THE GESTURAL BODY IN PERFORMANCE: A PRACTICE-BASED STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF PHYSICALITY AND MEANING THROUGH THE INVISIBLY DISABLED BODY.

by

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Thesis submitted

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2019

Abstract

This study investigates the concept of the gestural body as a site for communication in performance, using autobiographical practice to examine the influence of invisible disability on the perception of physicality and meaning. It adopts a practice-based methodology, locating me as creative practitioner at the heart of the investigation, enabling me to generate a deeper epistemological understanding as I engage reflexively through the research process (Barrett and Bolt, 2007). My psychosomatic approach means that my performance training and experience of living with ME influence the notion of embodiment, and I investigate how this impacts perception of what is performed (Grosz, 1994; Leder, 1990). The study explores ways in which shifts in the performance space and time, including the displacement of the embodied space and the experience of chronic time, may influence perception for both the performer and the audience (Morris, 2008). The research also explores the process of coming out as invisibly disabled in performance, and how this contributes to perceptions of the gestural body (Fassett and Morella, 2008). Ultimately, the thesis seeks to establish a foundation of knowledge relevant to the research of embodiment and lived experience, and to those investigating the previously neglected area of invisible disabilities in performance.

Acknowledgements

My thanks must go to my family who have supported me in my journey towards this PhD. To Jo, who has watched me learn and grow through every challenge and triumph from childhood to adulthood, always with unwavering support, belief and love. To my husband, Walter, without whom I could not have come so far. His selfless commitment, constant love and care are the foundation of my achievements.

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Introduction

This thesis investigates factors which influence perceptions of the invisibly disabled body in performance using lived experience of the chronic illness *myalgic encephalomyelitis* (ME) as a specific example. It examines the construction of performance by generating autobiographical movement material, and uses elements of time and space to frame the body as a site for communication. This process reveals the different influences on the production of meaning for both audience and performer.

The thesis begins with Chapter 1: The Research in Context, which situates the research in the interdisciplinary field of performance art/live art through its embodied approach (Johnson, 2013), sharing themes with body art, theatre and postdramatic theatre. It outlines the ontology of the research following Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theory of the body as prism of perception (1962, 1964, 1968, 2004) drawing on cognate fields including spectatorship, somatic practice and feminist theory to argue for the body as an intersubjective site in performance. The chapter discusses the cultural production of disability as an identity status (Hadley, 2014) and the existing viewing strategies of disabled bodies in performance, to address how these contribute to the concept of chronic illness as an invisible disability. It suggests that invisible disabilities exist in a liminal state in the binary of visible disability and able-bodiedness (Lindemann, 2010; Cosenza, 2014b), arguing for a view of embodied differences as existing on a spectrum, and implicating queer theory in the research through the need to come out as invisibly disabled (Fassett and Morella, 2008). The core research questions are introduced and an account is given of how invisible disability impacts the embodied approach to concepts of space and time, addressing the production and reception of meaning through studies of spectatorship and witnessing, and theories surrounding looking and the gaze.

The thesis continues with Chapter 2: Methodology, detailing the practice-based approach that generates data through the researcher's subjective position (Barrett and Bolt, 2007). It describes how the research uses autobiographical material generated through phenomenological reflection, and that it crosses borders with autoethnographic practice through a consideration of the influence of society and culture on embodied identity (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). The chapter goes on to discuss the pervasive privileging of the visual sense in the West (Classen, 1993) and how embodied and sensorial practice is particularly suited to this research by bringing visceral sensation into the visual realm (Banes and Lepecki, 2007). It sets out some of the key theories of somatic awareness that the research hinges on, including Drew Leder's concept of the dys-appearing body (1990), and how somatic and psychophysical techniques guide the practical research. Next, an account is given of how journaling is used as a reflexive strategy through the enquiry, which enables the researcher to develop a personal voice and provides a picture of the ongoing learning journey (Cunningham and Carmichael, 2018). Finally, the chapter details the research design and the influence of chronic illness on this process, including the separation of data collection

into three case studies, the choice of setting and the gathering of data from both the researcher's personal experience and from audience members.

The following three chapters are case studies, detailing the development of three workshop performances and the data gathering process of each. Chapter 3: Case Study 1 - *Untitled* describes the early stages of practical research through explorations of space, time and repetition. It explores how the bodily ideals of classical dance training, as well as the experience of chronic illness affected the researcher's somatic approach and influenced her interpretation of concepts such as performance and the performer's identity. It details the development of a gesture for performance drawn from the researcher's phenomenological experience of ME, and how body imagery assists in the communication of alternative experiences of embodiment (Grosz, 1994; Welton 2012). The chapter sets out the methods of framing the body for performance through space and time, including representation of the kinesphere to communicate displaced space and the use of a clock to link movement to the passage of time, and sets out the initial findings of how these elements contributed to perceptions of physicality and meaning.

Chapter 4: Case study 2 - *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See*, draws on early findings from *Untitled*, reframing the gesture by considering how nudity can be used as a device to communicate lived experience (Jones, 2004). It also explores how echoing objectifying and fetishistic conventions of framing and viewing female and disabled bodies could be used to question the visibility status of invisible disability and as a method of outing the performer (Jones, 1998; Millett-Gallant, 2010). The chapter describes how including elements of audience interaction by requesting the audience's help in the process of undressing, affected perceptions of the body through implications of the gender divide (Grosz, 1994; Jones, 2012) and introduced potential risk for both performer and audience (McConachie, 2008; White, 2013). An account is given of how the audience's choices of movement and proximity in the performance event were influenced by awareness of social rules of touch and barriers of safety, with particular consideration to the impact of nudity on spectatorship (Classen, 2005; Garland-Thomson, 2009; Grosz, 1994). This case study also addresses how the performance explored ways of destabilising perceptions of time to present the researcher's subjective experience of chronic time, by linking the deteriorating gesture in space with the use of sound (Jones and Heathfield, 2012).

Chapter 5: Case study 3 - *Screening My(Self): Reflections* responds to data gathered from *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See,* exploring how theatrical devices such as veils, screens and mirrors could be used to direct the audience's gaze as a new way of framing the body in performance (Garelick, 1995; Jonas, 1970). A description is given of how this created a physical barrier between the performer and audience, both to increase the audience's comfort in viewing the performer's body and to lessen the performer's sense of exposure from the previous case study. The chapter identifies how two-way mirrors provided a unique material to explore the merger of subjectivity and objectivity for the performer (Bleeker, 2008; Kulik, 2004) and how they investigated concepts of the vanishing point by revealing and reflecting the performer's invisibly disabled body (Phelan, 1993; Schneider, 1997). This case study also explored the complex merger of authenticity and representation in autobiographical performance

(Heddon, 2008), and how the notion of identity as an ongoing act of identification is affected by the changing interpretation of embodiment in chronic illness (Jones, 2012). The chapter gives an account of how *Screening My(Self): Reflections* investigated concepts of duration and endurance, moving towards a subjective and embodied understanding of time that reflected minimal forms of performance in Europe, and the need for more diverse representations of lived experiences in performance art (Heathfield, 2004; Lepecki, 2004; Shalson, 2013).

Finally, Chapter 6: Conclusion gathers information from the case studies to review the research and present the key findings. Firstly, that the invisibly disabled body's subjugation by the experience of chronic illness promotes somatic awareness through its unusual experiences of spatiality and temporality (Charmaz, 1990; Leder, 1990; O'Brien, 2014). Secondly, that the invisibly disabled body carries queer theories through its otherness, the need for it to be performed to be recognised, and that this need for repeated identifications reinforces the instability of its identity category (Butler, 1990). The research calls for the recognition of a spectrum of embodied experience in a move away from binary distinctions of ability and disability, and draws on Tobin Siebers' disability aesthetics (2010) to call for a new aesthetics of invisibility that acknowledges embodied experiences rather than just visual manifestations of disability. The chapter then addresses the limitations of the study, and suggests possible applications of the research and areas for further investigation.

Chapter 1: The Research in Context

1.1 Contextual overview

This practice-based research into perceptions of physicality and meaning through the invisibly disabled body takes embodied experience as both focus and method of the research. I use autobiographical material to create three case studies, each of which is centred on a workshop performance offering opportunity for data collection, and forming part of my ongoing reflexive research. Through the focus on the lived experience of the body in the performance event, the form of my performance practice is most easily recognised as performance art (Johnson, 2013), however in this chapter, I identify that the research operates interdisciplinarily, situated at the intersection of fields of performance art, live art, theatre and postdramatic theatre (Heathfield, 2004; Shalson, 2013; White, 2013). I provide an account of how these practices come together through a focus on the body's lived experience (Jones, 1998, 2012; Lobel, 2013), and how performance and live art have come to be seen as a welcoming practice for those with alternative lived experiences, such as my own experience of the chronic illness ME (Gómez-Peña, 2004). I explore how embodied practice takes a view of the body/self as both subject and object (Grosz, 1994; Leder, 1990), and generates an intersubjective understanding of the body in performance (Bleeker, 2008; Conroy, 2010; Fraleigh, 1987; Grosz, 1994; McConachie, 2008; Ravn, 2010).

The autobiographical strand of the research means that it crosses borders with disability studies, particularly disability performance, and I identify some of the current theories around the social and cultural production of disability as an identity category and how disabilities are presented in performance (Garland-Thomson, 2017; Hadley, 2014; Henderson and Ostrander, 2010; Lindemann, 2010; Lobel, 2013; Marsh and Burrows, 2017). As ME is a disability that does not manifest visibly, I also draw on the intersection between disability studies and queer theory to examine concepts of passing as able-bodied and outing myself as disabled in performance (Bunzl, 1997; Fassett and Morella, 2008; Lindemann, 2010; Marsh and Burrows, 2017; Quinlan and Bates, 2010). I address the liminal state that invisible disabilities occupy between disability and able-bodiedness due to the fluctuating pattern of health and illness that ME entails (Cosenza, 2010, 2014; Lobel, 2010; McRuer, 2006), and argue for a new view of disabilities which encompasses a spectrum of embodied experience over binary identifications of ability (Marsh and Burrows, 2017; Henderson and Ostrander, 2010; Jones, 2012; Siebers, 2010).

Finally, I detail how I research the production and reception of meaning through the body in performance, setting out the key research questions and examining theories surrounding looking, the gaze and spectatorship (Bennett, 1997; Bleeker, 2008; Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Garland-Thomson, 2000, 2005b, 2006, 2009, 2014, 2017; Grehan, 2009; McConachie, 2008; White, 2013). I describe how the experience of chronic illness, including manifestation over long periods of time (why chronic illnesses can be classified as disabilities) influences elements of space and time in

performance, including concepts of duration and endurance, which impacts perceptions of physicality and meaning (Cosenza, 2010, 2004b; Heathfield, 2004; O'Brien, 2014; Vannini, Waskul and Gottschalk, 2012).

1.2 Interdisciplinary research and performance art

Performance art is an interdisciplinary genre that shares themes of artist presence, performativity, and performance as event with other arts practices such as live art and theatre, but has its own history of over 100 years of performance practices, beginning in the early 1900s as a deliberate disruption to traditional artistic assumptions at the time (Goldberg, 2004). In her brief history of performance art, Rose-Lee Goldberg argues that performance art practices are difficult to categorise, partly due to the ephemeral and transient nature of the genre, which leaves little material to exhibit or archive (2004). Live art carries the same problematic intangibility, yet it is this very quality that gives live art its name. Emerging as a sector in the interdisciplinary art scene during the 1950s and 1960s, it was also a reactionary move against the dominant ideologies of the time, in particular as an antiestablishment reaction to the Conservative government (Johnson, 2013). Live art experimented with time in performance and focused on concepts of immediacy, immersion and interaction, as does performance art (Heathfield, 2004), but was seen as a more inclusive practice than performance art, which foregrounded the body and its visceral nature (Johnson, 2013). Performance art's fascination with the body and live art's call for inclusivity have attracted artists from diverse backgrounds, often those that have been considered 'other' to the majority, subjugated for reasons of sex, race, sexuality or physical difference, but who have found in performance a platform to share their experiences and claim their identity in a way that may resonate with others (Jones, 1998). Live art's emergence from and questioning of the social contexts in which it is produced (Johnson, 2013) create what Bree Hadley describes as "productively live spaces" (2014: 14), which removes art from the fictional world of traditional theatre and brings it into the social realm. This creates a blurring of the boundaries of interaction between performer and spectator, one of the hallmarks of contemporary live art, which seeks to confront the illusion of performance with the immediacy and tangibility of a live act by drawing attention to "the elusive conditions of the real" (Heathfield, 2004: 9).

The intertwined history and different interpretations of the terms performance art and live art means that today there is much overlap between the two practices, and the terms are often used interchangeably both nationally and artist-to-artist. Johnson draws attention to the ambiguous boundaries between performance art as a tradition and live art as an emerging sector from within it, arguing that the two areas allow crossover, and that attempts to make these definitions more clear run the risk of reducing either category or disallowing the interdisciplinary nature that is vital to both (2013). The diverse and destabilising explorations of performance or live art are not likely to emerge from other more conservative or more easily categorised disciplines (Johnson, 2013), making it "amongst the most challenging forms of practice to create, present or indeed to analyse" (Hadley, 2014: 23). The

difficulty in extricating one genre and set of practices from the other could be attributed to the conceptual overlap of the body and the effects of its status as 'live', perhaps because, as diverse performance practitioners and academics have shown, bodies are experienced within and through time, a central contention of my research (Charmaz, 1991; Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Jones, 2012; Jones and Heathfield, 2012; Ravn, 2009). In this thesis, I draw upon this conceptual overlap, using the term performance art to focus on the body and its liveness as the key concept of my practice.

The body's central position in performance art highlights the way bodies are perceived by others (Lobel, 2013). As Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, academics in the fields of art and art history contend, "Live and/or performance art enact and engage bodies across time", going on to note the renewed interest in the body in live and performance art since the turn of the millennium (2012: 15). Jones's book *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (1998), addresses the body as both subject and object of the artwork, charting the shift in focus toward embodied experience and the conception of subjectivity that has taken place since the mid-twentieth century. She uses the term 'body art' to emphasise the body as a locus between the body/self and its cultural context, a point which is vital for the production and reception of meaning in my research. The body in performance, she argues, has no inherent meaning in itself, but meaning is ascribed through the context in which it is viewed and the specificity of the viewer perceiving it through his or her own embodied experience, in an "interpretation-as-exchange" of ideas (Jones, 1998: 9). I explore this interpretation through an investigation of how framing my body for performance through spatial and temporal factors such as proximity, speed and repetition contribute to or alter perceptions of the body, with both my own and the audience's perceptions brought together for analysis. It is Jones's central concept of an exchange of ideas that drives the research, with the body as the point around which the concepts of perception and embodiment are focused. As Jones argues, working with materials that envision the body (including the body itself) creates an embodied encounter that reflects both the artist's relationship with her own body and her relationship with the viewers' bodies, either in the present moment, or with embodied encounters that the artist anticipates in the future (Jones, 2012). The body therefore, is the point for shared interpretation and understanding, as while there is a vast spectrum of bodily experience, experience itself is predicated on living within and through a body (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

The body also proves to be the meeting point between performance/live art and its neighbouring performance practice, theatre, with "porous" borders between the two disciplines (White, 2013: 2). Laura Shalson (2013) argues that theatre is both close and removed from live art, suggesting that the reality of the body and its experience of endurance or suffering is the only distinction between the metaphor of theatre and the literalness of performance art, a literalness that has often been said to be the key feature of performance art as a field. It can also be argued however, that theatre has a literalness, seen in bodies in labour and the live presence of both performers and audience, elements that create theatre's own sense of duration or endurance. Endurance then, is "either the limit that distinguishes the two forms or the principal point at which they overlap" (Shalson, 2013: 158). Shalson

identifies that the common point of performance is the act which in one way or another makes clear its mechanism of performance, yet in general, endurance tends to be viewed as the real and therefore to come out as a feature of performance art, rather than theatre. This unique crossover between performance art and theatre has become known as postdramatic theatre, a term which describes the memory of dramatic theatre but operates at its breaking point, recognising that, as Shalson argues, theatre remains something which is both endured by and endures within live art: "Dramatic theatre typically seeks to exclude the realities of the theatre situation, while performance art dwells on them" (159). The body's lived experience, including that of endurance, is my starting point in this research, which draws together the varying disciplines of my background and training, across which I now work. As Johnson notes, it is hard to find a live artist whose work is confined to the performance or live art sectors, as artists draw on many other cross-disciplinary practices, and many artists have formal training and artistic practice from other more discrete disciplines (2013). My own training is in the theatre, with a heavy emphasis on classical and commercial dance, which has been influential on my understanding of concepts such as embodiment, subjectivity and performance, themes which I investigate in this research.

As I have shown, performance art encompasses a range of artistic practices and backgrounds and has given rise to new terms and sectors including live art, body art and postdramatic theatre. The broad "conceptual territory" of performance art has made it a welcoming arena for artists with diverse backgrounds and experiences, one in which fluctuation and ambiguity are prevalent, and contradiction and paradox encouraged (Gómez-Peña, 2004: 78). Performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña asserts,

> Every territory a performance artist stakes is slightly different from that of his/her neighbour. We converge in this overlapping terrain precisely because it grants us special freedoms often denied to us in other realms where we're mere temporary insiders. (Gómez-Peña, 2004: 78)

This notion of inclusion in an arena that allows for greater creative expression through its adaptive practices and willingness to incorporate contradiction strikes a chord with my journey to the field thus far. My experiences in dance training and performance have been contrasted with ME, a chronic neurological condition, that has exerted a fluctuating but constant presence in my life since my early teens. ME affects multiple organ systems, producing symptoms of muscular fatigue, pain and spasms, poor immunology, a lack of temperature regulation, digestive issues, cognitive dysfunction including difficulty processing and remembering information, and heightened sensitivity to light, noise and touch (The ME Association, 2016). These embodied experiences starkly contradict the high levels of physical strength and stamina expected of dancers, and threaten to pull attention away from the illusory world created to the subjective experience of negative bodily sensations (Gray and Kunkel, 2001; Whiteside and Kelly, 2016). Gómez-Peña's notion of being a "temporary insider" is familiar (2004: 78), as my sense of belonging in the dance community is always under threat from a chronic condition that could expose me as lacking in the requisite physical ability, and remove me to an outsider position. Similarly, the invisible nature of ME prevents me from being recognised as disabled and becoming an accepted member of the disabled community unless I mark myself out as such. Kurt Lindeman argues that disabled persons can occupy a position of liminality,

not entirely part of the able-bodied world, but neither are they removed from "the physical spaces and discursive formations embedded in able-bodied society", arguing that embracing this liminality may be a form of resistance to the standard binary of able-bodied and disabled (Lindemann, 2010: 112). Julie Cosenza contends that these are socially constructed categories and that the fluidity of "betweener**"** identity offers unique embodied experiences and value (2014b: 2). For those with invisible disabilities, this sense of liminality is compounded by conditions which place them in an outsider position while allowing them to 'pass' as part of the able-bodied majority (Lindemann 2010; Quinlan and Bates, 2010). As Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell argue, the impact of social interaction surrounding embodied difference contributes to identity and the identification of self amongst others (2006). Invisible disabilities therefore, give rise to the concept of outing oneself from queer theory, consciously making the choice to communicate one's lived experience with others and drawing attention to one's difference (Branfman, 2015; Bunzl, 1997). This means that I must 'perform' my invisible disability to make this aspect of my lived experience visible to others. This area of my research draws on Erving Goffman's theories of the performativity of self (1990) alongside queer theory to examine how the disclosure of my disability in performance may influence my self-perception as well as the audience's perception of me. I use a variety of methods to perform my disability, including gestures derived from embodied experiences, methods of outing or 'uncovering' myself and a number of time-based strategies, all of which I will explore in detail in the case study chapters.

