specifically inherent to theatrical presentation and the way in which theatre and ‘everydayness’ intersect.

3. The spatial and compositional signification of absence and presence in *Doing, Done & Undone*

While in *Shrink'd* we played with proximal modes of viewing, *Doing, Done & Undone* and *The Living Room* employed the 'social' and 'public' spheres. These latter works focus less on breaking or dissolving the spatial frame, instead pointing to the theatrical frame as a social and theatrical construct, reminding the audience that 'artifice must be accounted for in our interpretation of the text, *we must make sense not merely of the told but also of the telling*' (Counsell 1996 p.20 & 2001, p.205, *my emphasis*). As such, both works are still concerned with the *in-between* of performers and audience members, but also conjure up other *in-betweens*.

Although employing one front, *Doing, Done & Undone*'s compositional use of space continues *Shrink'd*'s exploration of facing, or the *face-to-face*, and proximal space. It also suggests the *in-between* of drawing and erasing, or presence and absence, of performance rehearsing its own disappearance (Phelan 1993, p.147; Lepecki 2004, p.132). *Doing* makes frequent use of the downstage and upstage areas, with performers advancing towards and retreating away from the audience. At three distinct points in the work the performers line up at the front of the stage to face the audience. These *face-to-face* moments take place very close to the audience. Thus as in *Shrink'd*, *Doing* is playing at the edge of the frame, or *in-between* the stage and the auditorium. The facing or 'line-up' recalls Grosz's description of the *in-between* as malleable space (Grosz 2001, pp 91-92), which in theatrical terms softens and dismantles the fourth wall. At the beginning of the work the performers enter slowly, one by one. They take time to observe the audience until eventually they advance forward to the front line. At the end of the first section of the piece they repeat the 'line-up'. Caught in the middle of the dance, they are now seen catching their breath, making the effort and physicality of dancing visible. The third time they line up, at the end of the work, the dancers are even more exhausted and take time for their breath to subside (the sound score amplifying and continuing their breath even as they leave). They gradually retreat or reverse into their opening standing position, and then leave in the order in which they first appeared.

The advance and retreat throughout *Doing* offers different encounters between audiences and performers, at times it is confrontational, a charging forward, at others it offers a reflective space or a resuming of internal somatic investigation, at others still it is about the equality of gaze demanding the audience's active attention. This movement towards and away from the audience echoes the play of proximal distance inherent to *Shrink'd*, as well as its employment of co-witnessing, not only the performers are on view,

The physical presence of the dancer - the aliveness of her body - radically challenges the implicit power dynamic of any gaze, for there is always the very real possibility that she will look back! Even if the dancer doesn't literally return the gaze of the spectator, her ability to present her own experience can radically change the spectatorial dynamic of the performance. (Albright 1997, p.15)

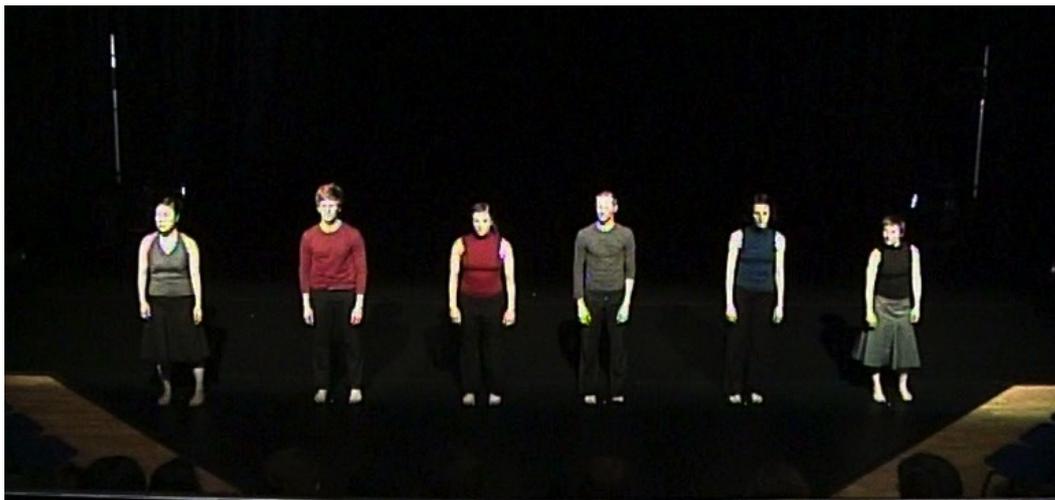


Figure 7. *Doing*, Video Still, Heddington Theatre, Oxford, 12 March 2009, 'line-up'

The 'aliveness' of the dancers' bodies is accentuated by their breath and the relative stillness of the looking in the 'line-up', which is in contrast to the incessant, rapid and physically exhausting movement that precedes it (in the second and third moments of looking). The gaze of the performers underscores the act of looking as part of the 'spectatorial dynamic' but suggests that the dancers are conscious of this dynamic. Like the viewer, they are engaged in a process of deciphering the performance, reflecting on and observing their movement as they move and concurrently reflecting and responding to the viewers' perceptions and gaze.

The use of the 'line up', performers standing close to the audience looking back, bears some resemblance to a section of Jérôme Bel's work *The Show Must Go On* (2001)⁵².

...the performers, some grinning and some impassive, stare out for a very long time at an audience first seated in darkness, then bathed in house lights and completely visible. The fourth wall does tumble. All that is left is a laserlike connection between eyes on both sides of the stage. (Dunning 2005; online)

Indeed, as in *The Show Must Go On*, the audience is lit during the 'line-up' in *Doing*. The 'line-up' in both Bel's and my work serves the same function of highlighting the corporeal reality of 'eyes on both sides of the stage' (Dunning 2005; online).

However, the 'line up' in Bel's, in accordance with his other works (and in the context of the minimal dancing that actually occurs in *The Show Must Go On*), suggests that the performance is happening in the audience's (and performers') mind, conceptually referencing dance or the 'spectre' of dance (Lepecki 2004, p.133)⁵³.

Indeed in some performances it is the audience that gets up to dance as a response to the lack of dancing or action taking place on stage (Kooperman 2007; online). André Lepecki suggests that Bel's works ask

...[How] can exploration of choreography's conditions of possibility reveal its participation in the production of subjectivity in the space of representation? What mechanisms allow the dancer to become the choreographer's representative?...How does choreography's alliance to the imperative to move fuel, reproduce, and entrap subjectivity in the general economy of the representational? (Lepecki 2006, p.46)

While many of these questions also permeate my works, I maintain an interest in the moving body and in complex composition. Thus, rather than bringing choreography down to its core conceptual elements (Lepecki 2006, p.46) I raise these questions in quite different ways, predominantly through the use of text and the *face-to-face*. Contrary to Bel's 'slower ontology' (Lepecki 2006, pp 45-64), *Doing* insists on speed

⁵² The line up is also a feature of Pina Bausch's work, particularly the work *1980*.

⁵³ See Lepecki (2004) for an elaboration of the Derridian notion of trace and emphasis on erasure and spectre.

and an overabundance of visual information. The piece is strewn with moments in which all six dancers move at the same time, spread across the stage and perform distinct movement material, making it impossible for the viewer to capture the entirety of what is offered to the eye. The speed and overabundance intentionally exhausts the viewer, making the dance in Rainer's words 'difficult to see' (Lambert-Beatty 2008, p.1). This, although in quite a distinct way to Bel, could also be understood as a form of resistance, the speed preventing the dancer's subjectivity from being 'entrapped' by representation (Lepecki 2006, p.46). Only when the dancers are able to return an equal gaze do they choose to stop moving.

As such, the 'line-up' in *Doing* serves more to underline the matter-of-factness of the dancers' bodies, the physical effort of dancing. The presence that pervades their standing still, in contrast to their dancing, recognises the way in which 'the exuberant present of performance masks an intrinsic absence...by definition transient, [performances] are immediate yet quickly become historical' (Frank and Richards 2000, cited in Lepecki 2004, p.137). Rather than masking absence, their standing takes note of their imminent disappearance (into continued movement or the cessation of movement at the end of the work). It is a reflective rather than a conjuring or 'spectral' looking, one that is grounded in corporeality even as it 'takes stock' or considers the temporal-ephemeral dimension of performance. The beginning 'line-up' suggests an opening to a future, the anticipation and expectation as to what is about to happen, the middle 'line up' – a breath to consider what has already taken place and how to proceed from the present moment, whilst the 'line-up' at the end has a sense of residue, of what has gone on.

This structure is similar to the use of action and stillness, music and silence that forms the main structural backbone of *Done*. The stillness of the looking in *Doing*, or the silence in *Done*, which resonate with Lepecki's discussion of Bel's work, does not negate movement or sound. Rather it works to heighten attention and suggests an *in-between*, how one moment 'bleeds' into the next temporally and in terms of consciousness, how the act of perception permeates both movement and stillness, sound and silence and how disappearance is embedded within presence: 'silence as sonorous rest also marks the absolute state of movement' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, p.267, cited in Lepecki 2006 p.54).

Doing & Undone also make extensive use of stage right and left, both in the first section of *Doing*, when the dancers seem to be chasing McConville (DVD 1: *Doing*, Clip 1, vimeo.com/album/2927615), and in the final section of *Undone*, where the dancers chase the light and vice versa (the light chases them), grouping and regrouping on either side of the stage, visible mostly in silhouette (DVD 1: *Undone*, Clip 1, vimeo.com/album/2927615). In this ending section the composition directly references the first piece *Doing*, ‘undoing’ the chase, performers successively leave in reverse order to the order in which they first appeared (in the chase of the first section of *Doing*). *Done*, equally plays with the edges of the stage, dancers moving from stage right to left in a game of ‘chase’ or at times exiting the frame altogether to leave the stage empty (DVD 1: *Done*, Clip 1, vimeo.com/album/2927615).

Continuing the interrogation of the notion of absence and presence, appearance and disappearance the movement from side to side as well as outside and inside the frame of the stage in *Done* underscores or even demonstrates the notion of trace, the drawing and erasing or doing and ‘undoing’ of performance. The trace is not only visible through the compositional use of space but also implicit in the movement vocabulary itself with its emphasis on incessant and sequential movement rather than shape or fixity (as discussed in Chapter One p. 44).

In the second section of *Doing*, in a series of tableaux, dancers are physically manipulated by each other in a way that highlights a degree of violence and evokes images of death. It is interesting to note how, although similar in movement and compositional style to *Shrink’d*, in *Doing* the tableaux are read differently due to the change of viewing perspective. In *Doing* the action is read more compositionally or formally through the ‘social/public’ distance between audience and performers, while in *Shrink’d* the audience is framed within the action and the ethical dimension of the action is underscored by on-stage witnesses.

In *Doing, Done & Undone*, a work that explicitly interrogates erasure and disappearance, the images of corpses gain a different significance. Here the performance of death can be seen in Phelan’s formulation as a rehearsal towards disappearance: ‘[t]he disappearance of the object is fundamental to performance; it rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs always to ebb

remembered' (Phelan 1993, p.147). Death is treated as matter of fact in both *Shrink'd* and *Doing*. Rather than sentimentalising death or pain, demanding empathy, or conversely using death as a shock tactic, the dancers lie down, get up and lie down again, or are compliant in their manipulation, reiterating it as a kind of game or rehearsal, caught in the tension *in-between* the two states.

The use of the images of lying bodies in *Undone* is seen in a different light, however. Here the image of lying bodies along the diagonal, first seen in *Doing*, is repeated, but here the dancers begin to 'snuggle' or shift towards one another while lying, forming three sets of duets. Rather than death, this image is suggestive of a domesticity of love or sleep, an image more representative of living than dying or suggestive of the way in which being caught *in-between* presence and absence is simply a condition of living and of dancing. Alan Read in his assault on performance theory's discourses of death and loss calls for a theatre of life, recognising the fact that after all, the death in theatre is only 'make-believe'. This is echoed in the dancers' game of lying, standing and lying, 'pretending' or rehearsing death in *Shrink'd*, *Doing* and *Undone*. Furthermore, just as Read argues that '[p]erformances are terminated...Something ends, it does not die or disappear...one ending inaugurates another beginning' (Read 2008, p.67), McConville's successive prologues before the start of each piece in *Doing Done & Undone* as well as her taking the same spatial place at the end of the piece demonstrably suggest endings marking a new beginning. Indeed, her prologues insist on appearance and beginnings: her 'welcome to the show, thanks for coming' at the start of *Doing* is reiterated after the interval when at the start of *Done* she says 'good interval?' and before *Undone* she states 'As you can see I've changed costume, same outfit, different colours'.

Despite Read's attack, I would argue that Phelan (1993) and Lepecki (2004) see the ephemeral and elusive nature of performance and the notion of disappearance not as a lack but as a useful tool in destabilising an ontology of 'body' and 'presence' (Lepecki 2004, p.6), and as a potent compositional strategy and means of agency and resistance,

Without a copy, live performance plunges into visibility- in a manically charged present- and disappears into memory into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control. (Phelan 1993, p.148)



Figure 8. Left
Doing, Done & Undone
(Publicity shots)
Photography: Chris Nash
Dancer: Robert Bell



Figure 9. *Doing, Done & Undone* (publicity shot)
Photography: Chris Nash, Dancer: McConville

4. Playing with the temporal frame of performance in *The Living Room*

In *The Living Room* it is not clear when the performance begins. Is it when the audience enters the auditorium and sees the dancers improvising, copying my 2/3 year old daughter Alonna⁵⁴ in a game of ‘follow-the-leader’? (Figure 10, below) Does the show begin when I invite McConville (‘Ducky’) to play the cello and Kobayashi to ‘play’ the sofa (that hasn’t arrived) in the furniture section? Or does the beginning or end of my textual prologue signal a beginning? The beginning of the work is constantly re-framed, suggesting there is more than one way of reading the performance, and more than one element or genre embedded in the performance. This hints at *in-betweens*, primarily that of traversing between the everyday and performance.



Figure 10. *The Living Room* (‘warm-up’) Photography: Chris Nash, Roehampton University, 3 March 2011, Alonna Flexer-Sandiland with the company.

The work continues to play with genre-switching throughout. The ‘furniture’ sections and the prologue and epilogue could be seen as aligned with live art/performance art with hints of stand-up comedy, whereas the ‘dancing’ sections can be identified within a dance tradition, in that they deal with the composition of non-

⁵⁴ Alonna’s first performance of *The Living Room* was on the 6th March 2010, age 2 and 4 months. She continued to perform with the company on tour until the age of 3 years and 6 months. As in developmental terms there is a major shift between the age of 2 and 3, her dancing and awareness has evolved considerably during the process. In later performances, while she was still revealed as ‘being in the moment’ and mostly understood the performance as ‘play’, she also became more aware of being seen.

representational complex movement and spatial patterning. Other sections such as the textual solos by McConville and myself, Kobayashi's solo ('duet' with Birch, Figure 11, below) and the duet/quartet (Figure 12, p.101) could be viewed through a 'dance-theatre' lens as they seem to suggest a narrative in the relationship between the dancers. However, identifying the particular genre of each section is not important to this analysis, or my choreographic intention, rather it is the switching between genres that is relevant⁵⁵. For example, *The Living Room*, ironically and knowingly sets up a situation of a 'play within a play', and whilst the prologue suggests what the show will entail, promising many solos by Kobayashi, the show is 'hijacked' by the performers. They constantly intervene both in the prologue and seemingly in the work itself, offering to do Kobayashi's solo for her or forcefully taking her place.



Figure 11. *The Living Room* ('Kobayashi solo 'duet' with Luke Birch)
Photography: Chris Nash, Roehampton University, 3 March 2011

⁵⁵ Recognising that definitions of 'genre' are under contention, for the purposes of this discussion the use of the term 'genre' is taken to identify the broadest classifications of choreographic practice, representational and non-representational dance.



Figure 12. *The Living Room* ('duet/quartet' Szydlak & Abi Mortimer)
Photography: Chris Nash, Roehampton University, 3 March 2011

The switching between both dance-based and theatrical genres, and the re-framing of the beginning of the work, suggest the dance and its performers operate intertextually, signify within a system of discourses (Fensham 2009, p.30). In doing so they intimate the *in-betweens* of the everyday and performance, reality and fiction, expectation and realisation, socio-political and personal, public and private⁵⁶. As choreographer I am interested in a reformist position of genre switching (Fensham 2009, p.30), opening up the possibility of multiple interpretations rather than merely 'breaking the frame'.

The number and different styles of beginnings and the continual switching between genres as *The Living Room* progresses suggests to the audience a continuum between 'real' life and performance. The dance with Alonna is critical to setting up this assumption. Alonna has not yet developed an awareness or concept of performance or what improvisation might be, she is simply 'being', 'doing' what she often does with her mother in her living room. Is she the 'warm-up' act (as she also literally serves to 'warm up' the performers before they start the show 'proper')? Is she 'real' life? (She is not a performer as such, simply a child playing).

⁵⁶ This playing between genres is also prominent in *Shrink'd*, primarily through the use of text but also through the reconfiguration of space. Together with the inclusion of a set of digital installations that address similar themes and encompass the audience, *Shrink'd* suggests the genres of immersive performance, installation or dance.

In this sense, Alonna is the ‘everyday’ brought into the performance space, the ordinary made strange by its reframing within a performance event (Banes 2003, p.5). More importantly her performance at the start of the show indicates, for the viewer, a way of decoding the work. It suggests the Goffman sense of the cultural frame of performance, and as such it implies to the viewer that the whole performance could be considered as such. Not only is it an informal exchange between those performing and those viewing, as dancing in one’s living room would be, it is also a social construction, a frame we choose to co-construct. The informality of play suggests other ways of conceiving and being in performance both as viewers and as performers. In this way *The Living Room*, although reinstating a spatial divide between audience members and performers, still retains the essence of *Shrink’d’s* informal viewing.