The overlapping areas of performance and the performative, representation, reality and authenticity are brought together in a conceptual melting pot in performance art, with live art and theatre treading similar territory but with different approaches, codes and practices (Shalson, 2013). The focus that my research takes on embodied experience situates it most clearly within the performance art tradition, although my use of live performer presence, duration and endurance holds strong ties with live art (Johnson, 2013; Jones, 1998). I recognise, however, that I also make use of forms of representation in my use of autobiographical tropes such as the performance of past iterations of the self and the layering of both past and present selves in performance (seen particularly in the third case study), which situates me across the boundaries of performance art and theatre once again (Heathfield, 2004; Shalson, 2013). This research must be viewed then, as emerging from within and through my own context of embodied experience and history of performance practice (Johnson, 2013), taking in forms of representation and reality in an interdisciplinary practice that centres around the body and its potential for embodied, intersubjective knowledge exchange.

1.3 The intersubjective body

For many artists including myself, body-based performance practice is a way for the personal paradigm to intersect with the social (Gómez-Peña, 2004) as the body is used to express personal identity and experience and to share this with others through performance (Jones, 1998). This paradigm, common throughout performance and the

visual arts, is predicated on a fundamental understanding that the body is the site through which subjectivity arises, a theory derived from phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962). Merleau-Ponty's major publications, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), *Primacy of Perception* (1964) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), brought about a paradigmatic shift in theories of perception, as he argued that because our body is the medium through which we experience the world, it should be seen as central to experience, rather than as a separate object under control of the mind, a widely accepted dualist perspective previously set out by René Descartes (1596-1650). Merleau-Ponty's contribution to contemporary academic thought has been enormously influential, described as "the most detailed example of the manner in which phenomenology can interact with the sciences and the arts to provide a descriptive account of the nature of human bodily being-in-the-world" (Moran, quoted in Banes and Lepecki, 2007: 48). Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theory views the body as a lens for our perception of the world, meaning that it is the basis for all judgement as well as the means by which we generate a sense of subjectivity and selfhood (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Elizabeth Grosz adroitly summarises how Merleau-Ponty's theory of experience unites the physical body and conscious mind by existing between them:

> He locates experience midway between mind and body. Not only does he link experience to the privileged locus of consciousness; he also demonstrates that experience is always necessarily constituted, located in and as the subject's incarnation. Experience can only be understood between mind and body – or across them – in their lived conjunction. (Grosz, 1994: 95)

In Merleau-Ponty's understanding therefore, the body is not merely a biological organism, but a uniquely conjoint entity comprising physical, mental and emotional exigencies. It is in living through a body that we gain sense-information about the world around us and generate a response to this information. In short, our lived experiences make up our sense of self, a vital understanding in my research, which leans on this notion of embodied experience as a form of knowing and from which performance material can be generated.

It is also through our bodies that we have a sense of personal identity – we are recognised and experienced by others as our body (Leder, 1990; Grosz, 1994). Drew Leder describes how Merleau-Ponty uses the phrase 'lived body' or 'body' to encompass the entire embodied self, with no intention to "impoverish our sense of humanity, as if the self were "just" a body" (Leder, 1990: 8). Leder goes on to extrapolate that if the body is the lens through which we perceive and experience the world, we are likewise, perceived and experienced as our body, a point that my performance practice relies on as a method of communicating my lived experiences and identity with others. Leder articulates,

> Within this perceptual world the body can itself appear as but another object to be perceived and scientifically described. However, this never exhausts its meaning. The very possibility of objects as we know them... refers us back to that body on the other side of things, the body-as-experiencer. (Leder, 1990: 5)

Leder's statement warns against a view of the body as "but another object", a concept that feminist and disability theorists have worked hard to counteract for being too ready to slip towards using the body, and bodily difference,

as the basis for judgement of others (Diamond, 1997; Schneider, 1997; Grosz, 1994; Jones, 1998, 2012). Elizabeth Grosz's corporeal feminism (1994) calls for a move away from dualist notions that subordinate the body to the mind or bring about essentialising views of bodily difference, but instead uses the body's experience as a source of knowledge, linking body and mind as one and the same entity, and in so doing, preventing a view of the body solely as object. She uses the model of the Möbius strip to describe the torsion between mind and body, with one existing alongside and through the other, each affecting the other in a never-ending series of twists and influence. Grosz argues that the body's status as object therefore is questionable; it is an object and yet cannot be reduced to just this category because of its unique experiential ability.

> Thus it is both thing and a nonthing, an object, but an object which somehow contains or coexists with an interiority, an object able to take itself and others as subjects, a unique kind of object not reducible to other objects. (Grosz, 1994: xi)

In body-based performance practice, the body's position as subject of the art means that it is the object of attention, yet it can never be reduced to only this objectivity. It is through the body's status as uniquely experiential object that we achieve subjecthood – as Grosz asserts, it is an "object able to take itself and others as subjects". This ability to take others, not just as body-objects, but as fellow body-subjects is brought together in the live act of witnessing, in which performer and spectator share the experience of the performing body (Sheets-Johnstone, 1966: 12). Collette Conroy explains that each person who shares in the act of performance, whether performer or witness, occupies a physical perspective:

> Whenever I watch or analyse a piece of theatre I occupy a physical perspective, and I rely on my own physical body as the vantage point of my analysis. So my analysis is always subject to the restrictions or possibilities that my own body imposes or opens up. (Conroy, 2010: 6)

This means that the witness relies on her own lived experience in the interpretation of the performer's body - she adopts an embodied perspective. Maaike Bleeker, examining visuality in the performance encounter, contends that the 'looker' always carries her subjectivity and embodied perspective into watching performance, leading her to argue that the "locus of looking" is the embodied self (Bleeker, 2008: 16). For her, performance is always mediated through the witness, in the specificity of her location and subjectivity, meaning that witnessing a performance event allows the viewer to share in the event in a real, embodied way. This is partly due to the effects of mirror neurons which contribute to our perception of movement by activating the same areas of the brain as when we perform the movement ourselves, so even when passively watching a performance we experience the movement in an embodied way (McConachie, 2008). This generates an understanding that witnessing bodies in performance is intersubjective, as somatic practitioner Susanne Ravn argues:

> this intertwined cycle between perception and motility does not amount to the body-subject in the process of becoming in a singular sense, but includes the fact that perception-action cycles extend *beyond individual to include the other*. (Ravn, 2010: 31, my emphasis)

Ravn's research into dancers' phenomenological experience demonstrates that their understanding of movement, sensation and embodiment is influenced by other dancers' movement and expressions of subjective sensations in a participatory arena. I similarly argue that witnessing a performance event constitutes a shared practice, which my investigation into the body as site for communication hinges on, as the performer's sense of space, time and sensation is interpreted by the audience and contributes to their understanding of embodiment. This point is examined by Gail Weiss: "To describe embodiment as intercorporeality is to emphasise that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated" (quoted in Jones, 2004: 135). Many contemporary performance artists rely on this understanding of intercorporeality as a method of communication between performer and witness, including artist Marina Abramović, whose work has centred on embodied experience since the 1960s. Scholar Peggy Phelan suggests that the success of Abramović's work lies in her insistence that "the only subjectivity worth celebrating is an intersubjective and profoundly social and collective one", a point that I approach through bringing my embodied experiences of invisible disability into the public realm (2004: 16).

The joint witnessing of the performance event and the shared experience of embodiment has led somatic practitioner Sondra Fraleigh (1987) to argue for the use of the collective pronoun 'we' to describe the body in performance, explaining that despite specific bodily differences, the performer communicates through the body, which creates a shared consciousness:

> The art of dance draws upon both the personal and the universal body – tending, I believe, toward the latter as it becomes a source for communion, testifying to our bodily lived experience, our mutual grounding in nature, and our shared bodily acculturations. (Fraleigh, 1987: xvi)

The sharing of a body by audience and performer through the joint act of witnessing is reliant on the performer's initial choice to use her body in her art, what Jerzi Grotowski believed to be the performer's ethical duty (1968). In my research, investigating perceptions of meaning and physicality in the body using this understanding of intersubjectivity is complicated by the invisibility that governs my lived experience of ME. While disability culture activist Petra Kuppers contends that the disabled performer's difference throws her into "hypervisibility and instant categorisation" (2001: 25), my own experience of disability is in being overlooked, assumed to be part of the able-bodied majority. In my performance, I interrogate this issue by revealing the invisibly disabled body that passes as an apparently able performing body, questioning whether the inherent invisibility of chronic illnesses prevents them from being recognised and how the physical experience they entail affects perceptions of meaning through the body. Communicating this personal lived experience holds further challenges. As Howes' publication *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (2005) attests, despite the fact that perception itself is not "private, internal, ahistorical and apolitical" but "a shared social phenomenon", individual sense perceptions are unique and can be problematic to communicate to those with alternate experiences (4-5). The difficulty of bringing my perception of invisible disability into the shared space of visual performance art then, comments on the

construction of disability as easily identified, demonstrable, and predictable (Kuppers, 2004; Millett-Gallant, 2010). As Jones accedes,

> We *think* we *see* and *know* differences as these *seem* to be visible in, on and through the body and its representation. We come to feel the difference. Our sense of our own bodies, as much as our beliefs about others' bodies, is over-determined by ideas about difference and identity pivoting often around visual cues. (Jones, 2012: 176, original emphasis)

My research explores whether the potential for knowledge exchange that intersubjectivity allows will help in communicating my subjective experience with others in a visual medium, while acknowledging a culture-wide tendency to determine difference based on visual cues (Garland-Thomson, 2000; Jones, 2012; Kuppers, 2001; Marsh and Burrows, 2017; Siebers, 2010).

1.4 The disabled and invisibly disabled body

That publication of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theories were matched with the advent of body art in the 1960s is no coincidence; as Sally Banes and André Lepecki contend, performance art also worked against outmoded notions of embodiment and toward a unified perspective of bodily experience (2007). This growing value for embodied forms of knowing precipitated a rise in autobiographical performance work, influencing other fields that reflected the deep connection between the body and culture, including the emergence of autoethnography (Bochner and Ellis, 2016). Physical forms of representation are an ideal method of both communicating cultural influences and influencing culture in return (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007), and the body itself is able to demonstrate not just the knowledge gained through embodied practice but its sense of emplacement in culture and nature; as Ann Cooper Albright argues, the body can tell us a lot about its social value within a particular culture (Albright, 1997). Grosz similarly asserts that bodies are not simply inscribed by our social and cultural setting, but "are the products, the direct effects, of the very social constitution of nature itself" (1994: x). The body's representation in art, history, and social settings does not simply image the body; these factors create the body in specific forms.

The predominant body image represented in Western society is one of wholeness, which Jones argues is mythic as the body cannot be fully known through vision (1998). Bree Hadley identifies that the notion of the whole body is "always already structured by the sexist, racist and ableist framework that articulates, and affirms, the binaries between one and other, male and female, able and disabled, that subtend Western cultural logics" (2014: 40). She goes on to contend

> It is this aspiration to wholeness - and the disabled person's inability to achieve this wholeness they are taught to aspire to – that makes it difficult, both privately and publicly, for disabled people to accommodate the images by which Western culture defines bodies. (Hadley, 2014: 40)

Hadley's argument holds sway, even when applied to the developing self-image of those with invisible disabilities. When the invisibly disabled person compares her own body to the representation of the whole body, there is no Freudian sense of the uncanny to raise a red flag of mismatching visual identity; the discrepancy between the idealised and real bodies runs deeper however, to embodied experience, where a chasm of difference is apparent. My body passes as the whole, able, capable body of Western culture but does not perform in the predictable patterns and rhythms embedded in ableist society (Cosenza, 2014a; Charmaz, 1991; Lindemann, 2017; O'Brien 2014). Chronic illnesses as a group (a politically contentious task in terms of representation and inclusion in itself) challenge the able-ness implicit in the notion of the whole body. Grosz contends that representation of many bodies by one abstracted idea of the body is unrealistic, and calls instead for

> A plural, multiple field of possible body "types", no one of which functions as the delegate or representative of the others... which, in being recognized for their specificity, cannot take on the coercive role of singular norm or ideal for all the others. (Grosz, 1994: 22)

Using autobiographical and autoethnographic methods to express my personal embodied experience of invisible disability takes a step towards recognising this plurality of body types and embodied experiences. My body provides a point of contact between what is knowable only from within and what can be perceived from without, through the understanding that the body is subject of both cultural productions of the body and lived experience itself (Grosz, 1994).

Hadley (2014) discusses how the ontological idea of *being* disabled emerges from societies in which the person's lived experience is measured against the 'mythical norm', originally noted by Audre Lorde in 1984 (Lorde, 2017). This subjectivity gives rise to the notion that the disabled person is seen only as an antecedent, lacking or otherwise unable. Disability emerged as a social status in the UK and US during the mid-twentieth century, coinciding with a philosophical focus on the body and the introduction of 'welfare state' provisions such as the NHS, which began to view different bodily configurements in medical terms, rather than as oddities for spectacle as seen in the 'freakshows' of Victorian society (Hadley, 2014). The medical model of disability has focused on the visible, evidential aspects of bodily difference (Siebers, 2015), presenting disability variously as a traumatic situation to be handled privately (Hadley, 2014), a tragedy for its victim (Kuppers, 2004), a physical difference creating spectacle (Millett-Gallant, 2010), a role in which because the individual is sick they cannot participate in society (Quinlan and Bates, 2010) or a non-normativity to be overcome (Kuppers, 2001). However, there is a growing view that points to disability as a socially constructed category (Garland-Thomson, 2017; Hadley, 2014; Henderson and Ostrander, 2010; Lindemann, 2010; Lobel, 2013; Marsh and Burrows, 2017). Rosemary Garland-Thomson notes that a sociocultural perspective engenders disability as a politicized term, but goes beyond physical difference to an understanding of what it means to be human:

> What we think of as disability is the transformation of flesh as it encounters world, as our body's response to its environment. This call and response between flesh and world makes disability. The discrepancy between body and world, between that which is expected and that which is,

> produces disability as a way of being in an environment. So disability is certainly an index of capability in context but it is also a witness to our inherent receptivity to being shaped by the singular journey through the world that we call our life. Although our modern collective cultural consciousness denies vulnerability, contingency, and mortality, disability insists that our bodies are dynamic. We evolve into disability. Our bodies need care and assistance to live. Disability is the essential characteristic of being human. (Garland-Thomson 2017: 328)

Hadley points out that disabled performers must find a way to address the practices and prejudices in "the continuing cultural labour of defining and policing bodies", a task particularly fraught for the invisibly disabled performer, who must first make her condition recognised (2014: 35-36). Against the present climate of change in regards to the visibility, opportunity and scholarship of people with disabilities, I argue that those with invisible disabilities are taking a place as the 'new other', struggling to be recognised as disabled because of a condition which lacks the visibility that conventionally entails a disability.

The social construction of disability is a fragile model which is liable to crumble when considering embodied experiences such as acute illness, chronic illness or invisible disabilities that do not immediately present in the demonstrable manner that the term disability has for so long implied (Lindemann, 2010). As Brian Lobel suggests, awareness of these subjectivities is now prompting a re-examination of the category of disability, to envision instead a curve of human experience that all of us will move across at various times in our life. He reminds us

> The frightening truth is that eventually everyone makes it over to this side of the illness/wellness equation... As the world of medicine and wellness changes, so do our experiences of illness and all its accoutrements. As we add more diverse, truthful, and generous voices, it will become impossible for others to stereotype the experiences, abilities, opinions, and attitudes of a person with an illness. (Lobel, 2010: 159)

Disability theorists Bruce Henderson and Noam Ostrander agree that whether we consider ourselves disabled or able-bodied, each one of us has a relationship to disability whether through others, through ourselves or through a future for ourselves, as "we are all one step (or misstep) away from being (re)positioned in the world of disability" (2010: 1). This change in thinking about the social processes of identifying as disabled has led to the theory of disability as a performative act, which Henderson and Ostrander explain: 'If disability, like gender and like sexuality in Judith Butler's works, is always in the process of becoming, then disability is something we do rather than something we are' (1-2). They suggest that disability studies are already involved within performance studies as performance seeks to display and explore a range of human experience and bodily subjectivities. Disability, then, should be viewed not as a loss or lack, but as "a variety of ways of being in the world" (3).

The performance of disability by individuals with a range of embodied experiences can disrupt the notion of disability as a fixed and stable category (Lindemann, 2010). This process of performing lived experience and acknowledging belonging to an identity category as part of one's art (albeit a fluid, shifting or temporary category), has been described by Lobel as "locating oneself while creating" (2013: 121). He admits that this process is especially problematic when dealing with invisible disability if one has previously been passing as non-disabled,

either consciously or not, a situation my performance practice explores (Lobel, 2013). There is already conceptual cross-over between disability studies and queer theory (Cosenza, 2010; Henderson and Ostrander, 2010; McRuer, 2006), and I contend that invisible disabilities can be located at this intersection, carrying queer theories of otherness, performativity, and the requirement to out oneself to be recognised. My challenge then, is to communicate authentic knowledge, knowledge that is acquired through embodied being (Jones 2002), and present this experience as a multi-layered performance of 'body fact' in 'body act' (Henderson and Ostrander, 2010: 2).

An aspect of my performance relies on me making visible some of the embodied experiences of living with a chronic illness, in a form of outing (Bunzl, 1997; Fassett and Morella, 2008; McRuer, 2006). Matti Bunzl notes that in the gay and lesbian community, the same system which protected its members "by a silencing veil of the unspeakable" also contributed to their discrimination (Bunzl, 1997: 131). Invisible disabilities are similarly veiled, not by the unspeakable, but the un-seeable, perpetuating discrimination through a lack of visibility, leading to a lack of awareness and representation. If the invisibly disabled are invisible, they are also unknowable to each other, so the process of recognising themselves as a group and articulating their collective identity consciousness is difficult, although online forums such as The Mighty (2019) go some way to address this issue. Robert McRuer (2006) considers how visibility might affect coming out as 'crip', a theory which emerged alongside queer theory, both of which use pejorative terms in a fluid way, claimed by people from wider embodiments than the terms originally signified. He argues,

> Visibility and invisibility are not, after all, fixed attributes that somehow permanently attach to any identity... the relations of visibility in circulation around heterosexuality, ablebodiedness, homosexuality, and disability have shifted significantly. (McRuer, 2006: 2)

Although I acknowledge the truth of McRuer's statement, I use the term invisible to acknowledge that my disability does not make a permanent visible mark on my body. In the invisibly disabled body, the evidence that Bunzl identifies is a pre-requisite of coming out, is subjective, tacit and experiential (1997). The visibility of my condition is shifting, contingent with the fluctuations of my symptoms and the way they are embodied and displayed through my behaviour. Deanna Fassett and Dana Morella (2008) argue that it is in coming out to others, the "repetitious actions... or utterances" that we are marked by our condition and which "constitutes one's identity as disabled" (150). So, it is this *action* rather than inaction that creates the notion of being disabled. As Jones (2012) stresses, our sense of self is brought about through *identifying* not *identity*.

Cosenza also draws on queer theory in her performance and academic practice to out herself or "make visible" the work that she, as a queer dyslexic graduate student has to undertake to match other students' access, what she terms "invisible labor" (2014b: 1-2). She questions the assumption that disability is visible, or rather the assumption that that which cannot be seen does not exist, asserting that this affects the individual through issues of self-advocacy, a form of invisible labour itself. Invisible labour is likely to be different for each individual, as much of it derives from the awareness and management of sense data and the complicated "somatic work"

involved in making sense of it (Vannini, Waskul and Gottschalk, 2012: 19). For many, the work of monitoring and managing chronic illness is carried out privately, at home, where the environmental factors that exacerbate symptoms can be kept to a minimum, contributing to the invisibility of chronic conditions. Chronic illnesses, which manifest through time, also require a re-thinking of normal time constraints meaning that individuals may have to remove themselves from public spaces and "the hidden rhythms of privilege" - the time it takes to achieve day-to-day tasks according to expectations of normal functioning and activity levels (Cosenza, 2014a: 156). As studies have shown (Charmaz, 1991; Morris, 2008; O'Brien, 2014) this privileged time is not compatible with the "chronic time" of invisible disability; the experience of time enforced by rhythms in the management of chronic illness, such as timed administration of medication, the longer time taken to achieve basic activities, or for periods of rest (Morris, 2008: 411).

Kate Marsh and Johnathon Burrows' publication *Permission to Stare. Fresh Perspectives on Arts and Disability* (2017), a collection of open letters from members of the disability arts community together with Marsh and Burrows' editorial writings, explores the changing definitions of disability and the many ways that disabled artists navigate the complex terrain of performing their identity as disabled. They demonstrate that disability performance is becoming recognised in a much broader view and as "one of the creative opportunities of our time" (6) in which different experiences and perspectives produce uniquely insightful art works. A central intention of the publication is that "nobody has to declare their authenticity" (9) or prove themselves to belong to any particular identity category; an important step in recognising the struggle for legitimacy that many disabled individuals experience. As someone with a fluctuating condition, I have questioned whether I am disqualified from identifying as disabled when I am not symptomatic. This point is similarly addressed by dancers Welly O'Brien and Annie Hanauer who consider how the shifting visibility of their bodily differences prompts different reactions from their audiences and influences their categorisation as disabled dancers, and how this informs their self-perception. Hanauer considers herself a dancer but questions how her label as a disabled dancer may re-contextualise her within or outside of the disability arts sector, and O'Brien similarly questions whether her skill as a dancer resides in her disability; "Am I still valid if I am not making my disability explicit? How am I perceived then?" (quoted in Marsh and Burrows, 2017: 20). As O'Brien and Hanauer's letters attest, having a central part of your identity overlooked can be an uneasy experience, and call into question your own identification. While the body has traditionally been the site through which identity is conceived and presented, this can lead towards the conflating of body *as* identity, which is the basis for judgements based on sex, race and so on (Jones, 1998). This is not to say that my disability is who I am - ME is not me (although I have deliberately used the alternative name CFS in the past to avoid that lexical similarity) - but my embodied experiences do inform my subjectivity. My condition fluctuates up and down the spectrum of bodily experience; I am sometimes disabled and unable to walk more than a few paces, but even at these times I pass as 'able bodied' with no physical disfigurement. Like Hanauer, I identify as a dancer but I feel a sense of illegitimacy when even inclusive dance companies promote the concept of physical elitism through material that frames dancers' strength and endurance, supported by 'intensive' training

programmes, which remain the "imperative pathway" to success in a career as a physical performance artist (Hargreaves and Vertinski, 2007). Crossing the border into performance art has afforded me the "temporary emancipation" that Gómez-Peña describes, allowing for a focus on my physicality and embodied experience as the groundwork of my research, but without the insistence on metaphorically (or literally) jumping through hoops (2004: 78).

Other performances have explored fluctuating or invisible health conditions, such as Ecclesia Theatre and Maeve O'Neill's play *Hidden: A Love Story About Invisible Disability*, which imagined the effects of an undiagnosed invisible condition on a romantic relationship (2017). Solo autobiographical performances include Peggy Shaw's performance *Ruff* (2016), which reflected on her changing needs since having a stroke, or Helen Duff's *Vanity Bites Back* (2016), exploring her experiences with anorexia and mental health issues through comedy and clowning. Coventry University's *InVisible Difference* conference in November 2015 also provided a platform for academics and performers to examine embodied difference, including Charlotte CHW whose durational performance *Pushing It* tested the limits of her chronic health condition in a durational installation, and Alessandro Schiatterella and Annalisa Piccirillo's performance presentation *What a Body Can(not) Do?*, exploring questions of bodily accomplishment through Piccirillo's spoken words and Schiatterella's invisibly disabled performing body. While fluctuating health conditions such as ME "contest[s] the possibility of predictable performance" this can offer new insight in itself (Price and Shildrick, 1999: 436). In her contribution to Marsh and Burrows' publication (2017), Tanja Erhart shares her experiences as a performance practitioner, noting that while bad bouts of health impact on the work she creates because it affects how she views life day-to-day, art can thrive on learning curves like this. Erhart questions the perception that a sick body is unable to do or achieve things, arguing that our bodies should not be fixed into categories of what they are, but would better be viewed by what they can do at particular times. Will Bride corroborates, arguing that performance stemming from personal ability is both valid and valuable as artistic practice, and "doesn't at all mean complacency or concession" (quoted in Marsh and Burrows, 2017: 19). This consciousness informs my performance practice, as I create material through rhythms that emerge from my body's needs, and gestures and behaviour that reveal my embodied experiences.

Publications and performances by the scholars and artists I have discussed have paved the way for a view of disabilities that reconsiders the production of aesthetic merit by including more diverse representations of bodily difference (Jones, 2012). Tobin Siebers addresses (2015) this new concept of aesthetic value:

> Disability presents increasingly as the key figure in the production and appreciation of modern art, one that is synonymous with aesthetic value in itself. Not only is this evolution crucial because it embeds the perception of disability in some of the most creative and valued practices in human history but also because it throws open the door to the work of disabled artists, whose images of disabled people and themselves must now take their place alongside other treasured visions of beauty. (Siebers, 2015: 243)

Siebers' publication *Disability Aesthetics* (2010) is an explicit search for this new aesthetic value, although flawed by a preoccupation with visible forms of embodied difference. While he does not explicitly qualify what he includes or excludes in his use of the term 'disability', he focuses on visibility as a central theme, through descriptive phrases including "the *shapes* of the individual bodies accepted or rejected by the body politic" (60, my emphasis) and his examples of facial disfigurements, limb deformities and even Tourette's syndrome, conditions which present in visible ways. This recognises only a limited spectrum of embodied experience and excludes many subjectivities from the attribution of aesthetic value he pursues: I question whether my body is "objectionable" (61) enough for his new standard of aesthetic value or whether the invisibility of my condition would prevent my body from earning his attention. As Siebers goes on to elucidate, "disability aesthetics embraces beauty that seems by traditional standards to be broken, and yet it is not less beautiful, but more so, as a result" (2010: 3). If my 'brokenness' is not visible, I am once again in a liminal state, between the able-bodied, beautiful in their wholeness and perfection, and the disabled, beautiful because of their brokenness and difference. Invisible disabilities could therefore be described as existing at a vanishing point in this binary, a position of unseen presence, a theme I will return to in the second and third case studies (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Phelan, 1993; Schneider, 1997).

Figure 1. Judith Scott's *Construction* (Scott, date unknown)

Work such as mine begins to shed light on an unseen or invisible aesthetic merit wherein the value lies in the alterity of experience concealed beneath the visceral layers of the body much like the cocoon-like artworks of Outsider artist Judith Scott (figure 1). Her sculptures are created by wrapping objects in multiple layers of twine, rendering the original object invisible to anyone but herself, reflecting the interiority of the experience of disability. Scott's work, which has attracted attention from disability theorists (Sedgwick, 2003; Siebers, 2015), provides an example of the relationship of the subjective experience of the soma and the objective perception that others hold of the visceral body, a duality which is reconciled in each yarn-covered object. While efforts have been made to more fully understand Scott's intentions behind her artworks, with X-rays allowing a view through the layers and revealing the collections of items beneath, her process of selecting the items and transforming them into uniquely

layered and colourful objects is still not clear. My own artistic practice follows a similar vein as the audience sees my visible body in performance, which conceals the invisible experience of disability that is only clear from within and therefore to me as artist. The new invisibility aesthetic that I suggest asks the viewer to consider the experience of the artist as the fundamental message of the artwork, a rhetoric that engages the viewer in a complex interchange of acknowledging and understanding another's subjectivity.

1.5 Researching the production and reception of meaning

To perform my subjective experience of chronic illness I take an embodied and somatic approach, drawing on Fraleigh's contention (1987) that although other mediums communicate the body, body-based performing arts express the body's experience best through the essential liveness of its real, living, breathing presence, a fundamental point to live art practice (Heathfield, 2004; Johnson, 2013; Jones, 1998). I will examine somatic practice in greater detail in the methodology chapter but will now address how an embodied perspective assists in research into the production and reception of meaning in performance by reconciling subjective visceral knowledge with visual forms of knowing (Fraleigh, 2015; Garland Thomson, 2009; Welton, 2012).

Embodied practice is a broad methodological field including theories of perception, presence and engagement with the world (Low, 2003). While it encompasses varying techniques and practices, a psychosomatic perspective, assuming a symbiosis of mental and physical perceptions is common to all and is a prevailing methodological approach to both the generation of performance material and as a method of analysis (Brodie and Lobel, 2012; Fraleigh, 2015, 2018; Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999; Grosz, 1994; Leder, 1990; Ravn, 2009, 2010; Sheets-Johnstone, 1966; Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes, 2013; Zinder, 2009). My research applies this unified perspective of consciousness through physicality to examine how my embodied experiences may impact perception of my gestural body, and therefore influence how meaning and physicality are interpreted. To approach this research into the production and reception of meaning through the body, I set out some key critical questions:

> How does the gestural body function as an effective site for communication through space and time?
>
> How does the displacement of the embodied space influence perception of what is performed?
>
> To what extent do changes in space and time influence perception of stylised gestures in performance?

In my research, I use the term gestural body to encompass the body as a physical and mental entity, taking gesture as an action performed to express or convey an idea, meaning, or intention, (Soanes and Stevenson, 2006). I use gesture as a dimension of language that reveals thought, going beyond its often unconscious use in everyday communication to the conscious, whole-body movement of performance (McNeill, 2005). As an expressive act, gesture predicates a relationship between the gestural body (the performer) and another subject (the audience),

to which it offers this gesture, so I address both my intention of expression as performer, and my perception of doing so, as well as the perception of this gesture by the audience. A gesture is an example of a semiotic act, a concept communicated through a symbolic action whether meaning is intentional or interpreted (Elam, 1980). David McNeill argues however, "It is profoundly an error to think of gesture as a code or 'body language' separate from spoken language" (2005: 4), but is in fact one aspect of a single, integrated mind-body system. Bruce McConachie (2008) agrees that while performances may carry semiotically loaded scenes or gestures, the spectator does not consciously decode this framework to make links between signifier and signified in order to understand the action. He points to the mirror neurons that enable the spectator to interpret emotion and empathise on an immediate and inscrutable level, leaving them with a feeling or understanding of the situation through their experience, rather than a network of significance from which to analyse and extrapolate meaning. Martin Welton describes this interpretation as an "energetic charge" (2012: 99), which occurs in the spectator as a sensuous understanding of what the movement might feel like, arguing that this embodied interpretation connects the performer and spectator so that seeing *becomes* a matter of feeling.

Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008) identifies that when performers concentrate their efforts on aspects such as embodiment, sensuality and materiality, the spectator becomes "the creator of new meaning" (2008: 139). In her theory of meaning-making, Fischer-Lichte uses the term autopoiesis, a term originally used in biology denoting the self-producing systems of living organisms, to describe the ongoing feedback loop between audience and performer in the performance event. Although as embodied individuals we are constantly interpreting and contributing to the autopoietic system of everyday interaction, performance creates scenarios which heighten awareness of this process. This feedback loop in performance is similar to a reflexive methodology:

> As a self-organizing system, as opposed to an autonomously created work of art, it continually receives and integrates into that system newly emerging, unplanned, and unpredictable elements from both sides of the loop. (Carlson, quoted in Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 8)

Fischer-Lichte goes on to argue that while contemporary performance scholars agree that meaning is created between performers and spectators rather than sitting solely in the quarter of one or the other, the focus has become examining the ways this production of meaning occurs and how it consequently changes the feedback loop, impacting the creation of performance (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). I take this approach in my research, using the case studies to gather data from myself and the audience about the factors that impact how perception of the body, which contributes to my ongoing reflexive research.

Scholars in the fields of spectatorship including Susan Bennett (1997), Maaike Bleeker (2008) and Gareth White (2013) identify that visual performance carries meaning through spectators' perceptions. It is also understood that an individual carries their personal history of meanings, associations and significations from experience in their particular social, cultural and historical setting, into their interpretation of performance; what Bennett describes as a 'horizon of expectations' (1997). Fischer-Lichte however, acknowledges that certain performances create

conditions which assist in producing a 'blank canvas' of association, disconnecting meanings from wider contexts and "liberating the emotional potential that any theatrical element might carry for a given perceiver" (2008: 152). In my performance practice I consider how the framing of my body through elements such as staging, lighting, sound, clothing and the speech acts that signify the parameters of the performance may contribute to associations beyond my body's gestures and physicality. As Bleeker contends, postdramatic theatre can effectively deconstruct ways of seeing from within an awareness of how the performance situation is presented. It is contrived, orchestrated and engineered to hold particular signs and significance for the spectator and it is by examining these aspects of theatricality that we can better understand the process of meaning-making (2008). Bennett (1997) contends that it is through the spectator's understanding of his/her own relation to both the inner frame of the performance, containing the particular performance event with its ideological coding and production strategies, and the outer frame, comprised of the concept of theatre as cultural construct and the audience's definitions and expectations of performance, that meaning-making occurs. Through these two frames and at their points of intersection, the spectator finds awareness of their own position in relation to both sets of action, and therefore able to interpret the performance as an individual. As Bennett articulates,

> It is the interactive relations between audience and stage, spectator and spectator which constitute production and reception, and which cause the inner and outer frames to converge for the creation of a particular experience. (Bennett, 1997: 139)

Fundamental to the framing of my body for performance is awareness of how movement contributes to the interpretation of meaning. Gesture is a transitory and malleable symbol, occurring through time and space, meaning that changes to elements of time such as speed and repetition, and elements of space such as size and proximity are influential in how gestures are perceived (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007). Performance practitioners have used different approaches to manipulate the performance of gesture to explore how meaning is created and interpreted, such as dancer Pina Bausch who used repeated actions to create impact through time (Hurstfield, 2014) or performance artist Marina Abramović for whom repetition is a central theme to analyse artistic endurance (*AAA AAA*, 1977; *Breathing in Breathing Out*, 1978; *Rhythm 10*, 1973).

Repetition of an action may also impact how the performer's movements displace the space that she occupies. Rudolf Laban's kinesphere (figure 2) demonstrates this concept through imagery of the space encompassed by the outstretched limbs of the body in all directions, a model of particular interest to my perception of embodied space owing to the unusual neurological and muscular sensations symptomatic of ME. A distinguishing feature of this chronic illness is intense fatigue, which I perceive as a retreat of the flow of energy that follows the path of the central nervous system in my body. I describe this process in more detail in *Untitled*, using the kinesphere to develop a model to analyse my phenomenological perception of ME. At times when I feel fatigued, my ability to hold my body upright, move my limbs and walk normally is compromised, meaning that I am no longer capable of occupying my normal kinesphere. The new image of the kinesphere would show a much smaller space that I would have the potential to inhabit, governed by the extent that my current state of fatigue would allow my arms or legs

to move in and reflecting a concept of bodily dys-appearance as expressed by Leder (1990), which I explore in greater depth in the methodology and case study chapters. This fluctuating sense of potential movement space would undoubtedly influence the way I perform a gesture, and there would be visible changes to the space encompassed by the motion of the gesture, the time taken to perform it and the duration I could perform it for. These changes are dependent on my perception of a physical condition that is invisible to the audience, but the effects of which may become perceptible through gesture.

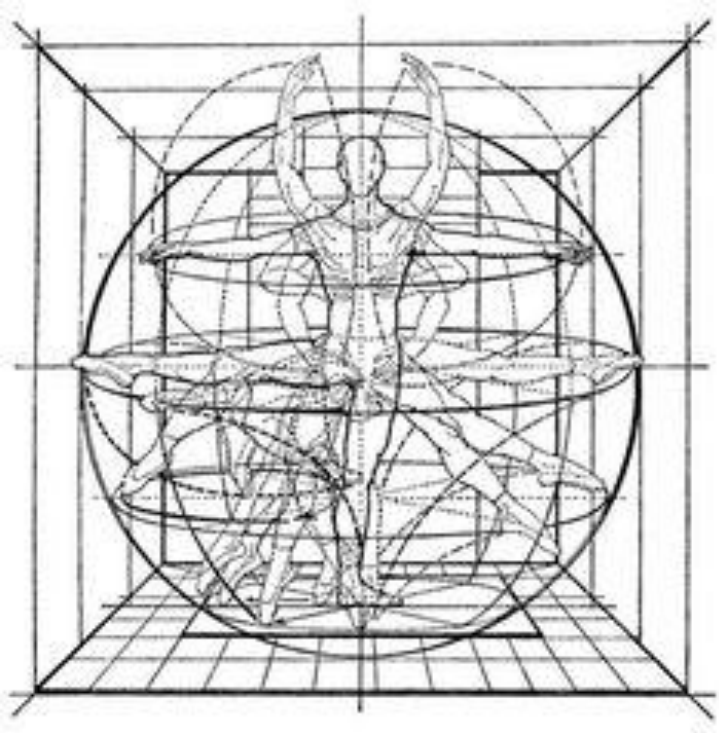


Figure 2. Rudolf Laban's kinesphere (The kinesphere)

Exploring elements of space, speed and repetition introduces concepts of duration and endurance into the research, which in the case of chronic illness is complicated by the body's experience of being regulated through time, with symptoms of illness something which is already endured (Charmaz, 1991; Garland-Thomson, 2014; Morris, 2008; O'Brien, 2014). While connotatively similar, duration designates a period of time during which something continues, whereas endurance carries the additional meaning of suffering through something prolonged or painful with patience (O'Brien, 2014; Soanes and Stevenson, 2006). As I have articulated, the invisible labour suggested by Cosenza (2010, 2014b) that people with disabilities carry out goes unnoticed by those party to the hidden rhythms of privilege. My research investigates how this may impact the understanding of durational performance for those whose perception of time and ability to endure conventional time frames is governed, not by their own will, but by the regulations of their condition (Morris, 2008). Duration or endurance may take on new meaning, existing in new parameters, affected by the somatic work of experiencing and enduring illness which is subsequently framed for performance (O'Brien, 2014; Vannini, Waskul and Gottschalk, 2012). As Lobel identifies,

for people experiencing illness "the lens through which they view the world (and through which the world often views them) changes irreparably" (2010: 158). The performance may request a view of time that disrupts normative assumptions of temporality to reflect the performer's experience of chronicity, or open up new views of temporality through which the witnesses to the event find their own understandings and resonances within the duration of the performance (Heathfield, 2004).