Not only the warm-up with Alonna but also our acknowledgement of the audience through the gaze at the start of the furniture section, our casual exchanges in the furniture section and the irony of the prologue point to an ‘everydayness’. The dance proper, when it finally takes place 20 minutes into the performance, is now coloured and intermingled with this ‘everydayness’. The play with the temporal frame right at the start of the work, informs the audience that both the everyday and performance exist *in-between* future, present and past, the ephemeral nature of performance echoing our lived experience of temporality. The work constantly makes reference to future, present, past: ‘I’m going to do a move, I’m moving, I’ve moved... I will end, I’m ending, I’ve ended’, declares McConville in her solo. My solo also refers indirectly to time: ‘some things make sense, some things don’t make sense, some things stopped making sense’. The epilogue is also delivered in the three tenses, as in McConville’s solo (Appendix Two).

Metaphoric and choreographic use of circles

The main compositional feature throughout the work is circles, metaphorically signifying cyclical time, cogs of a clock also chasing, whirlpools, or simply running in circles. This strategy references dances from the Judson Church era as well as recent works such as De Keersmaeker’s *The Song* (2009), and has a resonance with Davies’s most recent work *A Series of Appointments* (2010) premiered several weeks after *The Living Room*. Both *The Song* and *A Series of Appointments* (2010) use circles in a

minimalist, stripped-down fashion, with dancers only performing the actions of walking or running. Compositionally they deal with the spatial and temporal configurations inherent in the circle as well as the meanings that emerge in the playful and sometimes predatory dynamics inherent in the dancers chasing one another. The main circling section in *The Living Room*, ‘the vortex’ is similar to these works in investigation of spatial structure, but exhibits more formal choreographed dancing.



Figure 13. *The Living Room* (‘Vortex’) Photography: Chris Nash. Roehampton University, 3 March 2011, Centre: Birch



Figure 14. *The Living Room* (‘Vortex’) Photography: Chris Nash. Roehampton University, 3 March 2011, Centre: Martin

All three works, *The Song*, *A Series of Appointments* (2010) and *The Living Room*, use the circle to point to an *in-between* of order and chaos, or control and freedom. Indeed, a review of *The Song* states: ‘the body in all its concreteness tries to maintain its position in a constantly changing landscape... this performance belongs in the transit zone between mathematical precision and human freedom’ (Van Campenhaut 2009; online). This *in-between* refers to both the dancers’ negotiation and response to being caught up in a pattern, but in a sense also references choreography itself, the way in which by particular uses of the circle pattern an element of unpredictability and chance enters and disrupts any strict choreographic rule. In *The Living Room*, we found that the vortex section continually changed in performance depending on the size of the space, the speed dancers chose to move in as well as whether we had guests joining the performance that night, changing the mass of bodies circling and the speed with which the circle or vortex was completed⁵⁷. In this way, although very limited, the use of chance brought an element of the everyday as dancers had to respond to each situation uniquely ‘...the circle remains open: an idea can at any time be infected by another, or by a different approach or new perspective’ (Van Campenhaut 2009; online). This writing about *The Song* resonates with the way in which a bodily *in-between*, or responsiveness exists between the dancers in my works.

Section two of *The Living Room*, also references circles, yet here it highlights action and reaction, the movements of the dancer in the centre of a circle, ricocheting and triggering the other dancers to move (Figure 15, p.105). The use of circles in both sections as a play between control and freedom, action and response, within the temporal and spatial frames suggests instability. The possibility of chaos or chance destabilising a sense of choreographic order and indeed our experience or expectation of continuity within everyday life is thus a prominent metaphor within the work, drawing a parallel (*in-between*) dance and the everyday. This sense of instability is also relevant to the discussion of the *unhome* in the ensuing chapter.

⁵⁷ As part of the tour in several performances we invited local dancers/companies as ‘guests’ to join the performance. Guests would appear at the second furniture section, join ‘the vortex’, ‘voting’ and finally perform as part of the duet/quartet section before leaving. See DVD 1: *The Living Room*, guest section Israel, vimeo.com/album/2927625.



Figure 15. *The Living Room* (Section two), Photography: Chris Nash
Roehampton University, 3 March 2011, Centre: Szydlak

7. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the ways in which the works submitted in the thesis fray and dismantle the fourth wall engendering a corporeal and interpretive exchange between performers and audience members highlighting ‘everydayness’ in performance. This has social implications, viewing the spectator and the performer as independent and equal agents, and is amplified through the use of the *face-to-face*. This is further accentuated through the use of devices such as the frame within a frame, implied through on-stage witnesses as well as genre switching and episodic structuring. *Doing, Done & Undone* and *The Living Room* allude to dance’s ephemeral nature, and thus their fraying and reference to the temporal frame also serves to highlight *in-betweens* of appearance and disappearance, presence and absence, future, present and past. *The Living Room* metaphoric use of the circle signifies time as well as the play between order and chaos as a further reference to our experience of everyday life as both a temporal continuum and a site of unpredictability and change. Chapter Three continues the examination of framing, discussing the use of text as a further framing mode as well as its interface with the moving body.

Chapter Three
Dances that Speak

Yael Flexer's work is a conscious dialogue with the spectator. Her use of the dancing body is designed to speak, to relate, to suggest meaning. (Duffield 2009, p.8)

As both spoken text and gesture are equally important modes of signification in my works each is given its due in the next two chapters. This chapter is purposefully entitled 'Dances that Speak' charting the ways in which text operates primarily in *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room* particularly in its interface with moving body. The ensuing chapter (Chapter Four: 'A Parallel Speaking') considers the ways in which everyday behaviour, gesture and facial expression serve as parallel forms of speech, commenting on the action and asserting performers agency. The analysis in these two chapters serves to clarify the ways in which these operate in my work as choreographic devices in conjunction and in dialogue with the moving body.

Importantly, the writing does not privilege text over moving body but sees both as modes of speaking and address. As is emphasised in the previous chapter, the notion of 'a body that speaks' draws on Levinas's conception of the *face-to-face* as an embodied form of address. The understanding of 'a body that speaks' is primarily grounded in a notion of resistance to objectification, the way in which through text as much as through movement and gesture the performers (and myself as choreographer/author) in all three works 'talk back' to the audience: 'It is the act of speech, of 'talking back', that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject - the liberated voice' (Hooks 1989, p.9 cited in Albright 1997, p.124). Thus, Chapters Three and Four discuss the choreographic methodologies and tactics employed to address the audience, collectively leading towards the creation of choreographic **portraiture** (of the performers and myself) that suggests a complex and unfixed reading of subjectivity. This chapter therefore interrogates the practice primarily through the lens and understanding of portraiture in performance as one that encompasses the textual and the embodied.

Section One of this chapter draws on Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's (2002) feminist understanding of the interface of text, image and body in women's autobiographic work as well as choreographer Victoria Marks's (2003) notion of portraiture. Section Two touches on aspects of Brechtian theatre in relation to the use

of textual address and gesture revealing the artifice of performance and ‘the author’s hand’ (Counsell 1996, p.105). Both sections in different ways begin to highlight the choreographer/author function or choreographic device, occupying an *in-between* position both inside and outside the works. These strands of theory explored are woven together in Sections Three and Four, which delineate through the practice how text is used as a direct form of address through prologues and epilogues and as part of solo dances that interface text with a moving body. Section Five examines textual delivery that discloses personal information, situating performers within a socio-cultural/political framework, primarily referencing Bhabha’s (1994/2007) notions of hybrid identities, cultural translation and the *unhome*. However, here portraiture, Brechtian theatre and post-colonialism are approached as a *performative* research enquiry rather than presented as a comprehensive discussion of the conceptual implications of those theories

1. Portraiture

Although autobiography and self-portraiture have often been used interchangeably, with ‘self-portraiture once considered a mode of visual autobiography’ (Smith & Watson 2002, p.5), I choose to use the term portraiture in this thesis in that, in line with Levinas’s notion of the face, it emphasises the visual and embodied (rather than merely textual). As suggested by Smith and Watson, women have dramatically expanded modes and notions of self-representations that span the ‘visual, textual, voiced and material imprints of subjectivity, extending the possibilities for women to engage both ‘woman’ and ‘artist’ as a social and cultural formation in the process of construction and reconstruction’ (Nochlin 1999 cited in Smith & Watson 2002, p.5).

My use of portraiture primarily serves to underscore the traversing or *in-between* of dancing and ‘everydayness’ in the works submitted in this thesis: – who we are on stage, who we might be in ‘real’ life. It predominantly involves an informal everyday mode of address to the audience and informal banter between the performers on stage. It includes, as an example, introducing ourselves (the performers) by first names and continually referring to each other by name during the performance. Beyond reinforcing a personal rapport and a familiarity with an audience it highlights a notions of plurality of voices, performers as ‘makers’ or ‘authors’ of their

representation and the theatrical event, not only the ‘steps’. The works, in this way, refer to and underline an intertextual approach, the dancers’ own lives and voice become tangled with the choreography and, as a result, the audiences socio-cultural frameworks become attuned in conjunction with their reading of the formal choreography.

It is however, important to note that while I employ and play with autobiographical elements in the works I do not generally consider the works to be biographical or autobiographical. While works hint at personal information they do not aim to disclose, examine or portray performers’ biographical history or life stories. The wider term portraiture (as distinct to autobiography and self-portraiture) is therefore more appropriate to these works. It acknowledges the embodied as equal to the textual and as discussed above, the way in which my role as choreographer implies the creation of portraiture in negotiation and collaboration with the dancers.

The term ‘portraiture’ is borrowed from Marks who states that: ‘[in] creating portraits it is essential that the performers participate in, if not direct, the fashioning of their own representation’ (Marks 2003, p.139). While sharing an affinity with Marks in terms of a desire to bridge performance and the everyday our work is quite distinct in style and approach. Marks works with both non-professional and trained performers to create live dance and film portraits which are grounded in what she terms real relationships or issues, such as the films *Mothers and Daughters* (1994) and *Men* (1997) or the more recent live work *Action Conversations* (2008)⁵⁸. Marks states: ‘But to me, when a mother and daughter are dancing a piece made for them, I get a thrill knowing that a real, and not imaginary, transaction is taking place for the two on stage’ (Marks 2003, p.138). In contrast, while I also desire a genuine exchange between performers and audience members I am also interested in the space between reality and fiction, actuality and constructed event, problematising and interrogating notions of subjectivity as *in-between*. In the discussion that follows I therefore, in

⁵⁸ *Men* (1997) was created with a cast of seven men in their sixties and seventies who have not performed before. *Mothers and Daughters* (1994) was created with ten pairs of mothers and daughters some of which were trained dancers and others which were not. *Action Conversations* (2008) involves a cast of four war veterans and three civilians. See: http://www.victoriamarks.com/Victoria_Marks_Performance/Projects

common with Marks, use the term portraiture, and only refer to self-portraiture in relation to the discussion of my own performance or position as choreographer/author⁵⁹.

Portraiture in my works operates through an overlapping between the visual, the embodied, the causal and the textual. As suggested by Smith & Watson:

Women's artistic production of the autobiographical occurs at the interface of the domains of visuality (image) and textuality... in hybrid or pastiche modes [that] materialize self-enquiry and self knowledge, not through a mirror of seeing and reproducing the artist's face and torso but as the artist's engagement with the history of seeing women's bodies. (Smith & Watson 2002, p.7)

As discussed in Chapter One a functional approach to the body and to performance itself is emphasised in my works, rather than theatrical characterisation. The representation of dancers in conjunction with text hints, or confesses to a variety of socio-cultural identities, yet although sensual and emotive, it is rarely sexual. Instead the works propagate a wider notion of an embodied self that evokes the *in-betweens* of feeling and thought, private and public, interiority and exteriority, '[t]he dancer traces an embodied awareness of interior and exterior spaces and audiences can follow this movement' (Brown 2010, p.59). This embodied notion of self in turn interacts with socio-cultural representation and readings (Phelan 1993, p.2; Albright 1997, pp 1-27). The written analysis is also applied from this position and as such is situated within a trajectory of dance and performance scholarship, which seeks to incorporate the kinaesthetic with socio-cultural understandings (Thomas 2003, p.137).

Thus, Smith & Watson's (2002) analysis has a bearing on my research in two respects, first it acknowledges a wide notion of embodiment as tenable in the construction of subjectivity and second, it sees identity as processual and unfixed offering performers agency in the formation of their representation. Furthermore, their understanding of narration as discursive critique arguing against a traditional art history reading of self-portraiture as simply biographical is relevant to the discussion of the choreographer/author voice employed in *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room*.

⁵⁹ Self-portraiture is pertinent to the discussion of the solo section I perform in *The Living Room*.

2. Brechtian resonances

Duffield (2009, p.30) notes of my work that,

Flexer returns frequently to the idea of the conscious audience, aware, questioned and questioning and often mentions the need to break down the fourth wall. This is an interesting notion within dance, associated with the Brechtian aim for an intelligent spectator who enters into dialectic with the work they are seeing.

The use of portraiture in my work points towards the way in which the work is to be decoded intertextually. It acknowledges that

There is no possibility of ‘escaping’ discourse to reach a ‘natural’ or unmediated perception of the real, for that would be to escape subjectivity itself... ‘Making-strange’ employs the plurality of available discourses in order to undermine the supremacy of dominant ideological perceptions. (Counsell 1996, p.104)

As discussed by Schechner (2002) and Wright (1989) among others, Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* or A-effect asserts the agency of the actor, ‘a way to drive a wedge between the actor, the character, the staging...so that each is able to bounce off of, and comment upon, the others... a disregard for the fourth wall’ (Schechner 2002, p.180)

This understanding of A-effect bears some resemblance to the way in which performers in my works execute formal choreography, but concurrently incorporate everyday gesture, behaviour and speech. Their direct address of the audience and each other and their commenting and critique of the situation of performance (and each other’s performance) works to dismantle the fourth wall. However, while Brecht’s theatre was primarily politically motivated, works like *Shrink’d* and *The Living Room*, are principally concerned with highlighting a multifaceted *in-between* condition of subjectivity. Using elements of portraiture, nuggets of information about the dancers and myself (as choreographer and ‘private’ person), reveals a human and personal dimension. Politics or ideologies are therefore one of the frames of reference the works point to alongside other cultural and social prisms such as gender, ethnicity,

sexual identity, popular culture, and postmodern dance itself (all of which also carry their own political/social ramifications and understandings).

As suggested by Banes ‘the Russian Formalist concept of defamiliarization (or “making things strange”) ‘...were well known to (and extremely potent for) for American artists and critics in the sixties’ (Banes 2003, p.4). Banes identifies four strands of ‘making strange’ in the work of the 1960s⁶⁰, two of which are of particular relevance to my works: ‘making familiar things strange *within* the work, and ‘making strange things familiar *inside* the work’ (Banes 2003, p.5). ‘Making familiar things strange *inside* the work’, in Banes’s understanding, operates in *Shrink’d* through the reconfiguration of space altering the perspective and conventional mode of viewing. Equally the use of pedestrian movement such as, running in the ‘vortex’ section in *The Living Room*, recontextualises everyday actions (Banes 2003, pp 8-9). Episodic structuring, as discussed in Chapter Two, and the ironic miming of furniture in *The Living Room* can also be understood as a mode of defamiliarization.

‘Making strange things familiar inside the work’ according to Banes involves ‘an entirely opposite operation, the refamiliarization aspect of defamiliarization...[in] other words by “baring the devices” or showing their own seams and process of construction’ (Banes 2003, p.12). In describing this category Banes cites Rainer’s *Ordinary Dance* (1962)⁶¹: ‘[S]he included in it not only a spoken, poetic autobiography but also...laid bare her devices when she interrupted her story to speak directly to the audience about the difficulty of dancing and talking simultaneously’ (Banes 2003, p.13). Thus in Banes’s terms the text, in particular the prologues in my works, which discuss the work and its construction, serve to refamiliarise the artwork. This understanding is equally relevant to the use of gesture and everyday behaviour in my works, establishing a familiarity through reference to everyday behaviour ‘bringing something unfamiliar (choreography) down to earth’ (Banes 2003, p.13).

⁶⁰ Banes four categories of ‘making strange’ include: ‘making familiar things strange inside the work; making familiar things strange outside the work, making strange things familiar inside the work and making strange things familiar outside the work’. See Banes (2003, p.5).

⁶¹ *Ordinary Dance* (1962) Combines movement repetition with simultaneous spoken autobiographical text: ‘[t]his piece exemplified Rainer’s pioneering minimalist choreography with its signature use of everyday, quotidian movements’ (KQED 2009). See www.bodytracks.org/2009/06/yvonne-rainer-ordinary-dance.

The use of gesture as a form of demystification and as a way of establishing familiarity in my works is distinct in intention to the more formal use of Gestus in Brechtian theatre. In common with Gestus, gesture in my works indicates a self-reflexivity (Elam 1980/1993, p.86), a distance or an *in-between* relation between movement material and the dancers' reflection on it and the situation of performance. Crucially however, while Gestus is often predetermined the gesture in my work is the key element that remains open and improvised, spontaneously produced by performers, as in everyday speech, through their interactions with each other and the audience and varying from performance to performance.

3. Prologues & Epilogues in *Doing, Done & Undone & The Living Room*

The use of prologues to break the fourth wall and comment on the work from an *in-between* author position is a common methodology in solo live art and dance practice⁶². For example, in choreographer David Dorfman's work: '[he] publicly and obviously addresses the audience; he almost always faces out when speaking, and he inevitably uses the first-person autobiographical 'I'' (Albright 1997, p.136). Albright suggests that the act of 'talking back', instigated through direct textual delivery or the notion of one's voice, gains a metaphoric dimension within a feminist scholarship of resistance (Albright 1997, p.124, Thomas 2003, p.164). Importantly it 'calls forth a bodily presence, and recognizes the performative nature of that presence...a voice brings language, memory and history into the public domain' (Albright 1997, p.124). In relation to this, in *Doing, Done & Undone*, Duffield states,

Whether it is through... *direct address, dancers facing the spectator after a particular section*, clearly showing the effects of the physical exertion, accessible moments of humour both in spoken dialogue and movement sequencing or the *use of the prologue, the involvement of the spectator as a direct and conscious part of the choreographic field is consistently present* (Duffield 2009, p.32, my emphases)

The prologues are a signature feature in my works. They serve several functions, enacting and pointing to *in-betweens*, directing the viewer and giving clues as to how

⁶² It can be seen in works by female solo performers Ursula Martinez such as: *A Family Outing* (1998), *OAP* (2003) and more recently *My Stories, Your Emails* (2009), Wendy Houston *Keep Dancing* (2009), Rachel Mars *The Way you Tell Them* (2013).

to read the work. As seen in Chapter Two (pp 91-94) in relation to the ‘line-up’ in *Doing*, the prologues are similarly delivered close to the frame, *in-between* the auditorium and the central stage area, either downstage right (in *The Living Room*), down stage left in (*Doing, Done & Undone*) or in one of the corners of the square in (*Shrink’d*). As such they spatially (and temporally) act as a bridge, fraying the fourth wall and intimating a shared or porous space between the stage and auditorium, the performance, spilling over its edges onto the audience’s designated space. The prologues, as discussed in the previous section, also serve to demystify or refamiliarise performance, they ‘break the ice’, informally welcoming the audience to the show. As noted earlier, by introducing the dancers by first name or in *Shrink’d* also referring to their nicknames, the informality of ‘first name terms’ is established between viewers and performers.

In the case of *Doing, Done & Undone* and *The Living Room* the prologues also offer clues, descriptions and commentary⁶³ on what the show might entail. As discussed previously (Chapter Two p.96) McConville’s repeated prologues can be understood as an insistence on appearance as intertwined with disappearance. In *Doing*, her prologue points to two key aspects of the work: one, the fact that in *Doing* ‘we like to move a lot, we don’t really stop’, gesturing towards the way in which the work emphasises trace and relentless movement; and two, the co-witnessing or *face-to-face* the piece institutes through the ‘line-ups’, ‘...except three times when we stop completely... We also like looking at you looking at us, so hopefully you’ll like looking at us too...’. In the beginning of *Done*, taking the same downstage left position, McConville states: ‘That was *Doing* and this is *Done*, where we also move a lot, but then we stop to think about what we’ve just done’. So again she points the viewer to further consider notions of *in-between*, this time between action and reflection, sound and silence and the ways in which each leaves its residue on the other.

⁶³ The Grand Union employed commentary as a device, discussing the performance as it unfolds. Foster refers to this methodology as metacommentary (Foster 1986). In this chapter I use the term commentary in two ways. At times the commentary functions as metacommentary, using text to comment on the work from ‘without’. However at other times it refers to a gestural form of commentary from ‘within’.

Her prologue in *Undone* refers to ‘love duets’ as well as text in Arabic and Hebrew, hinting at Butler’s quote from the programme notes and sound score (see Appendix Five): ‘...one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel’ (Butler 2004a, p.19)⁶⁴. It also suggests a wider political frame of reference, layering the work and suggesting it could be read both aesthetically and socio-politically. The repetition of prologues at the start of each section of the triptych, offering information about what is about to happen, is reminiscent of Naharin’s triptych, *Three* (2005). The prologues in both triptychs reinforce movement as the content of the works by pointing out moments in the dance, elements for the audience to consider, and the ways in which the moving body resonates and is discursive in relation to other contexts (Friedes-Galili 2010; online).

The Living Room prologue (and epilogue) are delivered with a microphone, a device which frames the work as performance or a ‘show’. I am in a sense the ‘presenter’, ‘choreographer’, ‘author’, ‘director’ and/or ‘narrator’ introducing and relaying what is about to happen or what has happened. The microphone allows an intimacy of delivery that eliminates the need for voice projection. Compositionally, as discussed earlier (p.116), I am downstage right, addressing the audience. Hovering on the edges of the performance space, I occupy the space of the *in-between*.

This prologue gestures towards the choreographic concerns driving the work. For example, I initially welcome the audience:

Hi, My name is Yael [dancers interject off microphone with their names], on the microphone!....As you can see the furniture hasn’t quite arrived we are expecting an Ikea delivery any moment now....

Then I move on, and lifting my script state:

This is our manifesto:

⁶⁴ Butler’s text translated into Hebrew and recited by me is incorporated in the musical score for *Undone*.

There's not going to be any deconstruction or reconstruction, unless we reference some early modern dance pioneers, preferably dead [dancers interject with Martha, Merce, Nijinsky, Isadora]. There's going to be construction followed by more construction. Basically we're going to dance and you're going to watch. Because we like to dance, and because we're good at it. Well, better than thinking about it or talking about it. And there will be truth and authenticity and innocence, except innocence had to go, it was past her bedtime.

The prologue thus suggests that as well as being an introduction it also operates as a dance 'manifesto', in this case, a set of beliefs or decisions about what the show should or might contain. The spoken manifesto serves to mark out a presumed territory for the work, its boundaries and tone. It sets up expectations whilst placing the work within wider discourse. It also gestures (more directly than *Shrink'd*) towards Rainer's 1965 'No Manifesto'⁶⁵ as well as literally naming key dance 'pioneers'. However, any political tone suggested by the word 'manifesto' is immediately undercut by the fact that the manifesto is read from an Ikea chair-assembling manual with Gary (Stevens), the dramaturge/collaborator's name printed on the front (Figure 16, p.119). The irony of the textual delivery, punctuated with knowing looks by myself and interjections by the dancers directs the audience to consider the ambiguity, doubt and slippages that are inherent to this text. That which is intimated as about to take place (in the performance) does not necessarily get realised; that which eventually does get actualised in performance questions the assumed position the text might imply as well as the authority of its author (the choreographer). The dancers' interjections assert the centrality of their role, their place alongside the author, choreographer (the assumed originator of the work). This suggests that the work exists and is formed in the nexus or the *in-between* of choreographer, performers and an audience, in their negotiation and exchange.

⁶⁵ Rainer's 'manifesto' according to Banes operates as a strategy of denial (of illusionism) in line with the 1960s focus on objectivist dance, 'demystifying dance and making it objective' (Banes 1987, p.43). *The Living Room* manifesto similarly can be seen as a way of 'making strange things familiar inside the work' (Banes 2003, p.12)



Figure 16. *The Living Room* (Prologue), Photography: Chris Nash, Roehampton University, 3 March 2011, Front: Flexer

While I state that we are better at dancing than ‘thinking about dancing’, in the performance the dancers are presented as thinking agents, the work is therefore both self-reflexive and discursive as much as it is physically charged and emotive. While I say ‘there will be no deconstruction or reconstruction’, the statement is clearly referential and puts performance itself into question.

In these ways, the work constantly plays with contradiction and slippages of assumed ‘truisms’ such as ‘there will be truth and authenticity and innocence’, which is immediately undercut by ‘except innocence [referring to Alonna] had to go, it was past her bedtime’. The statement ‘[b]ut there will be time to reflect on how this work sits within the wider context of world events and interdisciplinary practice as well as time to consider its discursive elements in terms of notions of identity, performativity, witnessing and living....’ is both true and non-committal or apologetic. This statement is indeed what the work wishes to do, it is a statement of intent, yet the sardonic delivery of the text (as one long line with no pauses for breath) and the comical response from the dancers (‘oooohhh’) sets up incongruity, ambivalence and the play of double, parallel and at times conflictual meanings as a central mode of reading the work. Duffield suggests that

[the] prologue...continues to create a humorous, knowing atmosphere where the spectator is invited to laugh at recognisable dance forms together with the performer and at what Yael Flexer recognises as trademarks of her own choreography. However, underpinning this is a serious and committed approach to the use of the dancing body as the location of meaning. (Duffield 2009, p.33)

The prologue also suggests to the audience that all that is presented in the performance, both text and movement, needs to always be twice considered, rather than taken at face value. In this sense the work shares an affinity with Brechtian *Gestus* in that it 'breaks the performance-text into telling and told' (Counsell 1996, p.98). However, while according to Counsell the role and actor, 'told' and 'telling', must necessarily stay separate in order to allow for a critical reading, my works propose the *in-between* thus allowing for both critique and empathy to merge and diverge.

Narrators, storytellers and MCs were widely used by Brecht in his works to comment on the performance from outside (Counsell 1996, pp 84-85). The prologue in *The Living Room* in a similar vein sets me up as an *in-between* figure, located both inside and outside the work; as choreographer/director (as well as author, narrator, etc.) yet also as one of the performers. My *in-between* position, inside and outside the work echoes my diasporic position or hybrid identity as an Israeli artist working in Britain over the last 20 years. As the work progresses I seemingly try to direct the action from within: albeit unsuccessfully, as in my repeatedly asking Kobayashi to do her solos which are subsequently hijacked by the other dancers. Thus the work further emphasises the choreographer/author position or function. In this, like Epic Theatre it 'advertises its own fictionality, for overt artifice reveals an author's hand at work behind the text's constructions' (Counsell 1996, p.105).

In *The Living Room*, the prologue enables me to take a critical stance, commenting on the work from within and without as it unfolds. I serve as an on-stage witness, re-framing and reinforcing the act of viewing for the audience. Furthermore my *in-between* choreographer/author position itself acts as portraiture, for it reveals a complexity of *in-between* subject positions both subject and object, artist and private woman/person (Smith & Watson 2002, p.5). For example, in the prologue some

personal clues as to who I might be outside the stage (mother, academic, Israeli) are interspersed in the general declaration of what is about to take place. The textual reference to Alonna, an overblown academic statement regarding ‘how this works sits in the wider context of world events and interdisciplinary practice...’, or in ‘off the cuff’ statements like ‘there will be quoting of some fairly obscure Israeli pop songs’ continue the thread. This is akin to Liz Aggiss’s solo work *Survival Tactics* (2011) at the beginning of which she pompously and ironically declares her many titles as woman/artist/choreographer/screen dance artist/professor/practice as researcher/etc. This frames and renders any reading of subject/s within the work as multiple, underscoring an artist’s reality of having to occupy several positions.

The Epilogue in *The Living Room*, reiterates the work’s main choreographic concern with the correlation between ‘living’ and the temporal dimension of performance, its immanence and eventual disappearance. It is delivered in the three tenses of future, present and past:

‘Lights at 75%, there will be soft furnishings...

Lights at 50%, there are final words, there are some regrets...

Lights at 25%, there were things left behind. There were sofas and TV’s, tables and armchairs, potted plants and bookcases falling unannounced...’

and finally,

‘Lights at 5%, I’ll be going, I’m going, I’ve gone. You were an audience I was the reading light, good night’

While serving as both conclusion, matter of factly discussing what took place, the continual references to the technician to decrease the lighting in the epilogue points to the mechanics at play in the construction of performance. It also succinctly refers back to my position as choreographer/author/narrator throughout the work as ‘the reading light’ and to the audience’s own presence and part in ‘reading’ the work.

Additionally, the prologues in all three works offer insights into the creation process, in Banes’ terms ‘baring the device’ (Banes 2003, p.12). Some examples in *The Living*

Room include the lengthy discussion of Kobayashi's solos and duets about to take place concluding with 'in fact this show is mostly built around Aya' (1: *The Living Room Clip 1*, vimeo.com/album/2927625). In *Done* McConville discusses how the piece was created when Yael, the choreographer, was 6 months pregnant, directing 'them' (the dancers) to move '*really fast*' while she was seated on a chair. As such the prologues point to the *in-between* of process and performance, directing the audience to consider how the two are intimately connected and suggesting performance and representation are not only constructed but also processual.

4. Interfacing movement and text, portraiture and self-portraiture in *The Living Room* (solos, Lyndsey McConville, Yael Flexer)

The interfacing of text with movement makes use of the constitutive as much as the antagonistic relation of text and image, while both offer clues about the performer/s these converge and collide, problematising a single understanding of subject. Neither element is complete in its ability to disclose, reaffirming Phelan's position that the subject always exceeds representation (Phelan 1993, p.27). The solos performed in *The Living Room* by McConville and myself exemplify the way in which 'the textual can set in motion certain readings of the image; and the image can then revise, retard or reactivate that text' (Smith & Watson 2002, p.21). In the solos the text and movement are presented relationally, the movement opened by the text and vice versa. Consequently, 'the visual and textual are not iterations of the same but versions gesturing toward a subjectivity neither can exhaustively articulate; they are in dialogue' (Smith & Watson 2002, p.22). Offering several voices and modes of signification the reading of the solos is problematised they are not simply biographical.

McConville's solo involves her speaking the text in the future, present and past tense in conjunction with moving. The text could be construed as biographical yet the play with tenses suggests it is hypothetical or fictional. It contains the elements of a potential life story: 'I'm going to go home, I am home, I'm unhomed, I am going to get married, I am married, I was married, I will have three children, I have three children, I've had three children'. Yet any biographical authenticity is undermined by the text moving into the past tense, has it happened? Or is it simply a 'wish list' of what she would like to achieve in a lifetime? The movement punctuates the text, offering contrasting and complimentary readings, e.g. 'I've had a hit record' or 'I've been to Las-Vegas' are presented together with an iconic bodily stance (subtly reminiscent of a pop star or Elvis Presley). Interlaced with functional descriptions such as 'I'm going to touch the floor, I'm touching the floor, I've touched the floor...I'm going to do a move, I'm moving, I've moved', the text refers back to the concreteness of the dancing body. The portraiture therefore interweaves and inscribes the dancer as both embodied, physical body and reflexive subject,

Although the act of performing one's self foregrounds the fact that the self is often strategically performed, this subjectivity is also always reinvested by a physical body that speaks of its own history. Thus, in the very act of performing, the dancing body splits itself to enact its own representation and yet simultaneously heals its own fissure in that enactment. (Albright 1997, p.125)

McConville's solo, plays *in-between* fact and fiction text and moving body. It is genuinely 'felt' yet at the same time it points out the 'historicising' element in the construction of autobiographical solos. As such it highlights the *in-between*, slippages and ambiguity, underscoring the temporal imperative as a choreographic (and therefore aesthetic) as much as an emotive concern. This solo bears some similarity to Brown's *Accumulation with Talking* (1973), in which whilst both moving and talking Brown states: 'While I was making this dance my father died somewhere between these two movements'. The matter of fact reference to the moving body 'between these two movements' and the act of constructing a dance is juxtaposed with the profound loss of her father. Similarly McConville matter of factly states, 'I'm going to end, I'm ending, I've ended', referring simultaneously to the end of her 'moves' her solo, the end of the dance and ultimately her own life.

As suggested by Phelan, Brown's 'somewhere' references 'the world of movement beyond the dance, the ongoing melody of bodies poised between life and death' (Phelan 2004, p.18). Phelan further suggests that '[to] be a body means that you will die; to be in language means that you know this. *Accumulation with Talking* moves through the accumulation of loss that fuels our desire to move 'somewhere' between these two facts' (Phelan 2004, p.18). The interfacing of text and moving body in McConville's solo exemplifies Phelan's notion of 'being in' the body and 'knowing' through language. When McConville later repeats the solo in the 'vortex section', this time without text, (DVD 1: *The Living Room*, Clip 2, vimeo.com/album/2927625), the moving bodies, or formalised composition reverberates with the text. The performers can no longer only be seen as moving bodies, but as subjects of potential futures and histories.



Figure 17. *The Living Room* ('Vortex', McConville's solo repeated)
Photography: Chris Nash, Roehampton University, 3 March 2011

The text for my solo in *The Living Room* also reveals nuggets of personal information, often in poetic form but as in McConville's solo, never a full 'life story'. Equally the movement and its performance can be seen as personal, yet it is primarily constructed through quoting short phrases performed by the other dancers in their solos and recognisable movements and iconic images from Nijinsky, Graham and De Keersmaeker's *Rosas Danst Rosas* (1983). Thus a notion of the personal or biographical is underscored by quotation, reaffirming my position as not only 'woman' but also 'artist' in the task of constructing a self-portrait. The use of repetition (through quotation, direct movement repetition and spatially through the continual return to the spot where the solo began) points to the process of construction and my role as 'constructor', choreographer.

The solo also infers a processual self or identity as 'discursive, provisional and unfixed' (Smith & Watson 2002, p.10). Although I am the primary narrator throughout the work, in the solo I am silent, text is delivered by either Karni Postel (the cellist) or Szydlak (one of the performers). This duality problematises the reading as to whose 'life-story' is actually being narrated and at the same time, places me in a more vulnerable objectified, 'muted' position (similar to that of the other performers who are predominantly silent throughout the work). This is reinforced by the fact that both Postel and Szydlak seem to interject the text, adding their own 'contributions' in

Hebrew and Polish respectively. Thus the notion of multiple authors, stories and voices is suggested, disturbing a singular, autobiographical, reading.