Framing alternative modes of endurance in performance art may draw spectators' attention to their habitual ways of seeing, imaging and imagining disability, a disruption to social or theatrical norms "intervening in the cultural construction of disability" (Hadley, 2014: 15). However, communicating subjective, sense-led experience through a visual medium to those with alternative experiences has inherent challenges as neither inner perception nor cultural understanding of perception follows linguistic conventions. As Howes attests

> The senses are constructed and lived differently in different periods and societies, and this fact has profound implications for how cultural subjects apprehend their environment, as well as other persons and things in their environment. (Howes, 2005: 399)

Leder (1990) contends that the difficulty in describing inner sensations could be attributed to the limited dimensional range of our interoception, which has a qualitative simplicity and a correlative lack of descriptive vocabulary to communicate its experience. The current cultural era of occularcentrism (Classen, 1993, 2005; Garland-Thomson, 2009; Howes, 2005) and my own history in visually-based performing arts has perhaps biased me toward a visual medium in the communication of a subjective and visceral experience, a central challenge of my research which has led me toward embodied, sensorial practice, offering the possibility of intersubjective understanding (Fraleigh, 1987; Grosz, 1994; Jones, 2004; Ravn, 2010).

Performing as a disabled artist addresses prevailing discourses around the gaze as I create scenarios in which I offer my body for view. Forms of looking, gazing and staring have prompted enquiry from many perspectives, often seen as a form of domination across boundaries of race, gender and physical difference (Diamond, 1997; Garland-Thomson, 2009; Grosz, 1994; Millett-Gallant, 2010; Schneider, 1997; Welton, 2012). Welton asserts that the widely accepted view of the gaze, which he argues "has been held responsible for a host of critical and cultural crimes – from male hegemony to the very tenets of Western thought itself" (2012: 162), has somehow situated seeing as outside the body, creating an unhelpful disconnection from its embodiment. Elizabeth Grosz however, argues that the spectator is implicated in the act of looking through a phenomenological perspective: "Seeing entails having a body that is itself capable of being seen, that is visible" (1994: 101). Garland-Thomson, who examines staring as a form of knowing, similarly contends that looking can "promote[s] attentive identification between viewer and viewed" (2006: 189), arguing that staring is far from one-sided but an embodied and relational exchange (Garland-Thomson, 2005b). In my performance practice, I present my lived experience as an object of spectacle to engender greater reflection from the spectator. As Garland-Thomson contends,

> staring marks the body of the staree and enacts a dynamic visual exchange between a spectator and a spectacle. A certain symmetry inheres in the staring encounter in that it grants a preemptive agency to the starer but it also endows the staree with the ability to seize the attention and to hold in thrall the starer. (Garland-Thomson 2006: 175)

This sense of agency also allows me to examine my self-perception because as Garland-Thomson suggests, being viewed in this way reveals who we imagine ourselves to be (2000). If the visibly disabled performer's body brings about staring from the viewer through 'arrested attentiveness' (Garland-Thomson, 2000), I would argue that the invisibly disabled performer's body requests a different kind of attentiveness, persistent attentiveness, where the viewer must search beyond what is immediately seeable to what might be perceived through the performer's gesture and physicality:

> Staring is a conduit to knowledge. Stares are urgent efforts to make the unknown known, to render legible something that at first glance seems incomprehensible. In this way, staring becomes a starer's quest to know and a staree's opportunity to be known. (Garland-Thomson, 2009: 15)

As I have previously discussed, presenting my invisibly disabled body as a spectacle in performance requires that I out myself as disabled, a conscious othering which carries political implications about the marginalised position that invisibly disabled people occupy in society. Helena Grehan, drawing on Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of the responsibility of the self to the other, believes that performance offers "an alternative space of resistance, of calm, or even of radical unsettlement within which spectators may hear the call of the other", prompting an active engagement and an ethical response (Grehan, 2009: 20). Grehan suggests that if a performance has successfully engaged them, spectators will be left in a state of ongoing reflection and 'ambivalence', a term which she describes as "about acknowledging the complex, often contradictory and multilayered questions and responses political performances can trigger for spectators" (Grehan, (2009: 25). Solo performance can provide a platform for an individual to claim territory that may have been unexplored (Heddon, 2008) and for those with disabilities, public identification as disabled to the non-disabled majority is a subtle part of the social navigation as a disabled person (Lobel, 2013). Lobel posits,

> There seems to be something about 'awareness' – its porous nature, its indeterminateness – which seems well suited to performance, as an exploration of bodies in space in front of an audience... performance work which reflects upon certain lived experience... demonstrates an openness for both the performer and the many audiences that the work produces. (Lobel, 2013: 128).

Comedienne and presenter Francesca Martinez draws on her experiences with cerebral palsy and reflects on her choices of self-representation and others' perception of her in her performance *What the **** is Normal?* (2018), also a book. In this one-woman performance, Martinez's unique brand of ironic humour and fearless honesty questioned concepts of physical normality and perceptions of disability, proving Mat Fraser's argument that disabled artists are increasingly "intervening in society's preconceptions of disability" (quoted in Hadley, 2014;

182). He argues that when a disability is visible there are prevailing strategies about how to deal with the situation of recognition through pre-existing 'scripts' for interaction. Although Martinez's disability manifests in a visible way, her acceptance of her disability offered the audience a new script of interaction in which she encouraged recognition of her physical difference as part of her lived experience, rather than something to be deliberately overlooked. From my own and my friends' experience of the performance, it is clear that Martinez's performance generated the ethical ambivalence that Grehan proposes, keeping spectators "engaged with the other, with the work, and with responsibility and therefore in an ethical process, long after they have left the performance" (Grehan, 2009: 22).

With invisibility as an issue, perceptions of disability are additionally complex as there is often no script to follow because the situation is not recognised as one of disability interaction. While Peggy Phelan contends that in our current age of post-modernism and technology we have "a more general sense of connection to one another" (Phelan, quoted in Grehan, 2008: 172), my task with this research is to make clear the additional challenges to this connection when invisibly disabled individuals' otherness is occluded by the invisibility of their condition. This entails an exploration of the ways in which I might make transparent my experience of otherness in performance through the gestural body, including the experience of outing myself as other, with the emotional and psychological challenges of voluntarily marking myself as different to the norm and belonging to a community to which I may not appear to belong (Cosenza, 2010, 2014b; Fassett and Morella, 2008; Lindeman, 2010; Quinlan and Bates, 2010). For the spectators of my performance, the scripts of interaction will be challenged as I investigate perceptions of my invisible disability to explore how the binary identity categories of disabled and able bodied are attributed. As Jones (2012) identifies

> we must continue to acknowledge the ways in which bodies are identified and positioned in the world (including our own), while refusing to allow our assumptions about identity to congeal into fixed binaries. In order to promote this politics, it is - I will insist - essential first and foremost to keep the durational aspects of how we identify in the foreground. (Jones, 2012: 6)

Jones's move away from binary models of identification toward "multiple, intersectional, and relational processes" (6) is paramount to this research as I explore the liminalities that influence perceptions of the invisibly disabled body in performance. However, as Jones points out, we have to be considerate of resistance to concepts which nevertheless endure in the language we use to describe them - in critiquing binaries, we are forced to rely on words that perpetuate the binary concept, themes which emerge in my own research through concepts of able-bodied/disabled and visible/invisible. By using my invisibly disabled body to investigate factors that influence perceptions of physicality and meaning in performance, I suggest that embodied experience exists on a spectrum rather than a binary. Through an exploration of the fluctuating influence of chronic illness on my body/self, and how repeated acts of self advocacy and outing construct my body/self through time, I present identity as an ongoing and durational process.

Chapter 2: Methodological Approaches

2.1 Methodological overview

The research into perceptions of physicality and meaning through the invisibly disabled body has been practice-based, predicated on my subjective position as researcher-practitioner, which has provided an immediate and authentic way of gathering data (Barrett and Bolt, 2007). In this chapter, I describe how the flexibility of qualitative research has allowed me to draw on interdisciplinary methods including autobiography and autoethnography (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Heddon, 2008), and point to the links between subjective research methods and phenomenology (Kozel, 2007; Fraleigh, 1987, 2018; Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999; Ravn, 2009; Roche, 2015). I provide an account of how an embodied approach has offered a way to explore sensory and somatic forms of knowing and to bring this into the visual realm as a way to communicate the subjective experience of the invisibly disabled body (Banes and Lepecki, 2005; Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Howes, 2005; Siebers, 2015; Vannini, Waskul and Gottschalk, 2012). I explain how my personal experience with chronic illness has influenced this embodied approach, including how the dys-appearing body (Leder, 1990) and the experience of chronic time precipitate somatic awareness (Morris, 2008; Charmaz, 1991). Working from the needs and fluctuations of a chronically ill body impacts the methods of creating movement material (Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999; Marsh and Burrows, 2017) and I describe how I have brought unconscious motions into intentionality and used psychophysical techniques to generate impact through repeated actions for both performer and audience (Fraleigh, 2015; Welton, 2012; Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes, 2013; Zinder, 2009).

In my subjective research, I have developed reflexive strategies through which I analyse and inform the ongoing enquiry (Brownlie, 2014; Burkitt, 2012; Schön, 1983), and I detail how using a journal has assisted in this reflexivity, building my confidence in my voice as a researcher and providing a view of my research journey (Cunningham and Carmichael, 2018; Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011; Roche, 2015). I discuss how the various methods of documentation, including through journaling, digital recordings and taking photographs of myself has drawn my awareness to how I embody my research (Bochner and Ellis, 2016), allowing me to reflect on my identity as researcher emerging through time (Freeman, 2010; Kozel, 2013; Jones, 2012).

Finally, I provide an account of the research design, with three case studies providing opportunities for data collection, merging theory with practice (Hann, 2015). I consider how my chronic illness has influenced the research design, such as the research setting (Bennett, 1997; McConachie, 2008), but suggest that as gatekeeper, my invisibly disabled body has the potential to open new avenues of knowledge (Marsh and Burrows, 2017; Siebers, 2015). I go on to describe how I have gathered data from personal experiences through somatic engagement (Grosz, 1994; Leder, 1990; Ravn, 2010), and from the audiences of the workshop performances

through questionnaires, group discussions and recordings, and lastly, give an account of my methods of data analysis.

2.2 Practice-based research, phenomenology, and autobiographical and autoethnographic approaches

The research that I undertake has been practice-based, which as a qualitative research method can be described as "multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach" that "crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matter" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 1-2). Practice-based research has allowed me to draw on interdisciplinary approaches that are relevant to the research through my own position of subjectivity (Heddon, 2008), which has incorporated autobiographical and autoethnographic approaches through the focus on personal experience as influenced by a wider social and cultural context. Since its inception in the late 1980s, practice-based research has been the preferred method of enquiry for theatre and performance studies owing to the interweaving of conceptual dualisms, including artistic and theoretical, creative and cognitive, and practical and written, elements that my approach incorporates (Barrett and Bolt, 2007; Freeman, 2010; Nelson, 2013). Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson identify that the relationship between the researcher and the research subject in this creative field is similarly intermingled:

> intuitive messiness and aesthetic ambiguity are integral to researching theatre and performance, where relationships between the researcher and the researched are often fluid, improvised and responsive. (Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011: 2)

My central position in the research means that I have been affected by my discoveries as researcher as much as the inquiry has been influenced by my position as creator (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011). Heddon (2008) argues that as the self is the starting point from which to view the world and of all creative or theoretical production, such subjectivity is widely in accepted in research. Furthermore, Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt argue that this position of immersion generates a deeper epistemological understanding through the combination of practical exploration and reflective theory than could be gained through traditional, academically driven research alone (2007). The cycle of practice and enquiry has the capacity to build the practitioner-researcher's skills and experience in a heuristic process of discovery, gathering data across a broader spectrum than single-mode research (Nelson, 2013). Through immersion in the field, I have equipped myself for the journey of enquiry, learning from each stage of practice to reveal the next portion of the map to new knowledge.

The researcher's position of influence and subjectivity in practice-based performance research means that there is necessarily a focus on individual and subjective perspectives, leading many performance practitioners and researchers to explore its links with phenomenology (Banes and Lepecki, 2007; Kozel, 2007; Fraleigh, 1987, 2018;

Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999; Ravn, 2009; Roche, 2015). Fraleigh (2018) argues that phenomenology's sense of feeling lends it to the performing arts as a method of 'doing' research, because phenomenology is essentially performed - it cannot be fully explained through language. For performance practitioner and phenomenologist Susan Kozel, phenomenology links unhelpful divides including theory/practice, subject/object, mind/body, and solitary/shared experiences, contending that phenomenology offers a way to reconcile the experiences of the individual with others, so that one person's experience may open out meaning or resonances for others (2007, 2013). Her statements support the phenomenological perspective in my autobiographical research, offering a way to bridge the gap between my experience as performer and the audience's as witnesses. For Jones also, "Phenomenology interprets and produces the self as embodied, performative and intersubjective", meaning that the body/self is both subject and object, in the same way that a work of art is produced through both the artist's production and the spectator's reception of the work in ongoing reciprocity (1998: 39). Although methodologically my research is not purely phenomenological, the focus on my personal experiences and perceptions in autobiographical practice, and my use of theories of the body as a site of intersubjectivity has necessitated a phenomenological perspective. Phenomenology is present in both the enquiry into perceptions of the invisibly disabled body and the process of research, as my self-perception and the self-awareness involved in the invisible labour of managing and maintaining my chronic health needs has been a necessary influence on the evolving research journey.

As a qualitative project, my research includes themes of data-centred emergent theory and an understanding of the researcher's flexible and heuristic position, which have allowed me to draw on varied relevant methods and pursue avenues based on intuition; strategies which are consistent with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). The work does not follow this methodology however, but merely holds similarities of approach. My position as researcher-as-subject means that less data was gathered through interaction with other research subjects than through personal experience, and as Kathy Charmaz identifies, grounded theories are "products of emergent processes that occur through interaction" (2014: 320). Her statement argues for objectivity from the research matter or research participants, and it is my subjectivity that offers new knowledge into the perception of invisible disabilities. Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) note the need for constant questioning of the basis of key topics, which, together with the early episodes of analytic categorisation, data analysis and theory construction that grounded theory necessitates, would have been incompatible with the intuitive and fluid personal journey I had embarked upon, and distracted from the emerging thread of experience-based data.

It could be argued that autobiography, autoethnography and grounded theory each explore the interaction between self and community through their respective research approaches. Although most obviously centred on the subjective perspective, Ann Cooper Albright contends that autobiographical performance engenders community through the body's position in "the complex negotiations between somatic experience and cultural representation – between the body and identity" (1997: xiv). Like practice-based and other qualitative research

methods, autobiography has sometimes been considered too experiential and personal to hold value, but it is this literal self-centredness that offers potential for engagement between the performer and the audience. As Albright asserts, "Although it is self-referential, autobiography nonetheless assumes an audience, engaging in a reciprocal dialogue in which a story about my life helps you to think about your life" (1997: 119). Deirdre Heddon (2008) also draws attention to the centrality of the self in autobiography, warning that the connections between "self and identity, identity and representation and representation and politics need to be carefully navigated" (4). She notes that this method often attracts marginalised subjects, growing out of second wave feminist studies and other discourses of marginalised identities in the 1960s-1970s and although it allows for the possibility of failures - to fail to communicate effectively, or to present essentialist notions of the self that continue to constrain the subjects it seeks to represent - it also holds great potentiality for change through the connections between micro and macro politics. For many it has been a means of telling stories of "otherwise invisible lives" (Heddon, 2008: 3) and while taking centre stage does not automatically mean visibility for the issues broached, the theatre's unique temporality engages with the present moment to connect personal stories to contemporary issues of equality and human rights. Performer Saša Asentić describes how performance work driven from personal experience creates a wider political discourse:

> The social choreography we imagine and realise in our artistic work, rehearses a society that abolishes marginalization processes or reduces them to a minimum - a society that doesn't use just one parameter to measure everything, and that doesn't apply the same norms to all people but rather starts instead from the specificities of concrete people, opening the possibility of a social community. (Asentić, quoted in Marsh and Burrows, 2017: 23-24)

Garland-Thomson contends that because disability is an identity status constructed through time and in relation to the social experience, autobiographical performance work necessarily carries a wider implication of an autoethnographic study due to its social context. She states,

> disability performance art is a genre of autobiography particularly appropriate to representing the social experience of disability precisely because it allows for creating both visual and narrative self-representations simultaneously and because it traffics in the two realms of representation fundamental to the social construction of disability identity. (Garland-Thomson, 2000: 335)

Autoethnography seeks to describe personal experience as a method of understanding cultural experience and treats research as "a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011: 1). Emerging through a need to move away from the supposedly 'value-free' research of the sciences that overlooked the significance of personal narrative and experience, autoethnography takes a "self-consciously value-centered" approach allowing for accounts to be heard from people and subjects that may have previously fallen outside the realms of conventional research matter (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011: 2). Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis (2016) describe autoethnography as serving the needs of a culture at a particular time, making it appropriate for my research at a time when understanding and representation of disabilities is increasing, but invisible disabilities

continue to evade awareness. They describe the researcher's inward gaze that exposes the vulnerable self, encourages creative and performative ways of documenting and expressing personal experience, and develops reflexive methodologies. My work demonstrates autoethnographic processes in the examination of how my lived experience and identity has been constituted through the cultures I am part of, including how dance and performance culture has influenced my understanding and expectations of physicality, while my identity as a disabled performer has been affected by the invisibility of my condition. It is also seen in my intention to situate my personal experience within a wider political frame of awareness and representation of invisible disabilities, and in my approach to embodied practice that stems from subjective experience but assumes an intersubjective perspective in performance.

For performance ethnographer Joni Jones (2002), the embodied subjectivity of autoethnography offers a unique form of authentic knowledge:

> Performance offers a new authenticity, based on body knowledge, on what audiences and performers share together, on what they mutually construct. As a form of cultural exchange, performance ethnography encourages everyone present to feel themselves as both familiar and strange, to see the truths and the gaps in their cross cultural embodiments. In this exchange, we find an authenticity that is intuitive, body-centered, and richly ambivalent. (Jones, 2002: 14)

Embodied practice is a vital thread throughout my research, and one which scholars are increasingly turning to for its potential to produce research that resonates between individuals and communities. For scholarship such as mine into the experience and perception of physicality, embodied and sensory practice can enrich research, crossing disciplinary borders and moving beyond the limitations that language and discourse-based epistemologies and ontologies can set up (Vannini, Waskul and Gottschalk, 2012). Phillip Vannini, Dennis Waskul and Simon Gottschalk argue that sense-led research in ethnography engenders greater reflexivity and brings about a "multitude of perceptions" (2012: 14), a theme also explored by Bochner and Ellis who describe the "multiple layers of consciousness" that autoethnographic research produces (2016: 65). This multiplicity of consciousness is similarly displayed in autobiographical performance through the self-reference that layers past and present selves in the current moment of performance. While drawn from real-life experiences, autobiographical material blurs the lines between the performer's real life and the fiction of the performance through a process of editing and revision that is an inevitable part of narratives of the self (Renza, 1977). Louis Renza defines autobiography as "neither fictive nor nonfictive, not even a mixture of the two. We might view it instead as a unique, self-defining mode of self-referential expression" (1977: 22). This notion of self-reference is fundamental to my research, as I have negotiated the performance of changing versions of myself brought about by a fluctuating disability, reflected in both my autobiographical practice and the reflexive strategies that I have engaged in to document my research. As I will discuss in the following section on reflexivity, documenting my practical research in a journal and through digital recordings has enabled me to view and reflect on historicised versions of myself, with each journal entry or recording capturing an iteration of myself from the past. In autobiographical performance, this retrospective view

of the historical self engenders identity as an ongoing reflexive process, "a backward glance that enacts a future vision", which Jones draws upon in her queer feminist durationality (Esteban Muñoz, quoted in Jones, 2012: 6). In this way, the layering of multiple versions of the self creates a palimpsestic performance which demonstrates that the body or self, as Grosz asserts is "not an organic totality which is capable of the wholesale expression of subjectivity", but exists instead through its connections, links and overlapping areas of influence (1994: 120).