Postel's interjections name significant historical Israeli events through statements or issues such as 'Camp David', 'Oslo' 'Shir Leshalom' (Song for Peace), 'Mihu Yehudi' (Who is a Jew) 'Lena Meshutefet' (Kibbutz communal sleeping for children)⁶⁶. While English-speaking audiences generally only recognize the first two (Camp David, Oslo), when *The Living Room* was performed in Israel the solo carried thick autobiographical interpretations and connotations representative of a particular era. It alluded to the profound disillusion with the peace process, as well as the lament, as much as critique, of Israel's founding socialist principles and the complexities of its religious and political affiliations and divisions. Thus, as a portrait, it placed me at recognizable historical moments and as a woman of a particular age and time. At the same time, as the text is delivered by Postel in English, it points to the fact that I, as autobiographical subject occupy both an inside and outside, hybrid or liminal subject position. I am both Israeli and British, both an 'insider', a member of Israeli society and a 'stranger', someone who has lived away and experienced these events from afar. As discussed in the Introduction (pp 14-15) this position as insider and outsider also resonates with Jewish thought in terms of the diaspora and can be linked to Levinas's recognition of the alterity of the Other (Moran 2004, p.344).

⁶⁶ 'Camp David' refers to the historic peace treaty signed between Egypt and Israel in 1978. 'Oslo' refers to the Oslo accords signed in Norway in 1993, between Israel and the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organisation). Seen as an interim framework that would lead to a permanent agreement Oslo was the first time Palestinian and Israeli leaders met face-to-face and provision for the creation of a Palestinian state was declared. However, many of the resolutions were not realised and a permanent agreement has to date not been agreed.

'Shir Leshalom' is a key popular anthem of the Israeli peace camp, literally translated Song for Peace. It was also played in the rally in which Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. In this context it represents the failed hope for conciliation and peace between Palestine and Israel marked by the assassination.

Mihu Yehudi' literally translates as 'who is a Jew' and refers to the on-going political issue and struggle between orthodox and more moderate reform and progressive strands within Judaism as to who has the legal right to define and/or convert new immigrants (to Israel) as Jewish (e.g. in relation to Russian and Ethiopian Jews).

'Lena Meshutefet' literally translates as communal or co-sleep and refers to the practice of communal sleeping for children (separate from their parents) that was instituted by the Kibbutz socialist approach. No longer practiced due to both changing attitudes and the process of privatisation that has taken place and transformed the Kibbutz system. In this context it is read as both social and political, a time and a socio-political mode of being that has lost its currency. It is both lamented, critiqued whilst being presented matter-of-factly.

However, both Postel's and Szydlak's interjections include a personal element: for example their 'moans and groans', their commentary about fellow Israelis or Polish 'people' and the conjuring up of institutional and national stereotypes. As discussed by Albright,

The multiple sites of those discursive intersections - body as agent with body as object; the first-person 'I' with the third-person 'she', the voice of one person with the body of another, the dancer with the narrative-create a more complex view of subjectivity. Radically reorganizing the boundaries of self and other...(Albright 1997, p.122)

As well as pointing to the socio-political and choreographer/author function, my solo in *The Living Room* simultaneously situates me as private woman/mother/daughter – 'the smell of my baby's hair...nestling in your chest...seeing my parents age...paying a mortgage...saving for a rainy day'. It highlights the tension of the construction of self *in-between* personal story and national stereotype occupying a hybrid position. The use of 'documentary' textual material or 'personal story' marking emotive as much as banal moments in a life, underscores a temporal notion of identity as processual (Smith & Watson 2002, p.10). The juxtaposition of, and at times contradiction or incongruity between text and dancing body further emphasises the ways in which interior embodied experience interweaves and collides with exterior discourse.

In order to retell a life in performance, one must also stage the history of one's body. That double discourse reverberates with the representation, at once asserting the somatic reality of experience while also foregrounding its discursive nature. (Albright 1997, p.120)

In *The Living Room* my solo holds somatic and emotive content, identity as experienced and felt through the body, while the delivery of text takes a more informal, ironic stance of narration. This is similar to Dorfman's approach to autobiographic solo performance making, adopting a casual and humorous stance in his direct textual address of the audience while 'silent' movement sections contain and imply emotional vulnerability (Albright 1997, pp 137-138).

Furthermore, my position as choreographer/author or narrator, highlighted in the prologue, recognises the conflictual position of a hybrid identity, on the one hand attempting to explain and find intimacy with its audience and on the other, conscious of its position as stranger, different and distanced, already framed and understood as Other: 'As narrator she is narrated as well. And in a way she is already told, and what she herself is telling will not undo that somewhere she is told (Lyotard 1985, p.41, cited in Bhabha 1994/2007, p.215). As suggested by Bhabha (1994/2007, p.215), this narrator position brings to the forefront the hybrid subject's experience of objectification. As suggested by Albright (1997, p.124) the choice to narrate, to 'talk back' can therefore be seen as an act of resistance that recognises that objectification is inherent to representation.

The use of autobiographical references and stories serves to bridge the everyday and performance, private and public, me as 'real' person outside the theatre and me as performer and narrator on stage. Smith and Watson's (2002) notion of interface can be related to my discussion of genre switching in the previous chapter (see p.101), for the layering of information through text, dialogue and movement in disrupting, surprising and at times conflicting ways 'force us as viewers, who are addressed in and by the works, to participate actively and often times uncomfortably, in negotiating the politics of subjectivity. They invite us to confront our own participation in 'othering'' (Smith & Watson 2002, p.37).

5. Hybrid identities, cultural translation and the *unhome* in *Shrink'd & The Living Room*

Homi Bhabha's notions of hybrid identity, cultural difference and translation as well as his notion of the *unhome* (p.132) permeates the three works and is referenced more directly through textual delivery in *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room*. Further, the choreographer/author position, by occupying an *in-between* space, references the broader experience of cultural liminality articulated by Bhabha (1994/2007) and Madan Sarup (1996).

Bhabha's postcolonial notion of hybrid identity emphasises the *in-between*. Rather than viewing cultural identity as essentialist or as a binary of self/Other he instigates liminality,

What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently 'opening out', remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference... difference is neither One nor the Other, but something else besides- in-between' (Bhabha 1994/2007, p.313)

Bhabha contests the notion of cultural diversity, which he sees as essentialist in terms of cultural boundaries and definition. While apparently liberal, cultural diversity according to Bhabha contains rather than allows for the antagonistic positions inherent to cultural difference (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990, p.208). Bhabha's assertion of cultural difference highlights the conflictual experience and tension inherent to hybrid identities politically, socially and psychically, simultaneously occupying inside/outside included/excluded positions. It highlights an understanding of difference within the subject as stranger to her/himself as much as to Others, for '[in] another's country that is also your own, your person divides, and in following the forked path you encounter yourself in a double movement, once as stranger, and then as friend'. (Bhabha 1994/2007, p.xxv).

Bhabha's understanding of hybridity is also rooted within a psychoanalytic framework:

...identification is a process of identifying with and through another object, an object of otherness, at which point the agency of identification - the subject - is itself always ambivalent, because of the intervention of that otherness...just like a translation...hybridity puts together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses' (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990, p.211).

This echoes Levinas's philosophy of alterity as the recognition of the uniqueness of the Other (Levinas 1991/1998). However, Bhabha also sees the liminal or hybrid position as productive, in that it can affect change theoretically, socially and politically. The notion of 'home' is central to a discussion of hybridity and this is further elaborated on in the discussion of the *unhome* in *The Living Room* (see below).

Cultural translation in *Shrink'd*

Bhabha argues that if 'the act of cultural translation...denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture, then we see that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity' (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990, p.211). Thus cultural translation is understood as always existing in relation to and negotiation with other cultures. Bhabha goes further to suggest that

...translation is also a way of imitating, but in a mischievous, displacing way-imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it can be simulated copied, transferred, transformed...the 'original' is never finished or complete in itself... (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990, p.210)

The prologue in *Shrink'd* can be seen as demonstrative of this position. My address to the audience is translated into English by McConville and in turn is purposefully and indeed mischievously 'mistranslated' by Chan into Chinese. It frames the *in-between* lived experience of migration always negotiating *in-between* definitions and boundaries imposed by discourses outside the subject's control, the process of 'making sense' through translation. '[c]hanged by the journey; our subjectivity is recomposed' (Sarup 1996, p.6). This resonates with the earlier discussion of my self-portraiture through the prologue and solo in *The Living Room*, as both British and Israeli. In relation to Chan's 'mistranslation' in *Shrink'd*, on the one hand it asserts

her agency as a performer, subversively interrupting the translation to narrate her own story, on the other hand it also ironically references, 'cultural diversity' as a norm that locates and fixes other cultures 'within our own grid' (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990, p.208). Indeed Chan states, albeit in Chinese, how although she is Swedish she is being asked to speak in Chinese as 'the choreographer' finds it more 'exotic'.

The way in which performers are subjected to representation and translation by the choreographer/author is also ironically hinted at by Hari's interjections in the prologue and 'manifesto'. While Hari gets introduced as Kitty (having replaced Lisa Kendall, or 'Kitty', who originally performed the work) he holds up a sign that says 'I'm not Kitty'. In the manifesto although he is not given any text (other than 'I feel my freedom diminish by the minute') he constantly intervenes singing or humming the song 'Grease'. Like Chan, Hari's ironic subversion hints at the way in which third world subjects are often relegated to the position of Other (Bhabha 1994/2007, p.46).

The manifesto text follows a section which involves the physical manipulation of bodies. Through this the political ramifications and resonances of the movement are carried into the spoken text which, in turn highlights antagonistic positions of nationhood and affiliation in the context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict⁶⁷:

Yael: I come from a place where they're building a wall which they call fence

Ducky: You share earthworms

Bonita: I come from a place where they think I'm a tourist

Ducky: I come from Cheshire

The traversing of boundaries and borders is heightened in *Shrink'd* in several ways. It is emphasised through the lighting, which initially defines distinct areas for audience members and performers and is, in the final moments of the performance dissolved as performers invite the audience onto the performance space. It is also emphasised by the performers dancing and banter in close proximity to the audience, at the edge of the frame. Yet, Hari's singing in the manifesto sardonically undercuts the political tone of the work, suggesting it is only a 'dance', a show, entertainment. Reframing the

⁶⁷ As well as referencing Rainer's 'manifesto' and 1960s and 1970s notions of freedom as discussed in the Chapter Two (p.81).

political within the social or aesthetic in this way draws a parallel between political/social negotiation and the negotiation between audiences and performers and performers and choreographer/author that are at play in performance. As such Hari's and Chan's interjections or 'transgressions' can be seen as a form of negotiation that asserts cultural difference (as distinct to cultural diversity), 'we do negotiate even when we don't know we are negotiating...[s]ubversion is negotiation; transgression is negotiation' (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990, p.216)

Hybridity and the unhome in *The Living Room*

The Living Room, as the title of the work suggests, interrogates the notion of home and the traversing between the domestic/private and the public and hence the informal and formal, performance and 'everydayness'. The work makes direct references to Bhabha's notion of the *unhome* three times: in the furniture sections, in McConville's solo, and in the 'voting'. As with his notion of hybridity, Bhabha's understanding of the *unhome* encompasses the socio-political or cultural and also draws on psychoanalytic theory. The *unhome* refers to the displaced experience of the migrant, immigrant or a hybrid subject, who through the transition across borders straddles two cultures, at once familiar and strange, creating dissonance and displacement within the subject.

[The] unhomeliness... is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations. To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. (Bhabha 1994/2007, p.13)

Within a broader political perspective *unheimlich* or the *unhomed*, as those that can not be contained within the 'heim', threaten and disturb any homogeneous notion of 'imagined' nationhood (Bhabha 1994/2007 p.236). Equally, Bhabha acknowledges Freud's notion of the *unheimlich*, or *uncanny*, as unconscious desire or thought (Bhabha 1994/2007, p.14).

The title *The Living Room* is suggestive of a domestic space, yet on entering the theatre the audience finds a wholly undomesticated 'rehearsal' or performance space. At once expectations and notions of home are defamiliarised. Nevertheless, the

audience throughout the work is made to feel ‘at home’, through the informal ‘welcome’ of Alonna’s dance, the prologue and the informality with which the performers interact with each other and the audience, ‘“Make yourself at home”, this means that we want people to act without formality’ (Sarup 1996, p.2). At the same time, *The Living Room* continually points to the theatrical frame as a false construction, an *unhome*, a home that is unsettling, and unsettled. The work shifts between friendliness, informality and familiarity to defamiliarisation and displacement.

This is particularly felt in the transition from McConville’s heartfelt solo to Martin’s solo and subsequent group dance performed to flashing fluorescent lights. The personal delivery of McConville’s text is undercut by the starkness of the lights and the music, and the sense of driving violence in Martin’s solo. Self-manipulating her limbs, Martin is seemingly caught and contained in a loop of movement. The dancers’ performance and relation to one another in the section that follows Martin’s solo carries a sense of dissonance, each dancer in turn is caught circled by the others, their actions cause a rippling reaction sending the other dancers off balance and back into a flurry of fast paced movement. This *uncanny* moment in the work (the transition from McConville’s solo to Martin’s) is resonant of Bhabha’s reference to the *unheimlich*, for

[the] recesses of the domestic space become sites for history’s most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and uncannily, the private and public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting. (Bhabha 1994/2007, p.13)

The ‘voting’ and ‘furniture’ sections in the *Living Room* also refer to other meanings encompassed by the notion of the *unhome*.

a) *Voting*



Figure 18. Left, *The Living Room* ('Voting'), Photography: Chris Nash, Roehampton University, 3 March 2011, the company

The Living Room is profoundly interested in establishing connectivity with its audience and in interrogating its discursive potential as much as its choreographic or aesthetic concerns. Whilst the portraiture of the dancers throughout the work touches on the *in-between* private and public constructions of identity, the voting highlights Bhabha's insistence on cultural differentiation as well as pointing to complex constructions of identity within a social and communal sphere.

The 'voting'⁶⁸ begins with the statement: (DVD 1: *The Living Room*, Clip 3, vimeo.com/album/2927625)

Some of us have a home (no I mean own a home)
Some of us don't have a home
Some of us are unhomed
Some of us never feel quite at home

Thus, right at the start of the section we point to the disjuncture between home, place and belonging. While some of us indeed own a home (Flexer and McConville), we also confess to feeling *unhomed*. Szydlak, Kobayashi and myself, all immigrants, vote as *unhomed* while Martin who appears to be part of the mainstream (English, white, middle class) raises her hand to state she never feels quite at home.

⁶⁸ The voting operates with members of the cast lifting a hand to vote but also removing it at key moments.

The voting continues to delve into both the private and public dimensions with the dancers choosing to vote or abstain. So while some statements regard the personal ‘...We have two mums...Two Bisexuals (some of us are choosing to abstain)’ others situate the performers within a social, political and ethno-religious field “...Some of us are middle class, Some of us are working class ...Some of us were born under communism...Some of us are Thatcher’s children...Some of us experienced wars...Some of us are Catholics’.

The ‘voting’ section articulates the performers’ complexity of affiliation, opinion, comfortable and uncomfortable boundaries of self-definition, one’s sense of self as Other or as identified by others. Our ambivalence is felt through our response to the voting, at times affirmative at times hesitant or embarrassed as well as through the wry humour which runs through the section. It is evident through the multiple references to atheism and agnosticism, in contrast to the unanimous vote to our practice of yoga, bringing us back to our common denominator as dancers.

At the same time the ‘voting’ reveals personal information that may subvert expectations of certain audience members⁶⁹. Although the ‘voting’ takes on a semi-confessional and certainly revealing form, the line between autobiography or portraiture as truth and as fiction is ambiguous: ‘It is not clear whether these life facts are to be attributed to the performer or the performer’s role, or both and of course possibly to neither’ (Duffield 2010, p.1). This *in-between* play between truth and fiction underscores the potential for change and transformation embedded in a work which is concerned with ‘living’ and echoes the earlier discussion of the sense of transience in McConville’s solo. This chimes with Phelan’s notion of the *unmarked* as that which remains partially concealed or imagined for the viewer and as such reflects the viewer’s own sense of unstable identity (Phelan 1993, pp 171-172).

In *The Living Room* the voting on communism versus socialism, Thatcher versus Blair, acknowledges the wider debate of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and Britain’s involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. Despite the fact that the prologue states ‘there

⁶⁹ For example ‘some of us don’t want kids’ to which Szydlak and Birch vote, or ‘Two Bisexuals, (some of us are choosing to abstain)’ to which only I raise my hand, even though some audiences may assume I am heterosexual as I perform with Alonna while Nic Sandiland her father, is on stage.

will be no audience participation' on occasions members of the audience voted along with us. Choreographically the raised hand ('voting') gesture, which is present throughout the work⁷⁰, was used as a reference to the communal aspect of performance. As discussed in the previous chapter (pp 82-83), the audience as collective body is envisioned as a group of individuals who formulate their own opinion and position with regard to the work. The act of voting actualises or in the least demonstrates the possibility of disparity of interpretation for both the performers and the audience.

The 'voting' is spatially positioned as a 'line-up' similar to the *face-to-face* in *Doing, Done & Undone*. It takes place after the 'vortex' section, which is physically relentless, with the dancers running in circles and performing exuberant movement moving in and out of the floor. As in *Doing, Done & Undone*, it is at the point of physical exhaustion that the dancers face the audience to reveal personal information through the voting, the physical body intersecting with socio-cultural signification.

In performance, the audience is forced to deal directly with the history of that body in conjunction with the history of their own bodies. This face-to-face interaction is an infinitely more intense and uncomfortable experience. (Albright 1997, p.121)

The humour in the text of the 'voting' highlights an ambivalent position but also serves to 'soften' the confrontational dimension of the *face-to-face*, at once befriending the audience and confronting them with potential prejudices or the facts of their own culturally inscribed bodies/selves. The informality stipulated in *The Living Room* and moments such as the 'voting' which discuss specific experiences, as in Dorfman's work, 'can intersect with the audience's experience to create a common ground of communication' (Albright 1997, p.126). This was particularly felt in the performance of *The Living Room* in Israel while the delivery is mostly in English, the mention of issues such as 'who is a Jew', socialism and war/peace seemed to engender a sense of agreement or empathy in the audience

⁷⁰ The raised hand gesture is present throughout the work with different dancers raising their hand offering to be a certain item of furniture or volunteering to do Kobayashi's solo.

b) Furniture

The first ‘furniture’ section in *The Living Room* takes place at the start of the work where we seemingly mime or create movement in place of ‘absent’ furniture. The second ‘furniture’ section, in which we only refer to the furniture by name, occurs towards the middle of the work at the end of Kobayashi’s solo/duet with Birch. The ‘furniture dances’ hint at an absence, an *unhomeliness* at the heart of a work that constantly insistence on familiarity. The furniture never arrives, we desperately substitute it with our bodies, ‘making do’, pretending to be the furniture. The furniture ‘moves’ performed in the first ‘furniture dance’ become the building blocks of the entire choreography. An analogy is inferred between the furniture/home and the movement/choreography, the ‘furniture moves’ making the dance as, in a sense, furniture *per se* ‘makes a home’. This is first hinted at in Szydlak’s solo (DVD 1: *The Living Room*, Clip 4, vimeo.com/album/2927625). Her ‘mime’ and speech gradually drop away and become a dance, the building blocks are no longer named but are composed and inhabited to make a dance. The ‘furniture’ dance therefore serves as a form of defamiliarisation, making the familiar (furniture names) strange through its inclusion within a dance or conversely making the strange (the miming of furniture) familiar through the textual delivery and banter between the dancers.

In the second ‘furniture dance’ the furniture is never settled as we constantly displace and replace one another, taking over furniture ‘roles’ from one another. As discussed in the Introduction, on occasion local professional dancers would be included in the performance of *The Living Room* as guests. The guests would join this ‘furniture dance’ appearing as new items of furniture, the clock and the pot plant. By inviting ‘local’ guests in, the work again opens the notions of home and *unhome*, the *in-between* experience of displacement. The ‘guests’ are in fact local while the ‘hosts’ are temporary visitors (‘on tour’ for one night only). While the audience are invited into our ‘home’ it is us that are essentially the strangers or outsiders to a particular locality. This was particularly felt in the performance of *The Living Room* in Israel, where the local ‘guests’ and myself introduced ourselves as items of furniture in Hebrew. The difference in language, shifting from English to Hebrew accentuated the notion of home and ‘stranger’. As the second ‘furniture’ section concludes, the furniture settles for a moment before it is metaphorically and physically drawn into a

‘vortex’ the sense of displacement and loss of control returns together with more formalised choreography.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the complex and layered notion of subjectivity in performance present in my works through the prisms of portraiture, postcolonial theory and a Brechtian approach to performance. It indicates that the use of portraiture in works like *Shrink'd and The Living Room* suggests a plurality of voices, asserting performers' agency in the making and performance of the work. The analysis highlights the way in which the choreographer/author/narrator's voice situates me as both inside and outside the work hinting at a diasporic point of view (in *The Living Room*) and outlines the ways in which movement is interfaced with text, neither being complete in their disclosure (and at times using multiple narrators). This suggests the layered *in-between* understanding of subjectivity, that oscillates between truth and fiction, private and public, personal, socio-cultural and political frames, that operates in the work. The notions of 'making the familiar strange' or 'the strange familiar *inside* the work' elucidate the way in which textual elements such as the prologues, as well as the use of gesture normally associated with everyday social space serves to refamiliarise the work, revealing the mechanics of performance making (such as the choreographer/author function) and appealing to the audience to consider artifice as an element of content.

The next chapter explores the embodied perspective of the works, with facial and bodily gesture and the dancing body presented as parallel forms of speaking or address to the audience. This provides another layer of portraiture to the works and furthers the notion of the performers having agency in the formation of their on-stage representation. The chapter first explores the way in which gesture can be understood as an *in-between*, and bridges the two elements operative in all of the works, internal somatic experience and representation. The second part of the chapter examines the way in which embodied practice as a methodology, alongside a phenomenological philosophical inquiry, informs the movement language and choreographic construction of the works submitted for this thesis. It highlights the way in which empathy between performers emanates beyond the stage, engendering an intimacy and connectivity with audience members. It also brings to the fore the intricate dialogue between practice and theory, whereby theory is interrogated **in** practice as a support to the choreographic investigation which primarily drives the research.

Chapter Four

A Parallel Speaking

This chapter examines the juxtaposition of an everyday mode of behaviour and performance stance with formal choreography. Continuing the discussion in Chapter Three, it first examines how bodily and facial gestures and commentary act as a parallel form of speaking or address, interjecting and disrupting a singular reading of the moving body. This section interrogates the aesthetic of 'non performance' and, drawing on the writing of Phillip Zarrilli (2009), concludes with a discussion of how gesture operates as an *in-between* of performers' somatic experience and their reflections upon their moving body within the representational frame. Section Two continues the discussion through its examination of notions of 'doing' and 'being done to', empathy and difference as they are manifested in my works. This final choreographic analysis focuses on the inner processes involved in dance-making, examining the methodologies and philosophical framework which facilitate 'a body that speaks' and underlie the creative research processes. This section draws on Merleau-Ponty's 'double sensation' of touching and being touched (Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp 106-107), Levinas's emphasis on alterity (Levinas 1987/1993, p.100) and Butler's conception of sociality as revealed through the body, our physical vulnerability and tie to and for one another (Butler 2004a, p.22). It discusses the ways in which the creative process institutes a deep sense of physical empathy between the performers as well as recognition of the inevitability of difference. This sense of empathy and difference permeates the movement language and choreographic composition of the works and emanates beyond the stage in the connection between the performers and the audience.

1. A parallel speaking: everyday behaviour, gesture and commentary in *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room*

The quotidian stance and gesture operating in parallel to the moving body

De Certeau, like Levinas, sees speaking as an address which necessitates and comes into being in the encounter of an 'Other'. An address is understood not only as linguistic, it is the bodily presence of the other that initiates the address. For De Certeau speaking involves 'ways of operating' or 'using' language,

we privilege the act of speaking... it affects an appropriation, or reappropriation, of language by its speakers; it establishes a present relative to a time and place; and it posits a contract with the other (the interlocutor)
(De Certeau 1984, p.xiii)

He extends speaking 'to all bodily articulation, whether spoken or moved, the same capacity to enunciate' (Foster 2002, p.130). In De Certeau's terms the dancers' re-appropriation of the choreography (understood as strategy) through gesture and commentary in my work thus operates as a theatrical tactic of resistance to representation (Highmore 2002, p.151). Equally, the moving body, gesture, 'enunciates' or addresses the audience as a further communicative channel or layer.

Viewed as a syntactic system in its own right, the 'speech' of gesture, exists parallel to and inevitably gets tangled with the 'choreography', that is the more dance-like movement that has been pre-designed and rehearsed for the 'body'. Elam notes that a 'gesture does not exist as an isolated entity and cannot, unlike the word or morpheme, be separated from the general continuum'⁷¹ (Elam 1980/1993, p.71) for it is always situated in a structural relation to a pattern of movement or indeed language as a separate communicative channel (Thomas 2003, p.26). In *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room*, at times the 'doing' of the dancing is affirmed by a gesture, completing or accentuating a choreographic phrase. At other times, the gesture becomes an 'undoing' – a question mark, a quotation mark, a bracket, an aside that comically

⁷¹ Elam's discussion refers to Kinesics as Developed in the 1950s by anthropologist Ray L. Birdwhistle. Kinesics examines facial and bodily gesture, defining and equating them with linguistic construction and views communication as 'a multichannel process involving language [and] body motion' (Thomas 2003, pp 26).

suggests a critical distance, a secondary and/or contradictory reading⁷² (Elam 1980/1993, p 78).

The play with gestures is evident throughout *Shrink'd* through glances, approving and disapproving nods, raised eyebrows, smiles, hand gestures, finger pointing, shoves, firm holds and manipulations (which implicitly refers to putting others 'in their place'). Through the use of eye contact, breath and gestures such as nodding and pointing, we direct one another to enter or exit the space, we signal that 'we are ready' to lift or be lifted, to begin a movement sequence or a duet, to sit among the audience or leave at the end of the work. We also comment and critique our own and each other's dancing as we perform or complete phrases of movement, assessing both the execution 'that was pretty terrible (or spectacular)' or the choreography 'well that's an interesting impression of a swan' or 'nice trick! but does it really belong here?'.

Similarly, the 'furniture' sections in *The Living Room* as well as Kobayashi's solo with Birch are overlaid with gestural, facial and spoken commentary. In the first furniture section in particular, while the text is overly polite and courteous the action and the facial and gestural commentary operate in ironic opposition, revealing aggression or competition which is clearly enacted, the dancers 'pretending' to be offended. For example: Birch pushes Kobayashi from the 'sofa' position when she asks him to take over. While she politely says 'thank you' her facial response indicates she is 'offended'; after the performers hijack my 'reading light move' I am also seemingly 'offended'. Equally in Kobayashi's solo, she perseveres with the solo despite Birch's interferences, the subtle gestural and on occasion textual commentary reveals her relation to him.

Throughout the work, the performers either gesture or comment on each other's performances, their glances operating in parallel to the dancing body, signifying within a social space, one that is recognisable through its tactics of 'everydayness'.

Duffield's writing indicates that this process is evident to spectators:

⁷² For Elam gesture operates as a parallel form of speaking, '...a shoulder shrug may be interpreted as a 'statement' of the kind "I have no idea", "it doesn't interest me" etc. These are clear cases of 'complex' kinemorphic constructions' constituting a form of discourse independently of, but through a conventional association with, speech (Elam 1980/1993, p 76).

Flexer's performers are real bodies, showing oddities and difference. *They are masters of the little gesture and undercut each other, maintaining an ironic separation.* The exchange with the spectator, the physical dialogue that continues its staccato progress ... has clear parallels to the movement of people in public space. *The social exchanges, the definition of social space and the strategies being adopted are recognisable to the spectator.* The dancer's body is the clear and constant focus. *The spectator locates and translates significance through this exchange.* (Duffield 2009, p.35, my emphases)

As in Brechtian A-effect the use of gesture and facial commentary ironically underscores and points to the gap or distance between the action, the executer of the action (i.e. the performer him/herself), their reflection upon it, and the audience's reading of the action. *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room* both use the device of A-affect, or Gestus to make a distinction or a gap between emotion and the enactment of that emotion, and in doing so reject illusion in favour of the everyday reality of the performance event. As discussed in Chapter One (p.64) the works reference two senses of performativity, the performance of identity interacting with theatrical performance (Briginshaw 2001, p.81). As a tactic, commentaries, which occur spontaneously as an improvised response within a set of predetermined choreographed 'steps', like the 'talking back' of the prologues (Foster 2002, p.130) reject objectification. Through facial and bodily stance and gesture performers are able to shape their own portraiture and comment on their representation, as they perceive it to have been formed by the choreographer/author, or in the viewer's mind.

The aesthetic of 'non-performance'

The use of gesture and commentary by the performers establishes and reinforces an aesthetic of 'non-performance' (Briginshaw 2009, p.188) revealing the internal mechanics or the signals that operate between the dancers in the act of performance making. In Banes' terms, gesture here operates to 'make the strange familiar inside the work' (Banes 2003, p.5). As is evident in Duffield's description of my work (above), the performers' gestures are identified and recognizable to an audience from their own experience of everyday social space. Similarly, writing on Burrows and Fargion's choreographic Trilogy, *Both Sitting Duet* (2003), *Quiet Dance* (2005), and *Speaking Dance* (2006) Briginshaw suggest that,

Sometimes it is difficult to know whether the pair are performing or not. There are many pauses...One watches the other, or stares into space or at the audience, only to break into a flourish of elaborate activity. The boundaries between performance and non-performance are often blurred. (Briginshaw 2009, p.188)

After writing my description of *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room* above I also encountered Tim Etchells' writing in relation to this trilogy,

At the end or the start of some phrase they sneak looks to see where the other one is...Sometimes these glances seem purely functional, unreadable almost, on other occasions they also appear to have an explicit content... a glance from one man to another will seem to pass judgement on the other or on the task itself. These are the looks that often bring laughter, seeming to undermine the activity onstage with such delicate questions as 'Oh no, what's he doing now?' or 'Are we really sure about this sequence, or that move (Etchells 2007; online)

It is interesting to note the resemblance between Etchells' writing and my own, as well as the resonance between Burrows and Fargion's works and my own. Although the works are clearly distinct in terms of formal construction they share the aesthetic of 'non performance', revealing the negotiation and processes involved in the making and performance of the work, a 'Pedantic attention to detail...combined with a casual 'throw away' approach' (Briginshaw 2009, p.189).

This same casual approach is also present in De Keersmaeker's *Rosas Danst Rosas* (1983), and used for similar purposes,

De Keersmaeker's dancers' behaviour in performance minimizes distance by breaking conventional theatrical frames. They stand at the side and watch...[they] drink from bottles of water and adjust their hair or clothing... the dancers occasionally exchange looks and smile and look directly at the audience. (Briginshaw 2001, p.193)

In De Keersmaeker's work *The Song* (2009) dancers also casually sit or stand at the sides to watch each other's performance or track one another as they trace circles

around the stage in what appears as an orchestrated game. The tracking seems to operate as a kind of internal code of communication between the dancers. In a similar way, the dancers in *The Living Room* casually watch each other's performance from the side (standing under the florescent light or in the case of Postel and myself seated on chairs) as well as maintain eye contact as they track each other in the 'vortex'. The use of everyday and seemingly casual behaviour and bodily stance, gesture and gaze brings attention to the situation of performance and its relation to the representational frame.

In contrast to the subversive way in which dancers comply 'unfaithfully' to the choreography in works such as *Rosas Danst Rosas* (Burt 2006, p.156), in *Shrink'd* and *The Living Room*, in common with Burrows and Fargion's trilogy, performers are given more autonomy and decision-making powers during performance. Their commentary not only references the 'act' or 'doing' of performance it also allows them to reflect and comment on the 'here and now' with respect to their conceptual and somatic experience of the work as it is performed. This actively alters the choreography from one performance to the next. Performers in my works, as in Burrows and Fargion's trilogy, have the freedom to play and 'stretch' the timing of movement sequences and responses (Burrows and Fargion 2010), whereas in *Rosas Danst Rosas* they are asked to conform to the imposed musical and choreographic compositional constraints. The freedom of the former choreographic tactic allows the performers to respond spontaneously – for example, if they fall off-balance or bump into one another they are 'allowed' to comment and acknowledge their 'failures' and 'mistakes'. The 'mistake' (which is absent in De Keersmaecker's work but accentuated in Burrows and Fargion's and my own work) becomes a crucial element in the forming of choreographic content. Together with the 'casualness' of presentation it reminds us of the situation of performance as merely a 'bunch of people in a room' (Marks 2000).

Doing, thinking and feeling, bridging Brechtian 'distanciation' with somatic experience

With regard to Burrows and Fargion's work Etchells writes:

They are doing things (movements, sequences, actions) and as they do so, they seem to be thinking about them. If this sounds unworthy of mention I have to remember how much dance isn't like that; how often there's no sense of this separation between action and do-er, no sense of a person present to be thinking, no sense of thinking at all... There's a constant background awareness that this is a public act, something shared. The performance is an 'object' brought to meet us in a particular place and time, whose proximity and distance from us is repeatedly underlined by their flickering glances in our direction. (Etchells 2007; online)

Etchells' description suggests that their work establishes a malleable space between audience and performers. This supports my claim that by foregrounding 'the act of performance' one is ultimately suggesting a different way of conceiving performance. One that moves beyond binary positions towards a 'shared space' that is inherently embodied as much as it is reflexive, for what is under inspection by the audience is not only its narratives or content, but the performativity of the performance itself.

In common with my analysis of my own work, Etchells (2007) makes a correlation between Burrows and Fargion's 'distanced' performance and Brecht, particularly in the title of his paper '*Both Sitting or Brecht Might Have Liked It*'. For him, this 'speaking' of the gesture and its comic residue correlates with 'thinking', when it is clear that for him much of dance does not 'think'. However, might it also be possible to conceive of the use of gesture – this parallel speaking, the speaking that intermingles with dancing – as an *in-between*, an *in-between* that tries to communicate what is embodied, a feeling-thinking experience that is, perhaps, beyond the linguistic? Does the gesture serve to explain or excuse what is essentially felt experience spilling over its edges (a position that may be either the result of a British reserve or a postmodernist stance that is perhaps embarrassed of expression, and reverts to irony in the case of Burrows and Fargion)? Or does the gesture enable the performer to communicate, and in the act of communicating 'make sense' of their

thought as it overlaps, sometimes blending with, and sometimes wandering away from their moving body? (Figure 19, below)



Figure 19. *The Living Room* (McConville's solo), Photography: Chris Nash Roehampton University, 3 March 2011.

Elin Diamond suggests that, even in the case of Brecht Gestus allowed for embodiment to 'speak' and touch the Other, 'these moments of recognition and astonishment are not only intellectual but deeply sentient...without sentient knowledge of this otherness there can be no aesthetic consciousness, or even subjectivity' (Diamond 1995, p.161).

Burrows and Fargion equally talk of a desire to establish a communicative field with an audience through the gaps in which they reflect on their performance (Burrows & Fargion 2010). Thus gesture can be seen as a way of negotiating and expressing the embodied experience of *in-between*, traversing the internal and external, private and public. In *Shrink'd*, in broad terms, while the first half of the work is primarily concerned with 'presentation' – befriending the audience and establishing a *face-to-face* – the latter half builds on the sense of informality and intimacy that this has engendered. This half moves back and forth between the presentational and the performers' sensory experience of movement.