Albright (1997) addresses how autobiographical practice necessitates performing the history of one's body, and that in this act the body "splits itself to enact its own representation and yet simultaneously heals its own fissure in that enactment" (125). The concept of representation inevitably raises issues of authenticity, a complicated area for the performance of self in autobiography. Phrases like performance persona, often used to reflect the heightened or dramatic characteristics of an individual presenting themselves rather than a character in a performance event challenges the notion of the 'real' self. Jones (2012) considers issues of representation and authenticity in her queer feminist durationality, which demonstrates that identity is formed through an ongoing process of *identifying*, that is, through the repeated acts in which the individual engages in the performance of self. She states

> Representation does not secure the meaning of the subject. Nor is it secondary to the 'authentic' identity of the body... Rather, representation is the very way through which we take on our various identifications – both here and now... and in every moment in the future... The body always already carries with it every past encounter. (Jones, 2012: 211)

In Jones' theory, the idea of an authentic self gives way to an ongoing process of authenticity in which representation is a method of identification. Fellow feminist scholar Elaine Diamond (1997) also analyses representation and imitation in her theory of mimesis, which she takes to define "both the activity of representing and the result of it – both a doing and a thing done" (v). It is perhaps not so surprising that Diamond's lexical choices in her description of mimesis as unravelling through "improvisations, embodied rhythm, powerful instantiations of subjectivity" reflects the very passage to performance that has characterised my own embodied practice-research (ibid). In representing the previous iterations of myself in performance I have captured some of the indeterminateness of mimesis that Diamond describes by calling up the psychophysical experiences of my previous self, which means that I experienced them once again - I re-membered them, taking the past experience as part of my present self. This self-representation at once enforces the representative quality of my performance, while highlighting that there is no true or authentic self at any point, either past or present, reflecting Diamond's description of mimesis that "by its own operations, [it] loses its conceptual footing" (ibid). For Fischer-Lichte (2008) similarly to Grosz, bodily acts are "non-referential" because the body or self is not a pre-existing condition; the body "engender[s] identity through these very acts" (27). As Jones articulates, any iteration of self is part of one enduring self. It is in the ongoing becoming of self, of cycling through many iterations of self that lead from one to the next in an enduring palimpsest of meaning-making and self-production that any sense of a true or authentic self might be arrived at. The autobiographical thread of my practice-based research explores this concept through

an examination of how the fluctuations of a chronic condition inevitably influence the body's physicality and therefore produce the identity of the invisibly disabled body in different ways through time.

2.3 Embodied Practice

2.3.1 The visual and the sensory

In the West, visuality is often privileged above other forms of sensory perception (Classen, 1993), but scholars are increasingly turning away from the pervasive influence of visual signifiers such as semiotics in what has been termed a "sensual revolution" (Howes, 2005: 1). Constance Classen argues that visual privilege can cause academic writing to seem "disembodied" (2012; xi), preventing academics from establishing a personal grasp on their research projects (2005). With these points in mind, I have immersed myself in researching the perception of my invisibly disabled body, which, affected by a chronic condition that manifests in visceral sensations, must first be perceived somatically before it may be communicated visually. As Vannini, Waskul and Gottschalk argue, research such as this

> depends on the researcher's embodied presence in the field, and thus his/her ability to experiment with modes of representation that evoke sensuality, rather than just treat the senses as objects of analytical scrutiny. (Vannini, Waskul and Gottschalk, 2012: 14)

Their view is corroborated by Stephen Di Benedetto who contends that this approach can "broaden our understanding of the capabilities and possibilities of nonverbal expression in the performing arts" (in Banes and Lepecki, 2007: 125). Cultural contexts which place vision above tactility in a hierarchy of senses (Classen, 2012; Howes, 2005) have led to the association of vision with understanding (Leder, 1990), an over-dependence on visual cues which influences beliefs about bodies and produces dominating discourses such as the male gaze, the pathologising gaze, or the colonising gaze through a search for visual difference (Jones, 2012). In this social model, staring 'materialises' the other; "The male gaze produces female subjects; the normative stare constructs the disabled" (Sandahl and Auslander, 2005: 32). So it follows that in a culture in which disabilities are presented as 'stareable' physical differences (Garland-Thomson, 2009), chronic conditions go unrecognised as disabilities due to their lack of visibility - if vision is associated with understanding, then when vision offers no evidence of physical disability, there is a correlative lack of understanding of embodied difference. A turn toward sensory forms of knowing offers a path to communicating the unique knowledge "secreted by the disabled body" through forms of "complex embodiment" (Siebers, 2015: 244). This embodied sense memory can offer a useful go-between when we are confined by language to internal and external phenomena as it merges our inner selves with the sense-making work of the outer world (Howes, 2005). It may therefore be seen as "a site of unsuspected critical and performative power" that can reveal individual histories through the performer's intimate and profound knowledge of her body's history, which she constructs in transitory and metamorphosing psychophysical detail

(Banes and Lepecki, 2007: 2). By shifting the hierarchy of the senses in performance, we can begin to address the politics of awareness around certain bodies that have previously been imperceptible (Banes and Lepecki, 2007). In my research, sense led work merges the supposed opposition of inner and outer perception through embodied approaches that translate somatic perceptions of the invisibly disabled body to the visuality of gesture in performance (Fischer-Lichte, 2008).

In the classical and commercialised genres of performing arts that I previously trained in, interior sensory perception was shunned in favour of the visual, repressing the performer's personal insight, perception and feeling in favour of the visual pleasure of the spectator (Gordon, 1983; Gray and Kunkell, 2001). The move towards somatic practice has been a challenging one for me as the physical culture I was part of carried bodily and psychological values and ideals that I subscribed to as I engaged in the social construction of the ideal dancing body through patterns of behaviour and reward (Hargreaves and Vertinski, 2007). Among these values was an objective view of the body, what Roanna Mitchells terms 'body as servant' (2014) in which performers view their body as a property to be used and improved for their art (Gray and Kunkell, 2001; Mazo, 1974; Mitchells, 2014; Pickard, 2015). This creates a bodily aesthetic in which fitness is equated with goodness in an "imperative pathway" leading to success (Hargreaves and Vertinski, 2007: 6). Although these ideas of dualism and objectivity are in vast contrast to the unified, psychosomatic perspective that I have adopted in this research, the influence of the didactic classical pedagogy that dominated my performance training can be seen in my early resistance to generating movement material not driven by a particular stylistic technique, and in my attempt to reconcile my value of movement that held visually aesthetic qualities familiar to me, with performance practice that grew from authentic experience. As somatic practitioner Dymphna Callery argues, the disassociation of performers' physical and mental faculties can hinder creative abilities (2001), but more importantly overlooks the value of movement derived from inner forms of knowing that reflect personal experience, the core intention of somatic practice (Fraleigh, 2015; Ravn, 2010).

2.3.2 Somatic awareness and the dys-appearing body

Sharing theoretical values with phenomenology, somatic practice offers a way of reflecting more deeply on the experience of physicality by focusing on the subjective experience of the body, or soma, from within (Hanna, 1986). Fraleigh uses the word soma to incorporate the entire physical, mental and spiritual beings that we are, merging the consciousness of one's body, the consciousness of that self as other to others, and the body as human nature in our lived experience (Fraleigh, 2015). In my research, somatic awareness has offered a way to access the invisible body in performance practice, and is actively brought about through the experience of chronic illness, as I will explain. Leder (1990) theorises that the body recedes and appears in our attention depending on its state of

ability or dysfunction, persuasively arguing that the disappearance of the healthy or "taken-for-granted" body is a normal part of embodied experience that allows us to perceive phenomena outside of the self (131). He explains,

> the body tends to disappear when functioning unproblematically, it often seizes our attention most strongly at times of dysfunction; we then experience the body as the very *absence* of a desired or ordinary state, and as a force that *stands opposed to the self*. (Leder, 1990: 4, my emphasis)

He terms these times of dysfunction 'dys-appearance' denoting the awareness of the body through a dysfunctional state, such as pain or illness, calling attention to the fact that while the sensation is clearly one's own, its cause seems to come from without. Leder acknowledges that his theories support dualist notions, although he makes clear that he does not personally subscribe to them, a tenuous track that I also tread. While I do not agree that the mind and body are separate with either privileged or dominant over the other, my research and personal experience evidences situations in which thinking in dualistic terms is not just natural, but a path toward greater somatic awareness, as I will demonstrate.

Leder describes disability coming about through physical inability; "One's visceral functions continually and necessarily elude direct control. One is simply *un-able*. In disease, one is actively *dis-abled*" (1990: 81). David Morris (2008) similarly examines chronic illness as producing disability through the body being out of control, developing the concept of chronic time; the constraints and needs exerted by the chronically ill body to maintain a basic level of health. Kathy Charmaz, who also examines the time constraints that chronic illness exerts and how this influences the sense of self, argues that this new experience can seem like an "altered reality" (1991: 5) in which intrusive illness "demands continued attention, allotted time, and forced accommodation" (42). The sense of being constrained or controlled by one's bodily experience as expressed by Leder, Morris and Charmaz brings about a notion of duality, which performer and cystic fibrosis sufferer, Jahinger Saleh, expresses:

> I am my body, which means that I am inextricably bound to something that has a life of its own. Yet these processes are lived-through by me. They are felt in the midst of my worldly engagements. (Saleh, 2010: 15)

Saleh's statement exemplifies how dualism occurs through the experience of the body dys-appearing, encroaching on the individual's awareness through its dysfunction. In chronic illness, this dys-appearance can be a constant, near-constant or fluctuating presence, in which the individual's perception is repeatedly pulled inward to embodied, visceral experience. Leder argues that the dys-appearing body that intrudes on an individual's desires and daily life can seem like a foreign will, yet it is through the experience of the intrusiveness of chronic illness, the duality brought about by the body's frequent re-presencing to perception, that those with chronic illnesses have a heightened somatic awareness. He describes how the dysfunction to the body's previous spatiotemporality "correlates with a heightened thematization of the body" creating "meticulous attention" and "self-preoccupation", which is brought into increased awareness through the body's "episodic temporality of rally and relapse" (1990: 81). Charmaz too, contends that in this way, illness "forces self-consciousness" (Charmaz, 1990:

43). My own experience of chronic illness and bodily dys-appearance lead me to argue that embodied experience in chronic illness moves through phases of dualism and unity. The chronically ill performer experiences her physical symptoms, which are outside her control, creating a feeling of subjugation by the body, but by submitting to the needs of chronic illness, the individual unifies the self and the dys-appearing body through somatic experience. As endurance performer Jill Hocking explains: "I am taking control of my body by learning to live inside it" (quoted in O'Brien, 2014: 61).

For me, this has meant some changes in my expectations of performance from my previous classical ideals to accommodate my fluctuating needs. Although I engage somatically in the somatic work of monitoring and managing my health (Vannini, Waskul and Gottschalk, 2012), the challenge for me has been linking that somatic awareness with my performance practice in the studio, a place where I am drawn back to my previous assumptions that generating movement material should come from an objective view of the body. Performer Will Bride's reminder of the value of somatically driven practice is appropriate in overcoming this challenge.

> Dance practice as both a job and an art form feels best when you work from the energy level, needs, technical capacity, training, personal and cultural history, aesthetic preference, points of reference, etc., that are wholly, faithfully your own. This doesn't at all mean complacency or concession. It means that good work can be done when it emerges from a conscious understanding of and engagement with where you are as a human making dance. (Bride, quoted in Marsh and Burrows, 2017: 19)

Somatic practice offers a method of creating material that stems from personal experience in a different form of aesthetic value than my previous ideals held. Banes and Lepecki (2007) note that "all aesthetics are bound to distinct cultural mappings that define an energetics and a potential for the performing body" (5). While I may have long considered aesthetic value as arising from physical qualities of strength, stamina, and Western notions of beauty, Fraleigh asserts "Aesthetics is founded in our senses, realized through our living body in its wholeness, actualized in our words, our works, and daily life" (quoted in Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999: 190). She considers the purpose of dance to rediscover the nature of our human bodies, and reflects on Mary Wigman's suggestion that good dance is "satisfied in being what it is, not overtaxing itself for effect and risking falsity" (quoted in Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999: 200). Beginning practice with improvisation, I followed my intuition, exploring movements and gestures based in my somatic awareness, choosing to follow or reject instincts in a heuristic process that generates expertise, recognition and self-sympathy (Melrose, 2015). The tendency to follow set patterns of movement that are inscribed in the body as learned behaviour is a habit that can be difficult to undo, and I have had to learn to reject familiar movement styles and act on impulse (Callery, 2001). Fraleigh draws links between these early improvisations and phenomenology, advocating this as a method to clear previously held understanding about movement to see what emerges without assumptions of what should emerge, contending that this will "yield another level of knowledge" (1987: xvii). She describes this form of movement practice as "intrinsic dance" (quoted in Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999: 14); dance which arises from and for the self and which I describe in more detail in the first case study chapter.

Similar to Leder's disappearing body, where the healthy body recedes from attention, Fraleigh (2015) notes that automatic or taken-for-granted movements become unconscious and habitual, yet in the chronically ill body, even these ordinary motions such as standing, walking or dressing can require attention moment-to-moment. My research examines what might emerge from practice that recognises the intentionality of movements ordinarily considered automatic or habitual, brought into consciousness through the dys-appearing body. Psychophysical acting techniques that draw the performer's consciousness to the process of perception assist in the development of gesture generated through authentic experience (Zarrilli, 1997; Zarrilli, 2004; Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes, 2013). I have applied David Zinder's (2009) psychophysical *plastiques* ('exercises') to explore a gesture as fully as possible, repeating the motion to explore phrasing and movement quality in a manner similar to the performances by Pina Bausch in which cyclical gestures generate a physical and emotional effect for the performer (Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes, 2013). This response is attributed to the James-Lange theory of psychology, which proposes that rather than an emotional response being followed by a particular action, an action can elicit an emotional response (ibid). Phillip Zarrilli, Jerri Daboo and Rebecca Loukes describe how witnessing the act affords a different sense of impact as the spectator uses their own physical perspective to imagine the experience of the performer:

> Its power comes not from the psychological development of characters... but through what has been described as a 'theatre of experience' – emotional involvement not with the characters but with problems presented. (Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes, 2013: 211)

Welton also refers to Bausch's work as an example of repetition evoking a "feeling tone" for the spectator, describing a performance by Ruth Amarante in *Rite of Spring* (2008) in which her character is overcome by exhaustion, her struggling body contrasting with the previously inexhaustible capacity it seemed to have and now tries to sustain (2012: 19). In such acts, the spectator is gripped by the potentiality of the experience of suffering, drawing their attention to their own physical presence and participation in the act of the performance as witness. The 'theatre of experience' that Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes refer to and Welton's 'feeling tone' of performance hold particular significance for my performance practice as a method of communicating my somatic perception to the audience. Employing a process of repetition, I performed a gesture which deteriorated through time reflecting the oncoming fatigue that prevents me from using my body to its fullest extent, as I have previously decribed in the diminishing capacity of my kinesphere. This process examines both the emotional response of the James-Lange theory, with my performance bringing about a psychophysical response, and references the concepts surrounding representation and authenticity in autobiographical practice (Diamond, 1997; Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Grosz, 1994; Jones, 2012). Performing a repeated gesture through time becomes an act of self-production, in which there is no one true self in either my represention or the present self that performs it, but my identity is produced through the ongoing palimpsestic process of identifying in this act of endurance.

2.4 Reflexivity in the research process

Autobiographical practice demands a critical view of that which is taken for granted or assumed (Heddon, 2008), so reflexivity has been a vital factor to drive the enquiry forwards through ongoing self-analysis that reflects on and informs my practice (Brownlie, 2014; Burkitt, 2012; Schön, 1983). I have used "a working interpretive document" as part of this reflexive process, which Denzin and Lincoln argue assists the researcher to make sense of her learning, not just by recording findings but constructing them through revisions in light of new discoveries (1994: 15). In this way, the methods of practice research improve with *practise*. This need to respond and make decisions moment-to-moment is a valuable source of professional knowledge that generates expertise through "heuristically-derived responses" (Cameron, 2009: 125). As a practitioner-researcher, following my intuition and responding to unplanned scenarios has informed my methodological approach, as making and reflecting on creative decisions brings about discoveries that leads to new approaches (Melrose, 2015).

When I began this PhD, I was aware that the journey of performance practice that I embarked on carried a parallel strand of documentation, which would merge with and influence my ongoing practice (Jones and Heathfield, 2012). The rehearsed technique of journaling from other times in my life offered one method of documenting and reflecting on the research, giving me a sense of continuity and providing an anchoring point from which to explore new methods of practice (appendix 1). I find that writing by hand moderates and slows my thought, and the indelible flow of handwriting necessitates ordered and linear thought; a "free-writing" approach which generates meta-thinking (Cunningham and Carmichael, 2018: 57). Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) recommend writing as a therapeutic process that can make sense of personal experience, engender agency and strengthen the researcher's voice, an argument shared by Nathalie Cunningham and Teresa Carmichael (2018). Cunningham and Carmichael additionally suggest that keeping a personal log of insights helps the researcher to engage reflexively, and trust their intuition, strategies which in turn, draw the researcher's awareness to her world view and developing identity (58). My journal has been a companion to my solitary research journey, as I have written plans for my research and recorded my experiences of my practice, gaining awareness of my emerging voice as a researcher. I have also used my journal to record my thoughts about the digital recordings of my practical sessions, which allow me to identify my shifting perceptions of my practice, from the intentions and expectations I have in the studio to the technologised gaze the digital camera offers after the event (Heathfield, 2004). The journal and the digital recordings form an ongoing and reflexive phenomenological document, which has informed my research, being fed back into my practice, building a picture of self-knowledge in the research journey (Kozel, 2007).

An example of this is seen in a journal entry in which I felt disappointed that my experience of exploring space in the studio did not translate to what I saw in the digital recording (appendix 1, journal pages 5-9). I had described circles and arcs with my arms and legs in repeated patterns, enjoying the feeling of breadth, power and energy the movement wrought in my body but when watching the recording, I commented "just make everything *more*. Bigger, straighter, further, wider" (appendix 1, journal page 7). I felt that I was failing as a performer and that I should work harder and increase my strength to achieve a movement that was more astonishing to watch, hoping

that as I progressed I would be less impeded by physical limitations. Even as I wrote, I could see that I was cleaving to the values instilled in me from previous dance training:

> I've set up this idea of how the body could move, perhaps in an ideal way, thinking of the body as an abstract concept as Collette Conroy suggests (2010), which will always leave the real, specific body, my body, falling short of my expectations. So how should I continue, right now, in this session? Change my expectations to meet my body's current capabilities, or work until I achieve a body closer to this abstract ideal body? The latter is not an option (as far as I'd like) and doesn't provide much in the way of research or documentation about my condition. (20/10/15)

These notes reveal how the reflective process of journaling, digitally recording my practice, and journaling my subsequent impressions of the recording, have shaped and informed my ongoing research enquiry. As Kozel argues, developing reflective practices offers new material as you progress, providing insights and new questions in a growing process of devising (2013). In the journal excerpt above, articulating my ideas as I experienced them in the moment and then watching the recording brought my awareness to the fact that if I wanted to allow the wisdom of my body to be heard, it was doing just that, but not in the way I expected. This moment of discovery closed the gap between my past and present selves and drew my attention to the enduring self that moves through these shifting perceptions in a process of ongoing emergence (Jones, 2012). Jones offers an example of how a performance document, such as a painting, photographic portrait or recording bears a trace of the experience or memory of the artist, which opens up the possibility of affect as the viewer identifies similarly through embodied experience when viewing it. Although she assumes the artist and viewer are different individuals, her explanation of how the viewer becomes an active participant through queer feminist durationality resonates with the reflexive process that I am describing. She argues that in the work of art

> we see the trace, we *remember* our own experiences of bodily movement, and the signs of creative action having taken place thus evoke new thoughts, memories, *interpretations*. Our bodies, our memories, attach to those we perceive, imagine, interpret as implicit in (as expressed by) the forms and appearance of the work. (Jones, 2012: 194, original emphasis)

In this description it is apparent that the recordings I make of my work carry traces of memory and feeling that endure through time to when I reflect on them. In viewing the recordings, the past experiences become one with the present, so I am engaged in an enduring, abiding subjectivity.