While the presentational is manifested in the co-witnessing at the beginning of the work, or the showing of writing on the body to individual audience members, McConville's solo and section three and four move between the two. Before the third dance section, in McConville's solo, Chan closes her eyes trying to 'sense', 'hear' 'imagine' McConville's dance for her (DVD 1: *Shrink'd*, Clip 8, vimeo.com/album/2927610). This solo/duet was informed by our practice of Authentic Movement. Similarly in the third dance section the performers make less direct eye contact with the audience, referring more to each other through the gaze and through touch. Here we are 'tuning in' to our sensation, that is, emphasising our somatic experience, and are less concerned with referring to and interacting with the audience (DVD 1: *Shrink'd*, Clip 4, vimeo.com/album/2927610). Equally in *The Living Room* (and in *Doing, Done & Undone*) emotion and connection is felt in the contact between moving bodies rather than overtly enacted. As Duffield observes:

Whilst certainly playful and subversive, the interactions between performers are not confined to those tactics; rather the playfulness gives an added force to the fleeting moments when individuals make contact. Uncluttered moments – a hand lightly placed on another's sternum, a subtle change of pace...extended, shifting body contact, a shared glance...These moments are also acutely affecting for the watcher, reaching into the vulnerability of relationship, the danger of openness. (Duffield 2010, p.4)

There is a sense in which emotion spills over the edges of Brechtian 'distanciation' or thought. The execution of movement in a 'matter of fact' manner in these works does not annul feeling, rather 'the dance allows feeling to appear tacitly at the margins of the body and the dance' (Foster 1986, p.181).

This resonates with Zarrilli's notion that 'it may be more useful to consider acting in terms of its dynamic energetics than in terms of representation...the actor practically negotiates interior and exterior via perception-in-action in response to an environment' (Zarrilli 2009, p.50)⁷³. Extending Merleau-Ponty's notion of the *Chiasm* into the field of somatic practice, Zarrilli suggests that embodiment is always in the

⁷³ For a wider discussion of embodied perception and the notion of an aesthetic body, see Zarrilli (2009, pp 41-60).

process of modulation and as such involves several experiential ‘bodies’ or a dual consciousness rather than a single subject, ‘the phenomenal realm represents experience in flux, oscillating within and between modes of perceptual orientation’ (Zarrilli 2009, p.50). Seen in this light, the aesthetics of ‘non-performance’ in my work, and that of Burrows and Fargion, can be seen as an attempt to move away from representation in order to more accurately reflect the ‘in the moment’ embodied perceptual experience of the performer in terms of both sensations and reflections. Zarrilli suggests that while embodiment may be perceived as ‘unitary in its self-presencing’ the experience of subjectivity for the performer is ‘a constantly shifting tactical improvisation modulating betwixt and between one’s bodymind and its modes of engaging its own deployment of the score (physical and textual)’ (Zarrilli 2009, p.60). This reflects my conception of Butler’s notion of performativity as emerging as an ‘improvisation within a scene of constraint’ (Butler 2004a, p.1), the constraints being those imposed by the choreography (Chapter One, p.60 & p.65). Thus the use of gesture and facial expression, as argued earlier, can be seen as a ‘tactical improvisation’ that expresses the performer’s experience of *in-between* or dual consciousness, attentive both to internal sensation and reflections and the representational and communicative field of performance.

Importantly, although as performers we are attuned or ‘tuned-in’ to our sensation we are not immersed or ‘lost’ in it. We may close our eyes (as in Chan’s response to McConville’s solo), but we never ‘lose sight’ of the audience or the task at hand – dancing. We are not ‘taken over’ by emotion and do not portray emotional states. Rather we are attuned to subtleties, and (ever changing) emotions and sensations encountered through the body, but at the same time maintain a certain reflexive distance. This again echoes Etchells’ description of Burrows and Fargion’s trilogy: ‘They’re very here and very now. They are not immersed, not absent in any deep-state-like or emotional way’ (Etchells 2007; online). This is in line with my discussion in Chapter One on Albright’s notion of the figure eight loop of somatic experience and representation (Albright 1997, p.12).

2. A moving body that speaks: doing and being done to, empathy and difference in *Shrink'd, Doing, Undone & The Living Room*

The final part of this chapter, and of the thesis as whole, moves towards the movement or bodily core of the works. It centres particularly on the ways in which materials and a choreographic language emerge from an embodied practice and considers notions of embodied connectivity as a form of communication (empathy) and difference emerging in the encounter with the Other.

As discussed in Chapter One, Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation (alongside my own choreographic methodology) were fundamental to the creation process of *Shrink'd* and *Doing, Done & Undone*, which initially involved improvisational work to embed corporeal empathy between the performers. The movement materials that were developed through these processes were then compositionally manipulated to create distinct choreographic sections. Qualitatively, while key sections reflected the sense of physical connectivity that had been established between the dancers others were constructed in a more 'Brechtian' light, creating distance or disjuncture between the action and dancers' reflection on that action. *The Living Room* continued these explorations of disjuncture through the use of text and action words, which introduced defamiliarisation and the breaking of familiar patterns of movement. However, the sense of physical empathy is still prominent in the dancers' performance, particularly in duet work. It is also evident in the larger ensemble sections, which additionally highlight a simultaneous sense of similarity and difference through the use of compositional contrast and unison.

This section will first discuss the choreographic methodology of '*doing and being done to*', it will then move on to discuss the choreographic manifestations of movement empathy. It concludes with a discussion of the ways in which similarity and difference are played with in *Doing, Undone* and *The Living Room*. Although the practice is the primary focus in this section, it also reveals the dialogue between practice and theory that took place during the creative and research process, with each element informing, 'interrupting' (Protopapa 2011, p.105) and shaping the other.

'Doing and being done to' tableaux and movement material in Shrink'd & Doing

Chapter One discussed the connections drawn between Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation and phenomenological perspectives in this research. Merleau-Ponty's suggestion of the 'double sensation' of touching and being touched explicitly formed the basis for the movement exploration based on Contact Improvisation that was developed for *Doing*. Through numerous improvisational tasks, which also drew on Forsythe's *Improvisation Technologies* (1999), I asked the dancers to focus initially on actively directing their movement through space, 'directing' the body to move. I asked them to pay particular attention to proprioception; the folding and unfolding of limbs, noticing how, while the bones may indicate a direction and create form and structure, the joints were responsible for changes in direction. Through improvisation, as we anticipated, it became evident that we could not only direct the body but in fact fluctuated between 'moving and being moved' (Whitehouse 1999, p.43) as a reflective and sensorial realisation. While trying to purposefully direct the body to move we also realised that the body itself often initiates movement, reflection on the action only occurring subsequently.

Following a number of improvisational approaches to 'directing' the body we set movement material with this instruction in mind. The results of this are particularly evident throughout the first section of *Doing*, for example in McConville's and Kobayashi's movement material which opens the dance followed by a solo by Kobayashi performed alongside unison material performed by Bell and Chan (DVD 1: *Doing*, Clip 2, vimeo.com/album/2927615). Later on in the process I asked the dancers to construct duets using that same material, this time focusing on contact and the way in which one can manipulate or direct the other (see DVD 1: *Doing*, Clip 3, vimeo.com/album/2927615). The contact in these duets is fairly functional, treating the Other not quite as object but with the inquisitive curiosity that characterised our improvisational explorations. The dancers seem to be engaged in a kind of 'problem solving exercise' bringing attention back to the 'thingness of movement' (Foster 2002, p.141). These 'contact duets' qualitatively continue to signify or project the relentless 'doing' matter-of-fact and 'work like' aesthetic of this piece.

We then moved on to exploring the notion of 'being moved', 'being touched' or the sensation of being directed by an outside force or an Other. These explorations

involved improvisations alone, in contact with one other, or in a group. In solo work, I set the dancers the task of putting into practice (quite literally) Merleau-Ponty's suggestion of self-touch, oscillating between touching and being touched. Thus we attempted to direct our own bodies as an object from the outside, manipulating the limbs and particularly the joints to move into action, to fold and unfold, extend or collapse in space. In duet and group work we worked with Contact Improvisation experimenting with varying degrees of 'passivity' and 'activity' for the person 'being moved'. We explored numerous permutations on this bodily stance, from the body being entirely inert and compliant to active and dynamic, intentionally surprising both ourselves (as the persons 'being moved') and our partners as to how and when we would switch from one mode to another. I then asked the dancers to set material that demonstrated the oscillation from touching/directing to being touched/directed. The material for section three of *Doing* is substantially constructed from the movement material devised from this task and is particularly clear in Szydlak's solo and the trio that follows it (DVD 1: *Doing*, Clip 4, vimeo.com/album/2927615).

Szydlak's performance is almost demonstrative of Merleau-Ponty's assertion that,

When I press my two hands together, it is not a matter of two sensations felt together as one perceives two objects placed side by side, but of an ambiguous set-up in which both hands can *alternate* the roles of 'touching' and being 'touched'... *The body catches itself from the outside engaged in a cognitive process: it tries to touch itself while being touched, and initiates a 'kind of reflection'* (Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp 106-107, my emphases)

Szydlak's performance reveals her 'cognitive reflection', we see her both perform and consider the movement as she executes it. Again a 'problem solving' aesthetic is accentuated in her performance. Her 'thinking' and her conversation with her body, 'willing it to move', is as important as the movement itself. It signifies as a speaking 'with' and a speaking 'of' the body.

This dialectical relation to the body, described in the start of this section, can be seen as a Brechtian stance, asserting a disjuncture, or in Merleau-Ponty's terms revealing the *in-betweens* – of movement and its performance, process and actualisation, action

and thought. This also correlates with Etchells' earlier description of Burrows and Fargion as 'thinking' dancers (Etchells 2007; online). The complexity of the movement task at hand is acknowledged, contemplated and revealed as an element of content by the performers alongside its execution (rather than assuming a performance stance which conceals the effort and thought process involved in the execution of movement). Thus both the movement and its performance are foregrounded. As with Foster's discussion of Arnie Zane and Bill T Jones's work, 'This economy of motion...separates the moves themselves from their performance, asking viewers to look at both simultaneously' (Foster 2002, p.141).

The processes described above reappear in the middle section of *Doing and Shrink'd* through the manipulation of bodies. At times, the dancers assume lying positions, as corpses or choose to be fairly 'passive' or compliant in response to their 'handlers'. Nevertheless, even when assuming a matter-of-fact performative stance in relation to their physical manipulation, the dancers are not unaware of the associative and signifying elements of the tableaux they are portraying. This exploration of the difference between touching one self (as in Szydlak's solo) and touching an Other aligns with Levinas's critique of Merleau-Ponty's 'two hands touching', which he argues simply extends to another person without taking into account his or her alterity (Levinas 1987/1993, p.100).

Levinas suggests that Merleau-Ponty's notion of hands touching does not recognise sociality or the 'dramatic' experience of encountering the Other that places the ethical demand,

a radical separation between the two hands, which in point of fact do not belong to the same body, nor to a...metaphorical intercorporeity. It is that radical separation, and the entire ethical order of sociality, that appears to me to be signified in the nakedness of the face...in the expressivity of the other person's whole sensible being. (Levinas 1987/1993, pp 101-102)

While Szydlak's performance of her solo is inquisitive and remains concerned with the mechanics of movement, the dancers' performance of the tableaux sections portraying violence or physical manipulation is more layered. The movement and

images refer to the 'possibility' of violence rather than simply staging violence; there is a critical distance between the movement and performers' reflection upon it. Rather than aggressively manipulating others or enacting violence, we distil imagery through static tableaux or perform actions in a functional almost indifferent way. In place of an involved, animated or emotional display there is contemplation and commentary, a Brechtian 'distancation' or question mark is inserted into our performance. This is particularly felt in the response of the person 'being moved', allowing their body to be manipulated, resigning to an 'active passiveness', neither resisting nor initiating or facilitating the contact. Rather than allowing oneself to be immersed in the contact and touch, the person being manipulated seems to observe and objectify their own body, nodding and on occasion offering their limbs to the hands of others to manipulate as an object or a prop. While seemingly complying, the performers, at the same time address the audience through direct eye contact; while their bodies may appear inert their focal projection is very much 'alive'.

This questioning gaze is further underscored by the double viewing and framing of the on-stage witnesses in *Shrink'd*. The *face-to-face* employed in tableaux sections thus considers the alterity of the Other within a sociality (of both performers and audience members). It recognises our physical vulnerability and dependence on Others as suggested by Butler,

Is there not another way of imagining community in such a way that it becomes incumbent upon us to consider very carefully when and where we engage violence, for violence is, always, an exploitation of that primary tie, that primary way in which we are, as bodies, outside ourselves, for one another. (Butler 2004a, p.22)

It is perhaps significant that the making of *Shrink'd* (December 2004 - September 2005), coincided with the residue or memory of the 9/11 events in New-York, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the July 7th bombings in London and the Israeli disengagement or retreat from the Gaza strip on August 15th, 2005. Not aiming to make a direct political statement about any specific event I was nevertheless conscious that the work was referencing these (and more historical events) through the use of tableaux. Thus rather than naming a specific event, I structured the tableaux sections so that they could be read more generally as 'about war'. Tableaux could be

equally read as images of the holocaust, scenes of bodies in the aftermath of terror attacks, or indeed Iraqi, Afghani or Palestinian civilians caught in army bomb shelling. One Israeli audience member viewing a 'work in progress' showing in late August 2005, commented that the dragging of bodies across the space reminded him of the then recent scenes appearing in the Israeli media, of soldiers dragging Israeli civilians out of their homes as part of the disengagement process, revealing that the meanings in the work are largely dependent on the context of the viewing and viewers.

This generality of construction of images 'about war' bears similarity to Lambert-Beatty's discussion of Rainer's *War* (1970) in response to the Vietnam War (Lambert-Beatty 2008 p.244). As with the arguments presented above concerning my work, Lambert-Beatty suggests that Rainer's formal investigation or vision of war operates in a Brechtian way, creating distance between the image invoked and the choreographer, the narrator and the performers commentary upon it⁷⁴. However, the 'generality' of images 'about war' in *Shrink'd* and *Doing* was also accentuated through the performers bodies/selves, whose skin colour and ethnicity signalled that they came from different parts of the world. This ambiguity of images and their framing, the dancers' identity and their questioning performance posits a more general ethical question rather than 'taking sides' or making overt 'political' work.

Empathy and difference in the movement language and composition of Shrink'd, Undone and The Living Room

a) *Empathy*

Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation were critical in developing a deeply embodied sense of empathy and resonance between dancers in *Shrink'd* and *Doing, Done & Undone*. Both forms, in very concrete ways, are demonstrative of, and to a degree formulate the way in which somatic practices realise Butler's envisioning of sociality as 'primary tie' (Butler 2004a, p.22). In Contact Improvisation 'The

⁷⁴ *War* (1970) involved a narrator reading texts about war, both ancient and current alongside images of bodies strewn across the floor in a way which resonates with images of war and the end of section two of *Shrink'd* (Lambert Beatty 2008).

kinesphere of the one dancer is inextricably entwined with that of the other, literally and symbolically' (Thomas 2003, p.106). Albright's notion of 'intersubjectivity' equally destabilises Western conceptions of body and identity to consider 'one's own body as it exists in space and with Others' (Albright 2003, p.208). Stephanie Cohen writes about the reciprocity between Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation suggesting both 'facilitate a deep kind of investigation, touching people on kinaesthetic, cognitive, emotional, imagistic and spiritual levels...yield[ing] particular illumination with regard to relational and interpersonal sensibilities' (Cohen 2010, p.110).

These somatic practices facilitate the 'being for the other' that is called for by Levinas and Butler (Levinas 1987/1993 p.3, Butler 2004a, p.22). They bring forth a deep sense of empathy with an Other which is located and felt in the body, through the experience of moving. As such they highlight Levinas's conception of the face (or as appropriated by me, the body) as primary, underling the ethical imperative. As noted in Chapter One as witness, in Authentic Movement, or as partner, in Contact Improvisation, one learns to take a level of responsibility for and attend to the Other's physical and emotional vulnerability as well as responding to one's partner and one's own playful movement initiations and desires. In the creative process for both *Shrink'd* and *Doing, Done & Undone*, the use of both practices helped the dancers to cultivate this bodily and reflective, conscious and non-conscious 'interpersonal sensibility' towards one another (Cohen 2010, p.110).

This reciprocity between partners in the studio practice also emanated from the stage, creating a sense of empathy or bodily identification with an audience that is not necessarily conscious but nonetheless felt, for it provides

a sense of clarity and spaciousness for audience members as well, [through which]...*they too may be 'touched'*...and free to inhabit if not always consciously articulate their own associations and experience. (Cohen 2010, p.110, my emphasis)

This process is often referred to as kinaesthetic empathy⁷⁵ or ‘somatic attention’ and is crucial to my argument of ‘dances that speaks’, ‘we attend with or through the body, and... such a body’s mode of attention is culturally, socially and intersubjectively informed’ (Rothfield 2010, p.311). Alongside the use of text, and gesture it is fundamentally the dancer’s body that ‘speaks’, communicates with the audience, and completes the portrait. While embodiment for the dancer involves an ever shifting phenomenological field of experience (Zarrilli 2009, p.50), in the context of performance, the audience, as witness of the dancer’s process, both senses and can reflect on their own psychophysical experience. This is interfaced in the viewer’s mind with the information provided by text and gesture, which further enhances the affinity generated between performers and audience members.