Personal reflexive documents can inform ongoing performance practice in a number of ways. In Sally Doughty's performance *Hourglass: The Archive as Muse* (2015), she unrolled a scroll of drawings, written reflections and annotations on the process of her performance practice from underneath her skirt, in an *homage* to Carolee Schneeman's performance *Interior Scroll* (1975), presenting it as an artefact to depict how her performance had evolved. Jennifer Roche (2015) uses practice journals in her research into the creative process of choreography, incorporating excerpts into her published text to reveal her personal, emotional experience through a voice that is free from academic conventions. I take a similar approach, including journal entries in my case study chapters, the

voice of my past self in the process of research evidencing my ongoing reflexivity and learning journey. These entries reflect my thinking at the time of writing, so earlier examples show the values instilled in me from previous performance training, but as the journal progresses, my focus or word choice reflects my evolving thinking. John Freeman (2010) compares the ongoing process of practice-research to the Italian term for the layering of different paintings on one canvas – *pentimento*. He posits that performance based research shows earlier versions within the viewed product, much as older paintings begin to show through the newer layers of paint as they become transparent with age. In my research, this layering of past selves is seen in the journal entries, providing snapshots of my thinking at various times in the research journey, and the digital recordings, showing my focus of practical research at a given time. My body however, acts as an embodied site for this information, an archive displaying the palimpsestic self in which the lived experience of past selves is layered (Krische, 2015; Kendall, 2015).

It would be impossible to separate the written and recorded documentation of my research from the embodied knowledge that practice as research has afforded me, as each has informed and evolved with the other. Writing is in itself an embodied aspect of the research process which Bochner and Ellis argue is most valuable as an integral part of the inquiry (2016). John Freeman acknowledges a growing trend in practice-based research submissions in which practical and written components are not discrete but operate as mutually explanatory partners, a trend which my own PhD submission reflects through its live performances, their digital documentation, the thesis itself and the research journal. Freeman argues that this change in submissions points to the epistemological power of praxis and contends that practice research "is as concerned with the processes of discovery and articulation as it is with what is being discovered and articulated" (Freeman, 2010: 6). Performer Monica Mayer also comments on the imbrication of documentation with performance practice:

> I have always thought it paradoxical that half the time I produce ephemeral art, and the rest of the time I document it in as many ways as possible. For me, as for most performance artists I know, keeping a record of our work... has always been important because apart from registering our process, we realize it is raw material for history and theory. (Mayer, 2012: 105)

In consideration of the points made by Freeman and Mayer, I began to digitally record and reflect on my time engaged in literature research and writing at my desk, in the same way I did my practical sessions. I took photos of myself on my Smartphone when I was researching through reading or writing, which occupies a significant proportion of my time and energy, particularly considering the effort that this intense mental work takes with ME (appendix 2). Documenting this written work through self-portraiture took on a sense of performativity, prompting me to view the series of photos less as an adjunct to the performance practice but as a form of performance in its own right (Cheng, 2012). By documenting the same journey as the recordings of my practical sessions, these working selfies further interweave the theoretical and practical elements of my research, and focus on my physicality while I engage in what I had not previously considered a practical pursuit, but is another embodied aspect of the research process. Covering a period of more than four years, the series offers glimpses of my lived experience of this research that would not otherwise have come to light.

2.5 Research design

2.5.1 Case studies

I separated data collection into a series of practical case studies based around workshop performances that provided opportunities for me to gather data from my experience of performing as well as the audience's responses. Each case study formed part of the ongoing exploration of, and response to, concepts such as the body, embodiment, gesture, space and time. Immersion in the case studies ensured that my learning was through practical experience, but I used writing, such as through journaling, to direct those explorations, and strengthen my praxis (Hann, 2015). The subsequent data collection and analysis after a workshop performance was a vital process in my understanding and consolidation of knowledge, informing the subsequent cycle of practical research and ensuring that the outcomes of my practice continue beyond the live event (Auslander, 2008; Phelan, 1993). The workshop performances were not intended as definitive products, so should be viewed in the context of a wider framework of research, each taking a position in my ongoing and cyclical learning journey.

I approached each case study through a process of provisional theory-building, following instincts based on the emerging wisdom of my body and response to previous data gathered (Barrett and Bolt, 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Hartley, 1995; Heddon, 2008; Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011; Melrose, 2015). Grotowski (1968) argues that the performance practitioner's search for self-knowledge structures her creative approach and forms an unending cycle, in which the artist explores personal ideas and continually works to find new ways of presenting them. The ongoing dialogic process with my own understanding of the concepts and theories I explored means that there was overlap in the critical research questions addressed by each case study. Continued reflexivity, however, enabled me to draw on experience and follow leads set by findings from previous case studies to enrich the themes of the specific and wider research areas, informing and influencing my design and approach to the next case study (Cameron, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Kozel, 2013). The case study chapters provide a detailed account of the focus of each workshop performance and describe my practical approach to explorations of the research themes. They also present and analyse data gathered, from which I drew conclusions to inform my ongoing research. Taken as a group, the three case study chapters illustrate the links between the workshop performances, building a picture of my ongoing reflexive learning.

2.5.2 The body as gatekeeper

While in ethnographic or sociological research 'gatekeepers' to knowledge may control literal access to sites where research is to take place, in the context of my research, chronic illness assumes a constant presence as gatekeeper to both the methods of research and the data collection itself. Living with an invisible disability has necessarily had

an impact on my world view, influencing decision-making by dictating the level of physical, mental or emotional activity my body can achieve and considering possible after-effects of related stimuli. My invisibly disabled body requires careful monitoring and management, so learning to work around my needs or adjust expectations, both my own and those held by others, is a necessary step in pursuing goals with this ongoing influence. Despite my history with ME, there are still times when I have to purposely re-adjust my approach to allow for factors I have overlooked by making assumptions about an 'accepted' way of doing things, or what constitutes achieving a goal. Marsh and Burrows (2017) re-evaluate the model of gatekeeping from the traditional view of admittance to a core way of thinking, suggesting that leaving the doors open to see what might come in has the potential to broaden research and engagement, particularly in relation to disabilities. They refer to the positive and inclusive practice of Portuguese company *Dançando com a Diferença*, which prioritises the artists' needs and accommodations in its integrated performances. Although there have been times that my body has dictated my approach to research, it has been important for me to consider it less as a gatekeeper but a passport to the discovery of new knowledge about work that stems from my needs and embodied experience as an invisibly disabled performer. Siebers (2015) encapsulates the value of knowledge generated through different forms of embodiment.

> The power of disability generates new forms of embodied and imaginary difference, supporting complex embodiment as a critical methodology, one that defeats the aesthetics of human disqualification and formulates a knowledge base to which disabled people may contribute and from which they may draw, as they go about the difficult task of determining how they might identify each other and themselves. (Siebers, 2015: 245)

The perceived fixity of disability as part of the binary of able or disabled bodies (Kuppers, 2001, 2004) can lead to the 'disqualification' that Siebers describes, creating entrenched beliefs about what a disabled body can do (Hadley, 2014; Marsh and Burrows, 2017; Schiatterella and Piccirillo, 2015). Erhart describes how she challenges this view, working with choreographers to explore the movement potentialities that the varying levels of embodied difference of her disability brings, being honest and unapologetic about her choices of when and how she engages with her different aids, decisions based on her physical and emotional levels that day and in relation to the specific task. She explains,

> Embodied differences are not only an extension of my physicality, but an addition to my possibilities of expression. They each bring different qualities into the space, becoming movement resources and skill gaining opportunities. (Erhart, quoted in Marsh and Burrows, 2017: 22).

The challenge then, is in perceiving the unique abilities of the disabled performer and the needs, effort or physical ability associated with their condition on a spectrum of embodied ability, rather than a binary, and remembering that each of these differences offers new possibilities for practice.

At the outset of the research, I assumed that I would be able to engage in classes and training programmes to learn from specialist practitioners, but the implications of this type of learning were greater than I had allowed for.

These intentions (and subsequent cancellations) included a residential course in psychophysical acting, studying under Zarrilli in Wales; a residential course in habitual movement patterns with Sandra Reeve in Dorset; a clowning workshop in Plymouth, and improvisation sessions at Siobhan Davies Studios, London. Travelling some miles to reach relevant classes, after which my mental and physical levels would be compromised affecting my engagement in the class, together with recovery time, which could be some days, to deal with the inevitable after-effects of the entire activity, made these ventures unrealistic. Much of the accommodation my disability requires is alteration to the anticipated time frame of my work or goals, and while in my schooling this has been more easily quantifiable through extended deadlines or rest breaks, in a professional context and especially in the performance industry, it is much harder to describe and request the changes to time scales needed. Charmaz (1991) identifies that illness intrusiveness creates an important criterion for evaluating success, including the amount of time taken to complete a task. The experience of chronicity comes with lessons that the yardsticks previously used to measure and judge ability no longer apply to the new chronically ill body but pose "arduous or impossible standards" (Charmaz, 1991: 21). These yardsticks are also set out through the hidden rhythms of privilege noted by Cosenza (2014a) in which expectations of the time taken to complete a given task are measured by the majority who do not have the additional labour of managing illness to contend with. Decision-making was sometimes complex as I considered whether I was able to work through periods of ill health, adjusting my expectations and methods of research accordingly, and when I should allow myself time without the research as a mental presence. While there were occasions when I recognised that continuing to work would put me at risk of entering a downward trajectory into symptoms of ME and associated mental ill-health, I did not want to completely avoid periods of less-than-ideal health because these experiences are central to the investigation. Conscious decision-making to incorporate my wellbeing influenced the research setting and the timescale of performance workshops, choices which became part of my wider reflexive strategy, ensuring that work progressed while incorporating real-life factors of invisible disability.

2.5.3 Research setting

The choice of setting for data collection was influenced by my personal circumstances (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011), partly made through my assumption that practical explorations should take place in a studio based on my previous experience of movement practice in dedicated performance spaces such as studios and theatres. Places of performance hold personal, historical and embodied memories that are influential in our knowledge of the space, so these past experiences meant that I could feel a sense of ownership and investment in the space, an important consideration in making me, as research subject, feel comfortable to explore personal and emotional experiences through methods of practice that were outside of my habitual patterns of working and in the presence of an audience (McConachie, 2008). It was also an accessible location for me in terms of travel and access and, because I could book the studio for my private use, I could mitigate factors that could have a negative impact on

my health, such as light and noise levels and the presence of other people. Additionally, the choice of the studio as a rehearsal or training room within an educational establishment carried an implication of a work in progress, which fitted with my view of the workshop performances as part of the ongoing research, rather than as finished performance products (Bennett, 1997).

The localisation of the research setting influenced data gathered from the audiences, which were comprised of undergraduate students and staff from the university, fellow researchers and family members. The emotional impact of sharing personal experience of disability and using my body as a method of analysis meant that advertising my performance beyond the confines of this demographic carried too much of an emotional risk for me. As Carolee Schneeman articulates (in Johnson, 2013), the conceptual planning and production of live art often entails a need for isolation that is contrasted with the social exposure of the performance itself, an issue that was reflected in the private management of my condition, which was then made public in the workshop performances. I had come to view the university setting and composition of the audience by people with an academic interest as a 'safe' group to share my experiences with because of my shared background with them, and their understanding of research as a process of exploration. Hadley similarly acknowledges the advantages of working within university or other institutional settings for disabled artists, which provide an environment to work on politically driven work that could go overlooked in other performance venues, which, together with the concentration of academics, contributes to a "less hostile" working environment (Hadley, 2014: 20). Although the data gathered from audience responses was minimal, the driving force of the research was my own perceptions and experience of the workshop performances.

2.5.4 Gathering data from personal reflection and audience responses

Data collection was an ongoing process that occurred not just through the workshop performances of the case studies, but through the practice research that went into each one, and the wider focus on my perception of my invisibly disabled body. The fluctuations of my condition, whether directly related to the research methods or in the daily somatic awareness through which I monitor and manage my condition, contributed to data gathering. This was necessarily personal and subjective, because as Grosz argues, the knowledge of the body is understood only through its embodiment: "I am not able to stand back from the body and its experiences to reflect on them; this withdrawal is unable to grasp my body-as-it-is-lived-by-me. I have access to knowledge of my body only by living in it" (1994: 86). This subjective method of research offers my embodied experience as a specific example of disabled identity beyond the faceless concept of disability that a focus on bodies, rather than embodied experiences, creates and which "prevent[s] us understanding the material realities of human beings who have disabilities" (Hadley, 2014: 7). For Hargreaves and Vertinski, embodied experiences such as mine, shared through

autobiographical narratives offer “One of the most graphic ways of understanding about bodily identities” and therefore act as empirical data (2007: 8).

The chronic time of my illness meant that I lived and experienced my evolving understanding of physicality and embodiment each and every day through the research period, whether it was purposely intended as data gathering or not. Symptoms of ME could interrupt a period of practical exploration or literature-based research, but by adjusting my expectations of the methods of gathering personal data, my experiences during these times continued to provide insight to the perceptions of physicality and meaning through the invisibly disabled body. I used somatic approaches to focus on sensory perceptions and Leder’s conception of the dys-appearance of the body as an ongoing source of enquiry, allowing dysfunction to call my attention to previously unaccounted for aspects of embodied experience. Taking a sensory view of these periods of diminished capacity allowed me to gather a picture of how the symptoms of ME affect the way I use my body in space through smaller motions and gestures, and in time through slower movements that take longer to complete. These outward signs of my somatic experience affect the way other people gather meaning from my physicality, so experiences gained through a symptomatic period provided further data to be drawn upon when I returned to practical research, used as preliminary theories to test in the workshop performances. As I have identified, I used my journal to record data gathered through personal experience, and at these time of low health it provided an alternative mode of ‘doing’ practice (Stancliffe, 2015), and a method to explore ways of articulating sensory experiences (Vannini, Waskul, and Gottschalk, 2012).

Ravn (2010) argues that phenomenological or somatic approaches like mine, which follow an understanding of the body as the anchoring point for embodied experience, means that sensation is always understood within and through a wider understanding of the term ‘world’; subjective sensation, therefore, forms part of a shared process. Jones (1994) also argues that subjective perception opens into intersubjectivity, as the individual’s perception of self is brought about through an understanding of their ability to be taken as other, which “entails a reciprocity and contingency for the subject(s) in the world” (41). She discusses how a focus on the self, “inexorably leads to an exploration of and implication in the other: the self turns itself inside out, as it were, projecting its internal structures of identification and desire outward.” (46) It has been important in this thesis to make my personal experiences a focus, in order to have some authentic knowledge of invisible disability on which to build because, as Hadley articulates, ‘For those with a real, material stake in the matter... the disabled body is a personal, political and ethical issue, not just for themselves, but for their spectators and society at large’ (Hadley, 2014: 7). Heddon (2008) contributes to the notion of intersubjectivity expressed by Ravn and Jones, arguing that autobiographical performances that involve collaborative elements through audience feedback, constitute the self as plural as the collective of performer and audience work together to impact how the autobiographical, single ‘self’ is represented (9). In each workshop performance, I have used the presence of an audience to gather data about their perceptions of my physicality and the way they formulate meaning to build a picture of how the gestural

body functions as a site for communication. To record this data, I used questionnaires to direct audience members' attention to particular aspects I was investigating, and informal group discussions which can promote confidence and allow participants to be more expansive through conversation (Morgan, 1996). Heddon notes that the post-show discussion was taken as an integral part of performance by many feminist autobiographical performers during the 1970s, in an effort to close the gap between life and art. These discussions were intended as consciousness-raising activities for the audience by demonstrating the links between the performers' real identities and the representations of themselves in performance, but also between the performers and audience members as a collective. I intended my post-show discussions to operate as 'productively live spaces', taking art out of the fictional world of performance and into social settings, placing emphasis on spectators' reactions to intervene in the representation and construction of disability (Hadley, 2014). I took an informal approach to these discussions to set participants at ease, beginning with generalised, open questions such as, "What were your experiences?" or "Is it what you were expecting?" This prompted discussion without being leading and suggested to the participants that I was not looking for certain answers. As the discussion progressed, I had to be responsive to the group's changing dynamics, recognising when participants were comfortable enough to share experiences without my input or when I needed to move the conversation towards an aspect that I was addressing (Morgan, 1996).

Grehan (2009) acknowledges that making a study of spectatorship can be difficult due to the subtle, complex and transitory reactions of audience members, meaning that only broad assumptions can be made about their reactions. I filmed each workshop to record the performance, the audience responses and the subsequent group discussion, a useful strategy to analyse aspects such as audience movement and choices in proximity that I had not focused on while I was performing. Having a recording of the group discussions meant that I could accurately record participants' more in-depth responses from the informality of the group discussion, sometimes matching filmed, verbal responses to an anonymous questionnaire. Hadley identifies however, that while documentation may capture themes of response such as embarrassment, it cannot account for how individual reactions are arrived at (Hadley, 2014). "Textured responses" such as these increase the detail of the data gathered but are difficult to evaluate as they require interpretation from the researcher (Grehan, 2009: 5). Hadley argues that open enquiries such as those I posed in my case studies can frame the audience as potential sources of understanding and respect for the performer, meaning that my interpretation of their responses may have been influenced by my desire for recognition and acceptance (2014). The researcher's influential position in qualitative research can mean that the research enquiry becomes "partially self-validating" as the researcher takes part in interpreting and constructing data in an ongoing process of learning and sense-making (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 13). However, self-led research such as mine does not necessarily need to achieve an objective standpoint outside of the researcher's influence as it is this autobiographical process of research and discovery that is both the subject and method of enquiry (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011).