While some of our improvisations maintained the physical separation between mover and witness with both partners later recalling their subjective observations and experiences physical, emotional and reflective. Other improvisations employed the ‘angel score’⁷⁶ (Cohen 2010, p.109) in which after initially moving on his or her own the mover is joined by the witness. The witness supports the mover offering physical resistance, taking the mover’s weight or allowing themselves to be manipulated by the mover (as in Contact Improvisation), or mirroring the mover, attempting to emulate their partner’s psychophysical state and internal movement drive.

In *Shrink’d*, the practice of Authentic Movement led to the creation of McConville’s solo with Chan at the centre (DVD1: *Shrink’d*, Clip 8, vimeo.com/album/2927610) and informed the quality of movement of the third section of the work (McConville and Chan’s duet). Although framed more comically in the final work, and reversing the dyad roles set out in Authentic Movement (the mover, McConville, is moving with eyes open while the witness, Chan, is witnessing with eyes closed), it exemplifies the way in which the partner with eyes closed becomes deeply alert and attentive to their environment. In tandem with Cohen I believe that working with eyes

⁷⁵ Burt (2009, p.210) observes, in relation to Rainer’s work, that in the context of performance kinaesthetic empathy can encompass more than somatic experiences. He notes that, in contrast to Lambert who ‘sees the kinaesthetic as a means through which specific muscular feelings and physical sensations are communicated’ Phelan argues that it is ‘a process for sharing feelings about social and political experiences’. Also see Foster (2010).

⁷⁶ Cohen describes the ‘angel score’ in her work with Mark Koenig, however this score is widely used by others. I came across it in workshops led by Contact Improvisation teacher Karl Frost.

closed, letting go of the visual field, expands one's kinetic and proprioceptive capacities 'cultivating a strongly felt quality of presence' (Cohen 2010, p.108). Section three and four in *Shrink'd* equally seemed to reflect a sense of thoughtful attention to one another. This is particularly evident in Chan's solo and Chan and McConville's duet at the start of the fourth section, amplified through the tightly lit square on the floor.

b) *The emergence of similarity and difference in the practice of empathy*

Awareness of difference as well as similarity emerged during the improvisational stages of the choreographic practice. As part of the creative process some improvisations were performed with eyes closed and some with eyes open deepening the level of trust between the dancers. As methodology it was used as a way of honing the dancers' kinaesthetic empathy, and extending and challenging their habitual movement patterns. A key improvisation as part of the process for *Undone* involved one dancer observing another (both with eyes open) with the witness trying to corporeally imagine and sense (limb for limb) the mover's movement without physically moving. Later the witness tried to recall the quality of the mover's improvisation in movement. Here the witnesses were trying to inhabit the mover's patterns of moving through mirroring and imitation, that is, achieve a similarity in their movement language, as well as emotionally and reflectively trying to embody their partner's psychophysical state. I subsequently asked each dancer to construct movement solos as an 'homage' to their mover. The movement material created through the above became part of the movement choreography of the first section of *Undone* and was further manipulated to create the middle section of duets (which we referred to as the 'love duets'). Although sharing some stylistic characteristics, these duets were quite distinct from the functionality of the duets in *Doing*, revealing a greater sense of intimacy, subtle sensuality, as well as at times playful aggressiveness or competition, one partner holding, resisting and eventually releasing the other. This is particularly evident in the final duet by Bell and McConville.

Dancers commented on how they felt creatively liberated using this method. In trying to imitate and embody another dancer's movement patterns they found they increased their 'repertoire' of movement choices; creating an 'homage' gave them

choreographic ‘permission’ to create movement material or connections which they would ordinarily dismiss. Through taking the role of witnesses, the dancers found that the mover’s process has served to ‘hold a mirror up to them; [for] the movers facilitate a kind of self-discovery the witnesses may access in unexpected ways’ (Cohen 2010, p.106). Significantly, although dancers commented on how their movement vocabulary was enriched by the process, they also pointed out that they found it impossible to fully emulate the Other, feeling that their ‘impressions’ of one another could never truthfully represent the Other. Therefore, as dancers, in trying to emulate the Other we realised our inherent difference, but at the same time discovered ‘something’ of the Other and ‘something new’ of ourselves.

Thus, while the process increases movement range and habitual movement patterns it concurrently crystallizes one’s inability to merge with or become the Other, instead strangely or ‘uncannily’ occupying an *in-between* state of self/Other. This reading of an Authentic Movement strategy is resonant of Levinas’s assertion of the singularity of the Other as unique, and the inevitability of difference in the encounter of the Other (Levinas 1987/1993, 1991/1998). This recognition of a mode of empathy that acutely highlights similarity and difference brought an added degree of poignancy to the encounter between dancers in the works. In tandem with Cohen (2010, p.106) I found that the use of Authentic Movement in conjunction with Contact Improvisation enabled the dancers to take physical and emotional risks with one another that ultimately generated a greater sense of intimacy and connectivity between them, and between them and the audience. The embodied understanding of ‘self’ as one that is tied to other ‘selves’ permeated the works and continues the layered interrogation of subjectivity outlined in the previous chapter.

In *The Living Room*, the sense of empathetic and intimate partner work is evident in the first section, where the dancers perform a number of duets. At the end of the first duet between Birch and Szydlak, Birch leaves, making space for McConville to take his place and she initiates a new duet with Szydlak. The pattern of one taking the place of another continues through the section, and is also echoed in the later ‘guest’ duet that leads to a quartet with partners constantly swapping (from one couple to the next). However, the swapping of partners, whilst maintaining the sense of intimacy between partners also poses the notion of similarity and difference. The two duets are

performed in unison yet one becomes distinctly aware of the difference between the dancers as well as the significance of gender difference. The ‘guest duet’, performed by two women, is clearly intimate, sensual and at times even sexually charged (Figure 20, p.163). However, as the other two dancers, one Male and one Female, enter to form the quartet, the audience’s reading is reframed, shifting the intimacy and apparent sexuality the earlier duet suggested.



Figure 20. *The Living Room* (duet),
Photography: Chris Nash, Roehampton University, 3 March 2011, Centre: Szydlak & Mortimer

Figure 21. *The Living Room* (quartet),
Photography: Chris Nash, Roehampton University, 3 March 2011, Front: Szydlak & McConville, Back: Birch & Mortimer



The ensemble sections in both *The Living Room* and in *Doing and Undone* equally play with similarity and difference. As already discussed in Chapter Two with regard to *Shrink’d* and Butcher’s *Scan* (1999/2000) ‘Complicit with the grid’s specifications of spatial orientation, the dancers nonetheless conspire together to negotiate difference’ (Foster 2005, p.114). While in *Shrink’d* the first section hints at military

uniformity, using recognisable unison military movement of crawling, ducking and press ups, sections three and four move away from a notion of uniformity by making minimal use of unison or ‘army like’ vocabulary. While the performers in *Shrink’d* shared physical attributes of age, height, size, shape and movement style this was countered by the difference in language, skin and gender (and further emphasised in the prologue and ‘manifesto’ sections). Equally, the ensemble sections in *Doing* and *Undone* offer an overabundance of visual information with dancers moving rapidly in and out of unison forming complicated patterning, and play with complex patterning of unison and contrast. In the ‘final dance’ in *The Living Room* the dancers have short bursts of unison (of only a few seconds) that are performed by the whole group and these quickly disperse with each dancer performing independent phrases or moving in and out of unison with only one other dancer. The unison is never ‘perfect’. Choreographically, it achieves a similarity (rather than uniformity) that contains or maintains a grain of difference. Although dancers might perform the same movement, the sense of *in-between* self and Other is maintained and often commented on by audience members.

The piece’s clever structure winds through moments of ensemble unison, a scattering of limbs as one dancer thrusts her arms towards the other bodies, and duets emerging from contrasting phrases. That unison is occasionally rough around the edges...but that roughness adds to the authentic feel of the work, vitality and energy coming from the stage as dancers attack their phrases. (Smith 2010; online)



Figure 22. *The Living Room* (‘Vortex’- non-uniformity)
Photography: Chris Nash, Roehampton University, 3 March 2011



Figure 23. Left
The Living Room ('Vortex') Fleeting moments
of unison
Photography: Chris Nash, Roehampton
University, 3 March 2011, left to right:
Mortimer, McConville, Birch, & Martin

Briginshaw's discussion of unison in relation to Burrows and Fargion's *Both Sitting Duet* (2003) is brought to mind: 'Trying to make the material look identical or exactly the same does not seem important to them, it does not appear to be part of their agenda' (Briginshaw 2009, p.199). Thus the use of unison, as well as the fast switching from unison to contrast in my works can be seen as a choreographic tactic to allow similarity and difference to be equally and corporeally felt. That this tactic is successful is evidenced in audiences' reactions that comment on how, despite the clear differences between the dancers in terms of ethnicity, age and physical build (short, tall, slender, stocky etc.), they seem to 'fit', to project a sense of similarity or 'togetherness'⁷⁷.

The subtle negotiation of embodied resonance and difference that takes place in the works stems from the initial process of in-depth somatic exploration of corporeal empathy, as well as from instigating 'sociable' rehearsals. I actively encourage an informal, 'jokey' and 'chatty' rehearsal environment that enables us, as collaborators, to become closer to one another. As a methodology, this tactic helps unearth nuggets

⁷⁷ This is particularly the case in relation to a number of dance companies or choreographers who tend to work with dancers of a similar body type and build (e.g. Wayne McGregor and Richard Alston).

of personality and autobiographical information whilst simultaneously enabling ideas to emerge and flow from a collaborative sense of investigation (Bannerman 2009, pp 67-68). Within this caring rehearsal environment, our informality and black humour, teasing and testing one another, gradually reveals and ‘undoes’ our boundaries and vulnerabilities. This ‘inside’ knowledge and intimacy gained over time is reflected in the work through our interaction and gestural commentary toward one another as much as it is through our embodied sensing of each other’s comic and movement timing. Again Briginshaw’s description of the rapport between Burrows and Fargion resonates; ‘looks between the two; smiles; their split second timing that seems dependent on intimate knowledge of the material and each other’s performance ... a relaxed laid-back atmosphere and a sense of ease between the two’ (Briginshaw 2009, p, 198).

Thus, the humour and personal information exchanged, alongside the somatic improvisatory exploration enables the content of the works to emerge equally from deep movement research and social process. As the informality instigated in rehearsals is purposefully retained in performance, a fluid intertwining and overlapping of the everyday and performance, process and product is reinforced throughout the creative process. The moving body that ‘speaks’ coincides and interfaces with gestural commentary and the textual elements of portraiture.

...dance can foreground a body’s identity differently. Some contemporary choreography focuses the audience’s attention on the highly kinetic physicality of dancing bodies, minimizing the cultural differences between dancers by highlighting their common physical technique...Other dances foreground the social markings of identity on the body, using movement and text to comment on (often subvert) the cultural meanings of those bodily markers (Albright 1997, p.4).

As the previous chapter and this chapter argue, works such as *Shrink’d* and *The Living Room* see text, gesture and moving body as parallel forms of ‘speaking’ or addressing the audience. As such these works employ both strategies suggested by Albright. On the one hand they offer socio-cultural identity markers (and gestural commentary) and on the other they offer a kinetic visuality and physicality that focuses on the moving body, highlighting commonality and contrast. In doing so, the layers of identity,

performativity, cultural inscription and the body become as tangled as Albright's figure eight loop (Albright 1997, p.12). 'Everydayness' is present and actively engendered both in the creative process and in the final works, and as such it serves to remind us that the body is primary in the construction of sociality and our relation to the Other.

3. Conclusion

The works submitted for this thesis are, as noted in Chapter One, the primary evidence of the research, albeit deepened by an inevitable infiltration of the philosophical ideas to which it gave rise. The written thesis elaborates on the choreographic investigation through which the works were created, an investigation that explored, through practice, the somatic, sensory and reflective experience of the dancers, which lies at the heart of my choreographic methodologies. It has also revealed the ways in which I, as choreographer researcher, have identified and negotiated in and through my practice philosophical notions that had significance in my choreographic thinking.

It has been seen that a quotidian stance using gesture and facial expression bridges 'everydayness' and performance in my work, making the 'strange' (the choreography) familiar and signifying within a social sphere. The notion that the performers' improvised and spontaneous gesture and commentary operate as a parallel form of 'speaking' is also central to the choreographic research. This 'speaking' actively alters the choreography in rehearsal and performance empowering performers to interject and formulate their own representations of themselves. Further, the in-performance commentary by performers as 'thinking dancers' highlights, in a manner similar to Brechtian A-effect, both movement and its construction as the contents of the work. However, it is emphasised throughout that gesture also operates in my works as an *in-between*, negotiating performers' somatic experience and embodied perception and the objectifying situation of performance.

The project's research strategies, which encompassed Authentic Movement, Contact Improvisation, improvisatory and compositional tasks alongside an informal 'sociality', enhances performers' attunement and capacity for kinesthetic empathy

facilitating a 'body that speaks'. As a result, in the works the dancers' embodied sense of empathy emanates beyond the stage in their relation to the audience to create an affinity that interfaces with the gestural and textual inferences in the works and generates a layered and complex vision of subjectivity and portraiture.

The thesis presents the outcomes of a choreographic practice developed over a period of some twenty years. It also offers, from a practitioner's perspective, a grounded reflection on that practice. Situated as it is within the wider domain of contemporary dance at the cusp of the 20th and 21st centuries, both works and written exegesis capture a choreographic ethos that acknowledges late twentieth century dance practices. At the same time it addresses contemporary issues concerning identity and experiments with new ways of framing choreographic works as contained within an aesthetic of 'everydayness'. For this reason both the works and writing serve as a contribution to the always evolving body of dance knowledge that impacts upon and gives rise to current dance practice.

Appendix One: Script for *Shrink'd* Manifesto

Yael: Do you think we're invisible?

Ducky: Sometimes I have a feeling people see through me

Bonita: They always look at me

Yael: I always look at them

Bonita: What is this about again?

Yael: It's about high flying

Ducky: Crash landings

Yael: It's a search for meaning

Ducky: It's to catch our breath

Bonita: It's the time

Yael: It's the place

Ducky: It's the motion

Saju (singing): Grease is the way we are feeling

Yael, Bonita & Ducky: Saju!

Ducky: Why are we doing this?

Yael: It's an act of freedom

Ducky: That's a bit slippery

Bonita: Freedom is a life style

Saju: I feel my freedom diminish by the minute

Yael: I come from a place where they're building a wall...

Bonita: which they call a fence

Ducky: You share earthworms

Bonita: I come from a place where people think I'm a tourist

Ducky: I come from Cheshire

Yael: Words make this dance have meaning

Bonita: Words make it more confusing

Ducky: It's the word

Yael: It's the word

Bonita: It's the word

Saju (singing): It's the word, it's the word, it's the word

Yael, Bonita & Ducky: Saju!

Ducky: What are we doing?

Yael: This is a manifesto

Ducky: It's a dance rant

Bonita: It's a rant dance

Ducky: It's a ratatatat

Bonita: Is this about death?

Ducky: Is it about death?

Yael: It's about becoming

Ducky: That's very becoming. That's a very becoming dance piece.

Saju: Thanks!

Appendix Two: *The Living Room* Script for Prologue and Epilogue

1. Prologue



Figure 24. *The Living Room*, (Prologue).
Photography: Chris Nash, 3 March 2011, Roehampton University. Centre: Yael Flexer

Yael: Hi,

(Dancers: hello, hi etc.)

Yael: My name is Yael,

(Dancers: I'm Ducky, Luke, Aneta, Hannah)

Yael: On the microphone!

Thank you for coming to the show

(Dancers: don't mention it, you're welcome etc.)

Yael: Welcome to the living room,

As you can see the furniture hasn't quite arrived, we are expecting an Ikea delivery any moment now...

This is our manifesto:

There's not going to be any deconstruction or reconstruction. Unless we reference some early modern dance pioneers, preferably dead. There will be construction followed by more construction: basically, we're going to dance, and you're going to watch. Because we like to dance. And because we're good at it. Well, better than thinking about it, or talking about it. And there will be truth, and authenticity and innocence. Except innocence had to go, it was past her bedtime.

There will be quoting of songs we like, even though it's been done before, and even though some of them are fairly obscure Israeli pop songs.

There will be some knowing winks at the audience and stealing of the show and cheesy jokes, but no jazz hands, not even subliminal ones.

There will be no handstands, no headstands, no bandstands, no standing ovations, not much standing of any kind,

(Dancers: not for you, you get a chair)

Yael: particularly not me looking at you, looking at me looking at the audience, meaningfully.

There will be no dancing with chairs, under chairs, over chairs, no throwing of chairs no musical chairs, no mistreating of chairs, no chair misconduct.

There will be no buns in the cupboard, no prams in the corridor no skeletons in the oven, No wise words.

But there will be time to reflect on how this work sits within the wider context of world events and interdisciplinary practice as well as time to consider its discursive elements in terms of notions of identity, performativity, witnessing and living....

(Dancers: ooooh!)

There will be some text

There will be live music.

There will be silence.

There will be no prologue at the beginning of the show explaining what we're going to do and not going to do and giving the show away

There will be some interesting lighting

There will be no interval

There will be much sliding and rolling on the floor

There will be a really long solo for Aya

There will be a duet for Aya and Ducky, Aya and Luke, Aya and Aneta and then another really long solo for Aya. In fact this show is mostly built around Aya

Aya: Thank you

Yael: Your welcome

There will be no audience participation

Just a simple adult acknowledgement that we're in this together

There will be some guests

There will be some apprentices who will mostly sweep the floor

There will be lists

There will be questions

There will be some eyebrows raised

There will be overlong speeches and manifestos

There will be an end.