2.5.5 Data analysis

As I have previously indicated, I gathered data from my own perceptions of the physicality of my invisibly disabled body, both day-to-day and in performance. Albright suggests that in autobiographical research in which personal experience contributes to knowledge production, "The dialectic between who one is, what one lived through, and how one makes sense of all that, creates a particularly complex interweaving of identity, experience, and representation" (1997: 10). This sense-making process formed part of the cycle of reflexive analysis that informed my identity as researcher and researcher-subject, and shaped the ongoing research design. For data gathered from the audience I took a qualitative approach using the questionnaire responses and transcripts of the group discussions to analyse audience members' perceptions and see whether any themes emerged, in an approach that can be compared with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Gray and Kunkel, 2001). While I was guided by the audience responses, I recognise that my beliefs and intentions will have influenced data analysis to some degree (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), but qualitative research is interpretive and "accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on the research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011: 2). I engaged in analysis in what Denzin and Lincoln describe as a flexible, emergent and ongoing process that is "done through the process of writing, itself an interpretive, personal and political act" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 479). This was simplest when addressing yes/no responses from the audience to assess general opinions, but for more complex questions that invited personal response, I used the written records to note words and phrases that carried meaning in relation to the research questions I was addressing. I then looked for similarities between these words and phrases to group them into topics (appendices 6 and 9). In this way, I found that responses to a performance often focused on broad themes that the majority of audience members reflected upon, similar to Gray and Kunkel's method of fitting participant responses into pre-determined meaning units (2001), but allowed for patterns and similarities to emerge from the data. The audience responses were intended as a way of setting my personal perceptions of the invisibly disabled body in a social context, and creating scenarios that would frame my body as the object of a staring encounter to include theories of looking and spectatorship in my research (Garland-Thomson, 2009). Audience size varied between the three case studies, from just three people in the initial workshop performance, to over 20 respondents for the second case study. Although I acknowledge that small audience sizes mean a subsequent limitation of responses, qualitative research is an arena in which personal responses and perceptions bring richness and viability even in smaller quantities of data (Hargreaves and Vertinski, 2007; Sparkes and Smith, 2007). Bochner and Ellis point to the value of autoethnography lying in the interpretation of findings, and how these are incorporated into the research, contending, "an autoethnographic text directs attention to meanings rather than facts, readings rather than observations, and interpretations rather than findings" (Bochner and Ellis, 2016: 239). Furthermore, the data

gathered from the audience was not intended as the focus of research, but only part of the investigation in which my own perceptions and experiences were foremost.

Chapter 3: Case Study 1 - *Untitled*

3.1 Introduction

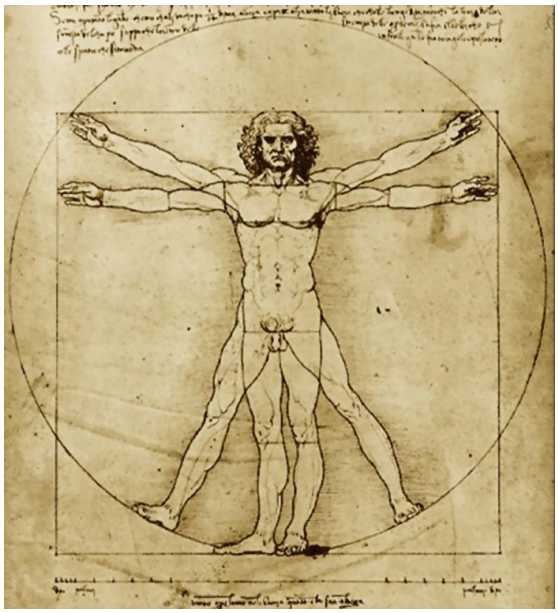
My performance training has primarily been in codified dance techniques such as ballet, jazz and tap, which are characterised by set steps, movements, and embodied ideals reproduced within their physical cultures according to the accepted parameters of the style (Hargreaves and Vertinski, 2007; Pickard, 2015). This training exerts a continued influence on my understanding of what constitutes performance, how I identify as a performer and how I approach performance making. Because of this, the somatic approach in this research presented a number of challenges through its value of the internal phenomenological experience of performance practice rather than the subjective aesthetic merit of established modes of pedagogical practice (Fraleigh, 2015; Green, 2002; Ravn, 2009). While I wanted to take a view of the body as both internally sensed soma and externally perceived body, adjusting my perspective to engage subjectively was difficult as I had been taught that my value as a performer was as an adaptable and passive object used by others in the creation of their vision (Gray and Kunkel, 2001). I was fascinated by the lack of value I held for the performer's perspective, particularly as my invisibly disabled body requires a somatic approach to monitor and maintain my health. I had developed methods of engaging in this invisible labour that included assigning numerical values to my energy levels, using descriptive words to draw my attention to particular physical symptoms and visualising the energy flow I perceived along neurological pathways in my body. However, I had suppressed and segregated this awareness, attempting to uphold 'ideal' representations of the body (Marsh and Burrows, 2017), believing that consciousness of my chronic health needs would jeopardise the mystique of the dancer - a performer set apart from others through her physical resilience and ability to push through her own discomfort, placing the audience's visual pleasure first and foremost (Gordon, 1983; Mazo, 1974; Pickard, 2015). When my previous notion of success in the performance industry was predicated on being strong, beautiful and with endless stamina, ideals of social perfection that emerge from the aesthetic of the able body (Siebers, 2010), I questioned how I might reconcile this conflicting perspective with the current needs and requirements of my chronically ill body. I wondered what might emerge from the somatic practice of an invisibly disabled performer if she no longer had to conceal her embodied difference but drew upon it as method of generating movement material. As dancers O'Brien and Hanauer similarly question (Marsh and Burrows, 2017), how would the audience's and my own perceptions shift as I concealed or revealed my disability? By bringing aspects of my lived experience with chronic illness into visibility, I wanted to question my assumptions about what it meant to be a performer, and explore the "phenomenological value" of my disability as a performance artist (Snyder and Mitchell 2006: 6). To examine these concepts, I created a workshop performance that would explore how my invisibly disabled body might be perceived, both by me as performer and the audience through spectatorship. I followed three core strands of enquiry:

- How does the gestural body function as an effective site for communication through space and time?

- How does the displacement of the embodied space influence perceptions of what is performed?
- To what extent do changes in space and time influence our perceptions of stylised gestures in performance?

3.2 Beginning practice research

Working without the idea of a final performance product in mind and without a prescribed form of movement was a new experience for me, and I felt adrift. To give myself direction in this new practice methodology, I focused on the body's fundamental link to space and time (Grosz, 1994), concepts that would begin to address some of the themes of the research questions. In an early plan in my practical journal (appendix 1, journal pages 3-4), I commented on my experiences, saying, "It doesn't feel like movement or performance that I'm used to". I reminded myself to view this as a liberating experience that would generate new knowledge for me: "Learn something new by going somewhere you haven't been before. Continue in this vein, see what you discover" (ibid). I saw inherent contradictions in my role – I had been taught that performers were strong and my condition was a weakness that must be concealed. As McConachie contends (2008), cultural institutions build up ideals or myths through social practice and affective rituals, and the ideals of the dancing body were inscribed in me through language and physical habits, a difficult cycle to break.



Figures 3 and 4. Leonardo Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (*Vitruvian Man*) and exploring the image through movement

My studio practice began with improvisation to work through habitual movement patterns such as turn-out from the hips and the quality of weightlessness in classical ballet that were so entrenched in me (Pickard, 2015; Tuffnell and Crickmay, 1993). In these early movement explorations, what Fraleigh has called "intrinsic dance" (quoted in Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999: 14), my focus was on my experience of movement and "the play of sensation with intention" (15), marking a shift away from an objective view in which dance is performed for another, toward an inner dialogue in which personally-led dance holds inherent value. Through this process, I developed my ideas about how I embodied my body-space, how my movement displaced space and how I could use my body to describe space in different ways. I considered Laban's conception of potential space set out with the kinesphere, and artists' work also helped me to view space as an expression of movement, such as Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (figure 3), photographer Shinichi Maruyama's *Nude* series (figure 5) and Heather Hansen's *Emptied Gestures* (figure 6).

Space is created and described through the body differently across dance genres, and my ballet training was evident in my portrayal of space through the axes of my body (Ravn, 1987). I experimented with the way my limbs could define space with lines, angles and curves, using repetitive motions such as swinging and circling (figure 11), noticing that a fully stretched limb created large circles with a feeling of freedom, but that smaller body parts created tighter, more restrained circles that induced faster repetition. I realised that while larger circles and longer lines described a bigger space, both somatically and visually, they were harder for me to execute, and I felt restrained by what I saw as the limitations of my illness.

My early journal entries and digital recordings show the struggle I had in reconciling my deep-rooted value of movement that I considered aesthetically pleasing by adhering to a pedagogical framework, with movement derived from somatic practice. One passage portrays my disappointment after comparing the recording of my practice with my experience of the movement:

> As I noted before, I don't always use the facility my body has, and my body doesn't always make use of the space it could. Whether this is a question of me wanting to improve my movement technique for aesthetic reasons, or so that I better communicate my sense of space (and later, the gestures within it), I'm not yet clear. Maybe I'm becoming too caught up in the idea of separating technical proficiency and aesthetics from whatever it is I consider I should be doing. Perhaps embracing and accepting what my previous training has taught me will be a vital part of how I work.
>
> I hope that as I become more accustomed to a) dance in general in terms of fitness, b) somatic engagement, c) improvising on my body, d) my own notion of space, I become better able to use that space and move my body within it in a way that I find pleasing to watch as well as to move. (Appendix 1, journal page 7)

Figure 5. Shinichi Maruyama's *Nude* series (Maruyama, 2012)

Figure 6. Heather Hansen's *Emptied Gestures* (Hansen, 2012)

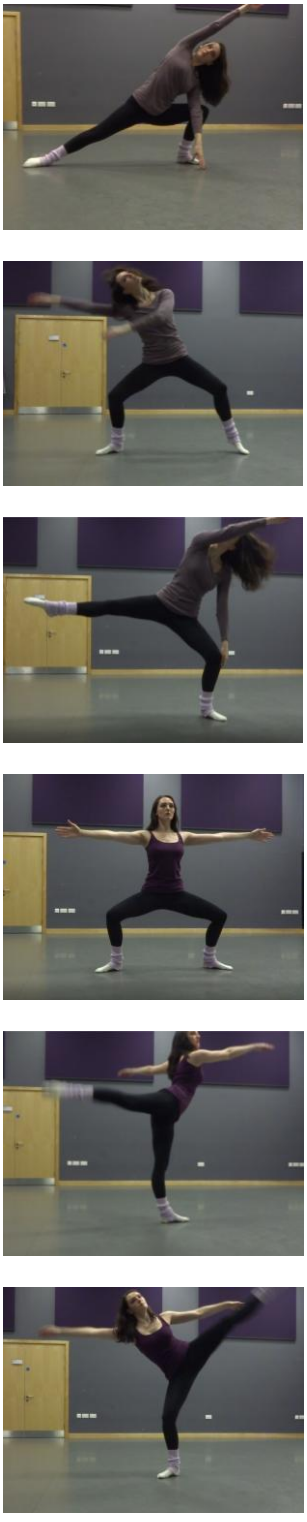


Figure 7. Exploring space through movement

Looking back, I can see that I had not yet come to understand aesthetic value as something which is "actualized (valued) in the subjective life (the experience) of a perceiver" (Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999: 189). My time in dance training had inscribed a set of aesthetic ideals in my thinking and my embodied practice, which I was now seeing anew as I tried to work beyond the cultural construction contained in my "historied body" (Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999: 196). While Fraleigh acknowledges that work born through somatic work may be beautiful or ugly, its aesthetic value derives from movement developed through care for the individual involved rather than a specific visual target (2015), a direct contrast to how I had previously worked my body beyond its natural limits, to develop a performance that went past everyday movement to something extraordinary. I was clear that working somatically would generate material that held authenticity, stemming from my embodied experience, so I had to become more conscious of perceptual phenomena as I worked, which would actively inform my ongoing somatic movement (Fraleigh, 2015).

The move toward somatic practice was revealing the conflicting intentions of the respective movement practices I engaged in. Dance was providing, as Albright suggests, a rich site to examine cultural constructions of ability, subjectivity and visibility, and offered me the possibility of challenging my previous understanding of professional dance that "equates physical ability with aesthetic quality" (Albright, 1997: 57). In the classical and commercial genres that I had experience in, I was presented in ways that accentuated my physical ability and sexual appeal, ideas that I now wanted to face by foregrounding my disability. As an invisibly disabled performer however, I was confronted by the additional challenge of presenting a seemingly able and conventionally attractive body that did not make a radical visual statement. If the disabled body is deviant from the norm, the invisibly disabled body deviates from disability's deviance, requiring an approach that moves away from occularcentrism to sense led practice to communicate its difference.

An entry from my journal at this time shows my growing awareness of the conflicting ideals that were revealed in my practice and how my previous thinking was incompatible with somatic work, and my fluctuating health with ME:

> So I've set up this idea of how the body could move, perhaps in an ideal way, thinking of the body as an abstract concept as Collette Conroy [2010] suggests, which will always leave the real, specific body, my body, falling short of my expectations.
>
> So how should I continue, right now, in this session? Change my expectations to meet my body's current capabilities, or work until I achieve a body closer to this abstract ideal body? The latter is not an option (as far as I'd like) and doesn't provide much in the way of research or documentation about my condition.
>
> Moving forwards – fewer expectations – this is a little reminder to move like you, not the ideal you, but the you that exists right now. And sometimes that will be full of energy, on top physical form, with a good range of movement, and others, like today, you'll be fatigued, with a sore throat, won't be able to get your legs as high as you'd like, and won't last as long as you'd want. But that's ok too. It's all my body, moving in my own way. (Appendix 1, journal pages 8-9)

This stage of research marked a turning point as I began to accept that the movement I created needed to reflect my lived experiences and not focus purely on visual form, a transition which Jones articulates as "negotiate[ing] the terrain between self-as-image (representation, visibility) and self-as-being (embodied, weighty, sensual, volumetric)" (2004: 135). As I continued to shift my focus from an objective perspective to a subjective somatic one, I began to incorporate somatic engagement in my practice through yoga classes, which, as a studio-based class with a timetable, tutor, and even discipline-specific clothing, was a format familiar to me from performance culture. Realising this, I reflected on the far-reaching influences of the physical culture that I had been part of, as without these prescribed features, I had found decision-making in my research practice difficult, unsure of my identity as a performance practitioner. I found credence in somatic practitioners' recommendation of Eastern practices such as yoga to promote somatic reflection, which helped me to see my new avenue of practice research in terms of its own culture and begin to focus on its concepts of embodiment (Zarrilli, 1997, 2002; Zinder, 2007). For Zarrilli, drawing attention inward by focusing on the breath is the first step in somatic training, which he articulates as training the consciousness of the bodymind (1997). The breath's rhythmic pattern draws the performer's attentiveness to her presence in the moment and she becomes increasingly aware of the process through which thoughts become actions. Zarrilli contends that through this meditative practice, the outer surfaces of the body recede in the performer's awareness allowing increased inner focus (2004). I spent time in the studio noticing the flow of my breath in my body and how this created movement, ideas which would come into play in the workshop performance.

An opportunity to explore my somatic engagement further came when my supervisors first viewed my practice, which altered the situation for me, making it a performance. This prompted me to take control, setting chairs for my supervisors to watch at what I designated as the front of the studio revealing my unconscious view that an audience's role in performance is as privileged, but passive witness. I also wore form-fitting clothing from a dance wear brand that highlighted my body as the classical ideal. With so much thought about my supervisors' perception of my practice, my sense of self was submerged in the effort toward the imagery of the ideal dancer (Fraleigh, 1987). On this occasion, I lost focus of my own intentions for movement exploration, and spent the twenty minutes of my practice acutely aware of what they might be thinking. This was a valuable learning experience, and in discussion with them afterwards, I realised how deeply embedded some of my notions of performance and my identity as a performer were, and began to consider my performance choices more consciously.

I began to experiment with controlling the audience's gaze through mirrors in my practice, positioning the audience and myself side by side in front of a mirror, divided by a solid screen so that we could not view one another except through our reflections, and with a screen preventing me from seeing myself (appendix 1, journal pages 35-37). I considered how mirrors were central to the development of self-as-dancer in classical dance training (Whiteside and Kelly, 2016), how they contributed to the development of a sense of self but were opposed

to the sensory body and therefore contributed to visual privilege (Bleeker, 2008; Grosz, 2008), and how they could be used to create mediatised images that controlled the way the audience viewed my body (Alloula, 1986; Auslander, 2008; Garelick, 1995). I would return to these ideas in the final case study, *Screening My(Self): Reflections*. After this, I shifted my focus away from objective judgement of myself, to see what would emerge if I let go of the rules I had followed in previous training. I set myself some reminders:

> It doesn't have to look nice. Very tricky for me, since I want to look nice in so many ways: as a dancer to show my ability and training, clean lines, strength and flexibility; as a woman to look attractive, not fat, sweaty, short, but to look long, lean, full of energy and pretty; as someone living with CFS – for some reason, I still don't want it to show!
>
> This is a safe place to bare all. In this arena, to myself and the people interested in my work, I can show them everything. I can look ill (maybe go without make-up!) (yes, on camera!), I can dance ill, I can 'underperform' – not having strength, stamina or flexibility is ok here, and it may well not matter if you can't see the lines of my body seeing as it's meant to be about the soma, right? (ditch the leggings and try baggy)
>
> The bits I don't mean to do, may be where it's at! So show all of it, the thought processes acted out physically, the little gestures that weren't meant for anything, the bits where I give up and stop doing what I'm trying. Look at these bits.
>
> Don't limit yourself. It's all relevant and part of the bigger picture. Don't plan that 'this bit' is what I'm doing, is what should be focused on and the rest isn't it. It's all it. (Appendix 1, journal page 16)

Some of the changes to my practice included not wearing make-up and working without mirrors, which radically altered my experience of practice by giving me the permission to be, move and feel in ways that I had not previously allowed myself. I seemed to instinctively use my weight and play with my centre of gravity, shifting my weight by bending, rocking and swaying, movements that represented a deviation from the elevation of classical dance training and therefore a step away from my old ideals. Much of this movement seemed to derive from the physicality of my sex, with wide hips creating a low centre of gravity in the pelvis. I noticed how the sexuality of my body contributed to my movement and I became interested in the way undressed dolls display highly feminised yet specifically sexless bodies, comparing this portrayal of femininity to the seemingly naked bodies of ballet dancers in flesh-toned leotards. I used these elements of sex along with the reflections on the rules and expectations I had of being a performer to develop a gesture for performance.

3.3 The workshop

3.3.1 The gestural body in space and time

To address the gestural body as a site for communication, I wanted a gesture that would express both femininity and the concepts of strength and weakness that I was considering, and began to work with a gesture taken from

Pina Bausch's *Danzon* (figure 8). Looking reflexively, I can see that it expresses ideals of strength and beauty through the female body in a way that is closely related to my classical training, perhaps why I identified with it. I experimented with performing this gesture in repetition, changing my use of space and time to communicate concepts of strength and weakness as a performer with an invisible disability (figure 13). I explored the emotional reaction that psychophysical practice creates, and found that performing the gesture slowly and deliberately brought about a feeling of being determined and in control, whereas fast repetitions that occurred suddenly and more frequently made me feel harried, as though I were trying desperately to achieve the strength the gesture expressed. I intended to challenge how meaning is ascribed through Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, the alienation technique that allows the gesture to be seen anew (Worthen, 2004), generating impact through repetition as performers Bausch, Abramović and Ulay have done (Abramović, 2010; Abramović and Ulay, 1977, 1978; Loukes, 2013). Preparing for *Untitled*, I was interested in using the concept of disintegration through time to reveal something of my experience to the audience (Diamond, 1988), but I realised that I lacked a connection to this gesture, and that no matter how relevant another practitioner's work seemed to my own experiences, it could not have the same depth of meaning as movement stemming from personal experience. I dropped it from my explorations, retaining the themes of strength and the revelation of weakness through deterioration that resonated with my personal experience.

Figure 8. Gesture from Pina Bausch's *Danzon* (*Danzon*)

Figure 9. Experimenting with the *Danzon* gesture

I next experimented with a pose that displayed the dominant ideology of the female body that had, for many years, been my conception of what a performer was.