Yael: Aya?

(Luke & Aneta: Yes)

Yael: Are you Aya?

(Luke & Aneta: No)

Yael: Are you furniture?

(Luke: Yes, Aneta: No)

Yael: Can you speak?

(Luke & Aneta: Yes, No)

Yael: Are you together?

(Luke: No, Aneta: Sorry)

Yael: Ok

2. Epilogue

Yael: Lights at 75%

There will be soft landings. There will be soft furnishings. There will be laughter, there'll be sweat, there will be tears. There will be a cold beer waiting for me in the bar.

Lights at 50%,

There are final words, there are some regrets, there are some wrong turnings, some surprises, there are some brilliant ideas that didn't make it here tonight.

Lights at 25%

There were decisions made, there were things at stake, there was a lot of nonsense and a bit of sense. There were subliminal jazz hands, subliminal handstands and many Aya solos.

Lights at 10%

There were things left behind. There were sofas and TV's, tables and armchairs, potted plants, clocks and bookcases falling unannounced. There was music, there was silence.

Lights at 5%

I'll be going, I'm going, I've gone

You were an audience

I was the reading light

Good night.

Appendix Three: *The Living Room* Script for 'Voting' Section



Figure 25. *The Living Room* ('Voting'), Photography: Chris Nash
3 March 2011, Roehampton University, Front: Martin

Some of us have a home, (no I mean own a home)

Some of us don't have a home

Some of us are unhomed

Some of us never feel quite at home

Some of us have kids

Some of us are thinking about having kids

Some of us are too scared to think about having kids

Some of us don't want kids

Some of us still are kids

Some of us are rich

Some of us think they're doing ok

Some of us are poor

Some of us are middle class
Some of us are working class
Some of us are proud of our working class roots

We have two mums
5 Twenty Years Olds
4 thirty Years Olds
Two Bisexuals (some of us are choosing to abstain)
One Token Man (we couldn't afford two)

Some of us were born under communism
Some of us were born under socialism
Some of us are Thatcher's children
Some of us are Blair's

Some of us experienced wars
Some of us experienced Peace
Most of us believe in peace
None of us believe in war
Any of us do anything about it?
Some of us are guilty
Some of us feel more guilty than others

Some of us are Catholics
Some of us are Jews
Some of us are protestant
Some of us are feeling guilty again
Some of us are Buddhists
Some of us are atheist, agnostic?
All of us do Yoga in our spare time (and have been to India at least once).
Some of us are faithful
Some of us have not been faithful
Some of us are choosing to abstain...
Some of us are feeling guilty yet again

Some of us got to the church on time
Some of us stopped making sense
Some of us live for the weekend
Some of us smell like teen spirit
אנחנו כבר לא דור מזוין
לכולנו יש בעיר מקלט
Some of us ain't no dancers
Some of us are human and dancers
Some of us are living on a prayer
Some of us should be so lucky
Some of us do the locomotion
None of us are like a virgin
Some of us are bad
כולנו יודעים שמשיח לא יבוא
וגם לא יצלצל
כולנו צריכים אהבה חדשה
Some of us woohoo
Some of us hung the DJ, hung the DJ, hung the DJ

Appendix Four: *The Living Room*, Script for ‘Yael Solo’ Section

Some things make sense:

The smell of my baby’s hair

The smell of rain on concrete

Nestling in your chest

Playing catch

Muddy boots

Hot chocolates

Knowing where I come from

Going to work

Paying a mortgage

Saving for a rainy day

Doing my homework

Rehearsing

Making one decision over another

MUSIC

Some things don’t make sense:

Time slipping through my fingers

Seeing my parents age

Going to work

Rehearsing

Paying a mortgage

The language I speak

The language I think

The language I feel

Rehearsing

Making one decision over another

MUSIC

Home baking

Being the boss

Rehearsing

Making one decision over another

Some things stopped making sense:

Train timetables, אני רק שאלה , עבודה עברית

The weather מזג האויר

Health and safety regulations בדיקות בטחוניות

Funding applications

Knowing where I'm going

Jeden za wszystkich- One for all/ Communal sleeping- לינה משותפת

Obowiazki publiczne- public duty/ Who is a Jew- מיהו יהודי?

Brushing my hair

Pointing my feet

MUSIC

Rehearsing

Making one decision

Over another

Making one decision over another

Camp David, Oslo

Rehearsing

Making one decision over another

Polscy malkontenci- Polish malcontent/Song for Peace- שיר לשלום

Rehearsing

Making one decision over another

Rehearsing

Making one decision (over another)

Appendix Five: Additional framing devices used in the works

1. Staging, Titles, Programme notes, Lighting and Costume Design

Shrink'd

Shrink'd is **staged** 'in-the round' with the audience surrounded by the installations. The **title**, *Shrink'd*, is echoed physically in the small 'stage', which offers a close-up viewing position that highlights small details, as opposed to the distanced viewing of the whole stage picture afforded by conventional studio theatre seating.

The **publicity and programme note** reinforced these frames for interpreting the work: "*Celebrating ridiculous movement performed under claustrophobic conditions, Shrink'd is a dance of extreme close ups...Highlighting the intricacy of the body and the immediacy of performance Shrink'd plays with the viewer as potential witness and occasional accomplice.*"(Flexer 2005)

Doing, Done & Undone

This work is **staged** conventionally in a 'proscenium arch' format in a studio theatre. The **title** of the work implicitly suggests the theoretical concerns that emerged during its making, the temporal movement of performance into 'pastness', its insistence on appearance while it moves towards its disappearance. It also suggests Judith Butler's notion of 'doing' and 'undoing', identity emerging within social performativity (Chapter Three).

The **programme note**, quoting directly from Butler, suggests this reading:

"Moving from the functional to the frenetic Doing, Done & Undone consider the ways in which we are tied to one another and reflects on the breathing space between action and stillness, performers and an audience. 'The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others but also to touch and to violence. The body can be the agency and instrument of all these as well, or the site where "doing" and "being done to" become equivocal'. '...one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel' (Flexer 2009 including quotations from Butler 2004a, p.19-21)

The **lighting** in *Doing, Done & Undone* further suggests an overlapping between performers and audience members, lighting the auditorium as much as the stage during the ‘line ups’. In *Undone*, the lighting plays with appearance and disappearance, the dancers moving between visibility and silhouette with the light chasing them across the space. In *Done* the lighting ‘spills’ onto the auditorium at times as well as increasing and decreasing in intensity to intimate the *in-between* of action and stillness. The lighting is used to both increase and radically decrease the frame rising significantly to highlight the empty stage at the end of the work and then sharply changing to the initial small square in which McConville’s hand was first visible, before going to black.

The Living Room

The work’s minimal **staging** hints at the *in-between* of domestic and formal, process and performance, private and public, the dancers seeming to inhabit the stage as they would their everyday environment. The audience enters when they are caught up in play with a small child, gradually the acknowledgement of the audience through direct eye contact and the textual prologue extend an invitation to the audience into ‘our living room’. The minimal set and lighting (florescent strip lighting, two chairs and two microphones) suggest either a performance space or a rehearsal room, conflating the private ‘virtual’ world the title might suggest with the ‘concreteness’ of a stage.

The **title** has two main elements: ‘Living’ refers to both everyday living and performance, its ‘liveness’ and the way both share the experience of time, future, present and past; ‘Room’ suggests a ‘virtual’ domestic space in the viewer’s mind, reinforced by the composite “Living Room”. The title and work play with expectations of what the space is: On entering the theatre the audience finds nothing that suggests a domestic or ‘homely’ space. Home and dance, dance and its home (the stage or the rehearsal space) overlap.

The **lighting** moves between dark almost menacing lighting states, with the fluorescent lights coming on and off and ‘warmer’ lighting states. This serves to underscore the notion of home and the *unhome*, familiarisation and defamiliarisation (Chapter Five).

The **programme note** reinforces this reading; “The Living Room *is an intimate dance set in what appears to be the bare bones of a living or rehearsal room. The six performers interfere or seemingly assist each other’s ‘solo moment’ together inhabiting an imagined domestic space* (Flexer 2010).

The **costuming** for all three works references the play between the formal and the informal. In *Shrink’d* they are fairly informal referencing the rehearsal studio, but also uniform echoing the military movement references in that work. In *Doing, Done & Undone* and *The Living Room* the costuming moves between the formal and casual. Although the dancers wear pedestrian, everyday clothing the formality of the performance frame is articulated through a designed echoing of colour across the different costumes and geometrical and textural use of fabric, shape and cut. In the latter two pieces the costumes (while related in colour or design) are distinct to each dancer, emphasising individuality rather than conformity.

2. Musical framing

All three works submitted were created in collaboration with composer Dr Nye Parry, with *Done* and *The Living Room* also involving collaboration with live cellist and composer Karni Postel, and *The Living Room* involving one piece by composer Douglas Evans. Both Parry and Postel are long-term collaborators who I have worked with over the past 20 years:-

In *Shrink’d* the sound score was generated using a variety of sounds some of which are recognisable to the viewer. Parry samples and manipulates ‘found’ or ‘concrete’⁷⁸ sound thus locating the score within a ‘real’ sound environment. In its choice of sound sources and use of volume and timbre, it supports the movement, dramatic or psychological states present in the work.

Doing, is rhythmically driven in accordance with the fast pace of the work, the driving rhythm of the movement. The score, which also uses ‘realworld’ sounds, at times subsides leaving only the sound of a heartbeat, this is particularly the case during the ‘line ups’. *Undone*, the sound incorporates Hebrew and Arabic spoken text

⁷⁸ Here I am referencing ‘Musique Concrète’, as termed by Pierre Shaeffer in 1951 through Groupe de Recherche de Musique Concrète at RTF in Paris.

(which is referred to in McConville's Prologue) as well as radio transmissions, switching stations. All these sounds belong to the everyday and offer another layer or context through which to read the work. In section three of *Undone* the sound gradually disintegrates from its driving rhythmic form beginning to come 'undone'.

In *Done* the relationship with sound is critical to the conceptual premise of the work, as it serves to frame the dance and its meaning. The sound in *Done* points to the play *in between* sound and silence, but rather than suggesting a binary, it denotes the way in which sound infiltrates silence and vice versa, each leaving its residue on the present moment. This, together with the 'white noise' texture of the sound score, reinforces the notion of the everyday. In *Done* the sound, like the lighting often exceeds its frame. Initially the sound establishes a convention whereby the dancers move to sound and stop to silence, this convention gets increasingly broken with the dancers leaving the stage empty while the sound is playing, and dancing in silence in anticipation of the sound, thus playing *in-between* sound and silence. The second section of this piece is performed entirely in silence while the sound seems to advance and recede in the third section. The final section is spatially and physically 'explosive' using the whole space, increasing to uncomfortable levels after the dancers leave, before suddenly dropping to silence which marks the beginning of the work.

The Living Room combines both an electro-acoustic score and live cello. The sections of music are fairly short and as such support the episodic framing and genre-switching that characterises this work. The live sound underscores the notion of 'living' and brings a more human dimension into the work in contrast to the other two works. The electro-acoustic sound score in this work is mostly generated from cello samples, and as such is also distinct to the other works in that it is thus instrumental and more formal or 'abstract' in its construction, although other sections use found domestic sound, or can be associated with 'pop' or 'club' music in terms of genre (Kramarz 2007). Additionally, Karni, the cellist, is seen as another member of the cast. She delivers text, speaks and votes and, like the dancers, employs everyday gesture and behaviour. Thus, the sound for *The Living Room*, as in the other two works is suggestive of the *in-between*.



Figure 26. *The Living Room*, Cello: Karni Postel.
Photography: Chris Nash, 3 March 2011, Roehampton University

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Marina Abramovic

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14–May 31, 2010

Liz Aggiss

Survival Tactics (2011), The Basement, Brighton, UK, 7 May 2011

Carole Brown

The Changing Room (2004), Ludvig Forum, Aachen, Germany, 4 November 2004

SeaUnSea (2006), Siobhan Davies Dance Studios, London, UK, 12 October 2006

Trisha Brown

Inside (1966), Trisha Brown Studio, New York (no record of date of first
performance)

Man Walking Down the Side of the Building (1970), In and around 80 Wooster
Street, New York, USA, 18 April 1970

Roof Piece (1971), 53 Wooster Street at 381 Lafayette, New York, USA, 11 May
1971

Accumulation (1971), New York University Gymnasium, New York, USA, 22
October 1971

Accumulation with Talking (1973), Centre Americain, Paris, France, 12 October
1973

Water motor (1978), Public Theatre, Newman Stage, New York, USA, 22 May
1978

Glacial Decoy (1979), Walker Arts Centre, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, 7 May
1979

Opal Loop (1980), 55 Crosby Street, New York, USA, 10 June 1980

Set and Reset (1983), Festival d'Avignon, La Chartreuse, France, 20 July 1982

If You Couldn't See Me (1994), Joyce Theatre, New York, USA, 3 May 1994

You Can See Us (1995), Montpellier Festival de Danse, France, 28 June 1995

Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion

Both Sitting Duet (2003), The Place Theatre, Dance Umbrella Festival, London, UK, 15 October 2003

The Quiet Dance (2005), Tanzwerkstatt Europa, Munich, Germany, 7 August 2005

Speaking Dance (2006), The Place Theatre, Dance Umbrella Festival, London, UK, 18 October 2006

Rosemary Butcher

Body As Site (1992), Royal College of Art, London UK, February 1992

Scan (1999), The Jerwood Space, London/Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, London, UK (no record of date of first performance)

Lucinda Childs

Street Dance (1964), Summer 1964, Robert Dunn's Loft, East Broadway, New York, USA (no record of date of first performance)

Siobhan Davies

13 Different Keys (1999) Atlantis Gallery, London, UK, 15 July 1999

Plants and Ghosts (2002), Victoria Miro Gallery, London, UK, 16 October 2002

Bird Song (2004) Island Arts Centre, Lisburn, Northern Ireland, 2 April 2004

The Collection (2009), Victoria Miro Gallery, London, UK, 23 March 2009

A Series of Appointments (2010) as part of *Rotor: The Score*, Siobhan Davies Dance Studios, London, UK, 3 November 2010

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

Rosas Danst Rosas (1983), Kaaitheaterfestival, Théâtre de la Balsamine, Brussels, Belgium, 6 May 1983

The Song (2009), Théâtre de la Ville Paris, France, 24 September 2009

Zeitung (2008), Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, France, 11 January 2008

Yael Flexer

Yes? (1996 and 2002), Michaelis Theatre, Roehampton University, London, UK, 19 November 1996, and Attakalari International Festival, Bangalore, India, 8 February 2002

No 3 (1997), Neues Theater, Munich, Germany, 4 August 1997

In The Third Person (1997), Swindon Dance, Swindon, UK, 10 October 1997

Flexible & Slightly Less Flexible (2000), Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, UK, 6 June 2000

Shrink'd (2003-2006),

1st version performance, East London Dance, UK, 31 August 2003:

First performance, Woking Dance Festival, UK, 26 February 2006

Exit Plan (2005), E-Werk Festival, Freiburg, Germany, 2 November 2005

Doing, Done & Undone (2007/8),

Done, Densens Hus, Copenhagen, Denmark, 25 May 2007

Doing Roehampton University, London, UK, 27 January 2008

Doing, Done & Undone, University of Chichester, UK, 23 April 2008

The Living Room (2009-2011), Brindley Arts Centre, Runcorn, UK, 4 March 2010

www.flexerandsandiland.com, for information on all works

Deborah Hay

Circle Dances (1970) Northern Vermont, USA, Continuous process – no record of date of first performance.

Wendy Houston

Keep Dancing (2009) Battersea Arts Centre, Dance Umbrella Festival, London, UK, 7 November 2009

Victoria Marks

Films:

Mothers and Daughters (1994), Director: Margaret Williams, made for Channel 4 Television, UK

Men (1997), Director: Margaret William, BBC/Arts Council, UK

Live Work:

Action Conversations (2008), Highways Performance Space, Santa Monica, USA. 8 February 2008

Rachel Mars

The way you Tell Them (2013), The Basement, Brighton, UK, 11 May 2012

Ursula Martinez

A Family Outing (1998) The Green Room, Manchester, Queer Up North Festival, UK, 5 May 1998

OAP (2003) The Tron, Glasgow, UK, 15 November 2003

My Stories, Your Emails (2009) Library Theatre, Manchester, Queer Up North Festival, UK, 14 May 2009

Ohad Naharin

Three (2005) Suzanne Dellal Centre, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 7 February 2005

Steve Paxton

Flat (1964) New Paltz, State University of New York, USA, 30 January 1964

Yvonne Rainer

Ordinary Dance (1962), Concert 1, Judson Memorial Church, New York, USA and KQED, San-Francisco, USA, June 1962

We Shall Run (1963), Concert 3, Judson Dance Theatre Concert, Judson Memorial Church, New York, USA, 29 January, 1963

Trio A (1966), Rainer's studio, New York, USA

1st studio showing, 26 November 1965

Shown as part of Rainer's '*The Mind is a Muscle*' Part 1. Judson Memorial Church, New York, USA, 10 January 1966

The Mind is a Muscle (1968)

Part 1. Judson Memorial Church, 10 January 1966,

Part 2. The Anderson Theatre, New York, USA 11 April 1968

War (1970), Douglas College, Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA, 22 November 1970

Flag (1970) Judson Memorial Church, New York, USA, 9 November 1970

Felix Ruckert

Ring (1999) Centre National de la Danse, Theatre Contemporain de la Danse, Paris, France, 4 February 1999

Secret Service (2002), Dock 11, Berlin, Germany, 5 February 2005

Hautnah (1995) Club des Cinque, Blois, France, 10 February 1998

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