> I'm displaying my body in its feminine perfection, bevelled leg, tight bottom, pulled-in stomach, long neck, straight shoulders, face bright, smiling and ready. I'm considering the requirement of my body to look female – boobs, bottom, long legs, pretty face, long hair – but not to show any female behaviour like boobs that jiggle, hair that gets in your eyes, unwanted body hair, to say nothing of pregnancy, periods and the like. (Appendix 1, journal page 18)

From this image of simulated perfection, I wanted to contrast my lived experience of being a performer with an invisible disability.

> I'm trying to get across, make visible the hidden side of being me as a dancer. What does it mean to be a dancer? What does it feel like? Like all the Pinterest posts, I'm trying to communicate the thoughts of perfection and inadequacy, of don't show them that you're tired, that it hurts, that you can't go on because they paid to see you look perfect.
>
> I'm trying to show my weaknesses, the leg that won't stand straight, the posture that wants to drop, my face when it wants to fall. I'm trying to make visible how it feels to experience the coming-on of fatigue and the other symptoms of CFS – I'm dropping my posture slowly, like it's creeping over me, checking my glands, allowing the big, bright smile to fade away to worry and gormlessness. (Appendix 1, journal page 18)

By revealing my reality, I intended to question both mine and the audience's conception of being a performer, and the categorisation of disability as visible (Albright, 1997). I also wanted to question the ownership of the performer's body, as in my previous training it had become ingrained in me to find pleasure and worth in 'giving myself' to the audience, gaining value from their enjoyment of what my body could do (Pickard, 2015; Gray and Kunkel, 2001). I began to work at times that I would usually avoid due to the onset of symptoms of my ME, which, thinking reflexively, may have been a reflection of my ongoing value of suffering for my art, trying to think of the negative sensations of illness like the 'productive' pain of stretching in dance training (Pickard, 2015). Performance artist Charlotte CHW (2015) uses her invisible disability in her performance installation work, pushing her physical limits to unleash new lines of enquiry. Similarly, I decided to continue my improvisational sessions once symptoms of fatigue, muscular tingling and lack of control had begun. From these explorations, a gesture emerged that I had discovered early on in my practice without considering consciously, what Ravn calls the 'pre-reflective realm' (2010). Despite my intention to move away from codified patterns of movement and create movement that stemmed from somatic experience, I was wary of using this gesture, considering that it may lack validity, but I began to see that it was precisely the authenticity of its creation that made this gesture a stronger starting point to address the efficacy of the gestural body as a site for communication. I now took this gesture, stemming from my embodied experience of the disabling fatigue characteristic of ME, developing it reflexively as a phenomenological performance document (Ravn, 2010).

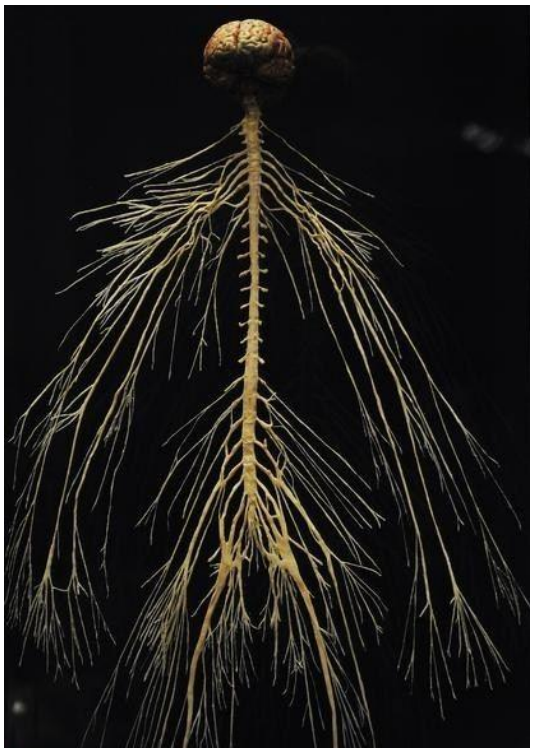


Figure 10. Detail of the nervous system (The nervous system)

Figure 11. Screen shots from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (Rey, 2015)

When fatigue comes on, I experience a disruption to the normal neural functioning of my body, which I perceive as energy flow that follows the neural pathways from the brain, into the body and to the limbs. Two images were helpful to envision this process – the human nervous system (figure 10), which helped me to imagine the neural pathways that were affected by ME, and an image from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (figure 11), showing rays of light moving down the Beast's limbs and extending from his fingers and toes as he is re-embodied as human. When fatigue comes on, I perceive energy flow retreating from my fingers and toes, following the neural pathways up my arms and legs, into my spinal cord and back to my brain. My use of biological imagery and phenomenological experience strikes a chord with neurophenomenology, a method which takes into account both a scientific and experiential perspective to generate imagery of the body in performance (Fraleigh, 2018). For Fraleigh, body images are constructed in thoughts and ideas but are formed through bodily sensations, kinaesthetic patterns and forms of somatic knowing. While the language used to describe these phenomenologies may come across as unscientific or un-academic due to the limited vocabulary associated with describing inner sensation (Leder, 1990), finding ways to communicate perception is crucial to studies in performance (Welton, 2012).

These body images have been vital to my conception of embodiment, particularly as my phenomenological perception of the retreat of energy from my limbs applies the concept of embodiment in a new way. While I continue to perceive my body somatically and to identify my sense of self as my body, I consider areas of my body unembodied due to a lack of energy and limited neurological control, sometimes meaning I am unable to move at all, what I call a 'zero phase' using a scale of energy from 1 to 10. I have come to use the phrase 'body-space' to describe the physical parameters of my body, within which my sense of embodiment may recede depending on the retreat of energy. In this way, I contend that I only have the *potential* to embody my body-space; parts of my body, such as my hands and feet, or everything from my neck down, may be unembodied. Although my body is physically present, and it is me and my sense of self, I no longer have control over it and parts of my body are remote to my will and desires. To frame my experience of unembodied body-space in a way that others may have experienced, it could be compared to the uncomfortable experience of 'dead leg', when a leg has become numb from inactivity and does not respond to neurological commands to a fully functional degree. The leg becomes floppy and difficult to walk on until the 'pins and needles' sensation subsides. During these episodes, the concept of the limb as potential space to be embodied becomes tangible, as that part of your body feels somehow remote to your control, and you must wait to embody it once again. This conception of embodiment relies on an understanding that the parameters of the body are determined by imagery rather than being fixed attributes (Grosz, 1994). As Grosz asserts, "The body image is extremely fluid and dynamic; its borders, edges, and contours are "osmotic" - they have the remarkable power of incorporating and expelling outside and inside in an ongoing interchange" (Grosz, 1994: 79). She goes on to state that psychological or neurological disturbances can "entail[s] major and in many cases unpredictable psychical effects which may dramatically alter the subject's body image, changing psychological processes as well as motor and sensory actions and reactions" (115). Her argument supports my conception of shifting embodiment within my body-space and holds similarities to Leder's (1990)

theory of the dys-appearance of the body to consciousness. To apply Leder's concept of bodily dys-appearance to my own situation, when I have a zero phase my body dys-appears; it is uncomfortably present to me through its inability to function as normal. Leder contends that when the body's normal spatio-functionality is disrupted, the body can seem to be away or apart from itself, and at these times while I can see my body, its dysfunction and the proprioceptional changes that disrupt normal sensation make my body seem out of my control and therefore absent. Leder asserts that the dys-appeared body or body-part can bring about an alien quality creating a feeling of being controlled by the body: "The experienced self is rent in two as one's own corporeality exhibits a foreign will" (1990: 87). Although this suggests a dualist reading, practice stemming from phenomenology offers ways of reflecting on previously overlooked embodied experiences, which can "help us to be more attentive to experience, uncover phenomena that were concealed, explain what Cartesian framework renders inexplicable" (Leder, 1990: 155). Fraleigh similarly acknowledges that dualism arises at times of physical difficulty, fatigue or illness, when the performer finds her body is unable to do what she intends, but that "a fundamental unity" is still apparent (1987: 12). She holds that dance provides a way to embody the unified concept and that it is in movement that we make real our embodiment. If movement is the manifestation of embodiment – "Embodiment is not passive... I live my body as a body-of-motion" (Fraleigh, 1987: 13) - her argument supports my own theory that when I am overcome by fatigue and unable to move my limbs or body, these areas as unembodied. I do not mean to use this argument for a wholly dualist understanding, but merely to recognise the lived body's experience of dualism in situations of dysfunction (Fraleigh, 1987).

Grosz (1994) addresses the dualism that arises when body-parts are absent to perception, such as in phantom limb syndrome, when a body part within a body image is no longer present, and agnosia, the non-recognition of a present body part that should form part of the body image. She describes a phantom limb not as a memory or image from the past but as "quasi-present": "It is the refusal of an experience to enter into the past; it illustrates the tenacity of a present that remains immutable" (89). To apply this same theory to my experience of unembodied body parts with ME, my subjectivity does accept the possession of my arms and legs, I recognise that they are mine and they are me (unifying object and subject), and I accept that there are many possible actions they could or would perform if they felt embodied, if I could re-member them in the present moment. My own case makes a strong argument for Grosz's quasi-presence – but it is a refusal of the past experience of my limbs to enter into the present, and it is the present's very changeable nature through the fluctuations of chronic time, rather than immutability, which means that a past experience cannot be present now. These points illustrate what Grosz describes as a ""fictional" or fantasmatic construction of the body outside of or beyond its neurological structure" (89), a structure which she goes on to assert constrains the body through its biological limits, "limits, incidentally, whose framework or "stretchability" we cannot yet know, we cannot presume, even if we must presume *some* limits" (187). Maaike Bleeker (2008) similarly reflects on how work by disabled artists such as me, who draw on phenomenological modes of enquiry, is important in recognising "particular variations of embodiment and ways of perceiving the world" (1). She argues that these phenomenologies are "subjectively profound and symbolically

significant" (ibid) rather than merely medically measurable, and agrees with Grosz that they have the potential to "contradict the conception of the physical boundaries of the body-organism as the natural and necessary boundaries of the embodied subject" (6).

The lack of embodiment in the limits of my body-space when I am totally fatigued means that I am no longer able to use my arms and legs to their fullest extent, affecting my kinesphere. My new kinesphere is dependent on my ability to stretch or lift my arms and legs, meaning that it may be significantly smaller, perhaps not extending above my head, or limited to movements below the waist, depending on the retreat of my energy flow. This diminished capacity reflects the intrinsic link between subjective experience, our experience of the world through our body and the understanding of place as existing within space (McConachie, 2008). In the workshop performance, I wanted to explore whether I could exhibit the experiences of the internal body, what Leder terms the "visceral" body, through the outer, or "ecstatic" surface body (1990). The gesture I performed would translate the retreat of embodiment within my body-space to the resultant diminished capacity of my kinesphere, which the audience may then perceive. This action would take space not as a static entity but a "dynamic phenomenon" that is lived in, formed and informed by the moving body, to address how the displacement of the embodied space might influence the audience's perception of the performed gesture (Østern, 2014: 104). Howes (2005) argues that displacement implies a disconnection between embodiment and environment, seen in my performance of the changing embodiment of my body-space, just one example of how individual interpretations and creation of space can vary. This also supports Heddon's contention that while space is not something solid or fixed it is no less a tangible experience, "Though space is 'performed', it is nevertheless also material, existing simultaneously then as both 'real' and 'representational'" (Heddon, 2008: 111).

The gesture I created represented energy flow extending through my body and retreating again. I began standing, slumped over from the shoulders with knees loosened, and then straightened my knees, brought my pelvis into alignment with my spine, pulled my shoulders back and raised my head and arms, until I was standing on tiptoe, arms stretched above me and eye line raised. As I performed this gesture, I envisioned the flow of energy travelling from my torso into my legs and feet, and into my arms, hands and head, so that when I reached the pinnacle of the gesture, the flow of energy would extend through my toes into the ground, from my pelvis and out through my tailbone, and from my fingers and the top of my head into the air. Working with this gesture in repetition meant that I also reversed the gesture from the fully extended position back to the slouched posture at the beginning, describing the retreat of energy from my extremities in my body-space. The repetition of the gesture in rehearsal affected the rhythm of my breath, speeding or slowing it depending on the size of the movement, until I found myself immersed in the motion and experiencing a psychophysical response that called up sensations and memories of ME that I had not experienced since some particularly bad periods of ill health some years before (Zarrilli, 2004). The repetition also suggested the cycle of fatigue and energy, ill-health and recovery that is a

feature of ME, and I reflected this through the deterioration of the gesture as I performed it multiple times, in a smaller and smaller approximation of my kinesphere.

The form this movement took was in vast contrast to my previous dancing ideals, and reflected the new forms of 'minimal' dance in Europe that Andre Lepecki suggests challenge assumptions regarding dance's existing ontology based on unrealistic ambitions and expectations of the body and its "very narrow understanding of time and temporality" (2004: 127). Heathfield (2004) comments on this view of time as a commodity, noting that to examine the cultural structuring of time, performances are increasingly taking an approach that focuses on gesture and meaning production with a "slow-time aesthetic" (ibid). He contends that these approaches "provide an opportunity to de-habitualise and de-naturalise perceptions of time", an effort that my performance worked towards by drawing attention to the chronic time of invisible disabilities through its slow and repetitious movement. Work such as mine then "gives attention to other temporalities: to time as it is felt in the body, time not just as progression and accumulation, but also as something faltering, non-linear, multi-dimensional and multi-faceted" (Heathfield, 2004: 10).

3.3.2 Framing my body for performance

For the performance, I chose to occupy only a small space in the studio that would reflect my kinesphere and demarcate a specific performance area, separating me from the audience but marking me as the object for their gaze (Garland-Thomson, 2009). I considered building a rotating stage block that would display me like a life-size ballerina figurine on a music box, making a deliberate reference to the idolisation of the dancer (Gordon, 1983; Mazo, 1974; Pickard, 2015), but rejected this idea to avoid simplistic imagery that might pull focus from the communication of my invisible disability, and because it would allow the audience to remain passive as they watched me, which I was keen to challenge. Instead, I positioned myself in the centre of the room and encouraged the audience to move freely around me, in what Gareth White terms an invitation to participate, a turning point in which the audience enact their level of response or involvement (2013). In the "moment of invitation" the audience were invited to become active, choosing how to witness the performance and becoming part of its artistic material, moving from being the spectator to being watched themselves (White, 2013: 28). Abramović and Ulay made a similar choice to promote the audience's conscious decision making in their performance *Imponderabilia* (1977), in which they stood inside a narrow doorway, naked, forcing audience members to choose which person to face as they passed through the narrow gap. I used a similar procedure to draw awareness to spectatorship in my performance as whether the audience chose to move or remain stationary, their action would become integral to the unfolding action.

To demarcate my performance space, I created a "postural schema" that would portray my experience of space through visual means by measuring the distance I could reach with my arms from a static position to determine

the size of my kinesphere (Grosz, 1994: 85). I fixed a piece of string to the point at which I stood, and the other end to a bottle filled with sand that stretched to the point I could reach, and poured the sand in a circle to portray my kinesphere. This depicted the "access to spatiality", which for me, fluctuates due to the energy levels of ME, marked visually through this demarcation with sand as well as through the changes to my kinesphere that I described with the deteriorating movements of the repeated gesture (Grosz, 1994: 85). This related the experiential, multi-dimensional and malleable conception of intensive space to a measurable form of extensive space that is static and external to the body (Østern, 2014: 104).

Marking the performance space like this held none of the standard visual conventions of theatre (Elam, 1980); there were no lights, proscenium arch or stage, and although it is impossible to render a space truly blank, without prior memory or signification, I intended to provide fewer semiotic clues that might influence the audience's preconceptions about the performance (McConachie, 2008). This also framed the performance as a live event rather than as theatrical, a distinction which Fischer-Lichte (2008) stresses carries additional implications about the artist and the spectators' relationship: a work of art is separate to the artist/creator, exists autonomously, and assumes the spectators' consumption of it in a traditional subject/object relationship; an event however, has a less clear boundary between the action by performers and the spectators, existing in state of liminality, where borders of action, control and subjectivity are negotiable, an idea that I was beginning to incorporate into my research.

Framing my minimal, repeated movement with sound was a challenge as finding appropriate music to work with in practice had been difficult. My previous training meant I was heavily influenced by lyrics, melodies and rhythms, so for a long time I had worked in silence, concentrating on allowing the rhythm of my body movements to develop naturally, and listening to the sounds of my breathing, following practices such as the yogic breathing technique *Ujjayi* (Eisler, 2017). The rhythm of my breath and the repeated motion of the gesture reflected the cyclical nature of my fluctuating health and the chronicity of invisible disabilities (Morris, 2008; Charmaz, 1991) and I wanted to bring this notion of time into the consciousness of both myself and the audience. I used a ticking clock as accompaniment for the workshop performance, meaning this to stand semiotically for time and using the rhythmic sound to reflect the meditative quality of repeated cycles of breath and movement in my practice. I chose a traditional brass alarm clock for the workshop, as its physical presence in the room drew attention to time as a feature of the performance. I set myself a 15 minute period to define the deterioration of the gesture from the first full execution that saw me use my entire kinesphere, to a final motion that showed only the first moment of effort, a slight shift in weight in my pelvis, displaying the minimisation of my kinesphere due to the lack of embodiment of my body-space. I could perform the gesture for this period of time within the bounds of my physical, mental and emotional capacity, without risking negative after-effects from over-work; I was beginning to find aesthetic value in creating performance that reflected my body's needs. The 15 minute time frame brought some of the markers from codified dance training that I was comfortable with - I knew how my movement would begin and end - but this made me feel that I needed to match my movement to the soundtrack so that I had

portrayed the entire process of deterioration within the time frame, otherwise I would not have performed it 'right'. Thinking reflexively, I would have had greater opportunity to focus on my somatic experience of the performance if I had put less emphasis on matching my movement to the soundtrack, but at the time this was not something I could let go of. I placed the clock within my eye-line so that I could see how much time had passed, but tried not to look at the clock too obviously, to avoid destroying the 'mystique' of the performance for the audience; in this aspect I still clung to old ideals (Mazo, 1974). I wanted there to be an atmosphere of suspense as my movement deteriorated, so I set the alarm to go off at the end of the 15 minute period, clearly marking the total deterioration of the time and the gesture, and making an abrupt signal for the end of the performance.

I used my sex as a feature of my performance, addressing some of my thoughts about how, as a performer, I have been encouraged to present myself in an overtly feminine way. Grosz (1994) acknowledges that in using the sexed body as frame for analysis, sexual difference is inevitably conflated with identity, and in my experience sexual difference was a cornerstone of the body's value. It was by highlighting female sexual characteristics through dress and grooming that casting success was most likely to be achieved, and value created. This exemplifies Laura Mulvey's contention that the intrinsic aesthetic value of the female role stems from their status as object to be viewed:

> In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness* (2005: 3).

I questioned this traditional female role of *to-be-looked-at-ness,* asking the audience and myself to look beyond conventional interpretations of my sexual difference (Diamond, 1997), to the embodied experience of the viscera, which I externalised through the performed gesture. For me, nudity provided an expression of the stripping away of layers with which I performed my sense of self, a performance that, during my practice, I had become aware was ingrained in my notion of identity as a performer, and which I had begun to address by choices to wear loose clothing, no make-up and work without mirrors. Jones argues that live artists using their bodies, 'fleshworkers' as she terms them, embrace the base matter and materiality of flesh to make explicit the shared humanness that is the conduit for our lived experience (2004). In appearing naked, I requested that my sex be viewed *invisibly*, that is, I exposed and then requested erasure of my sex, asking the audience to look past my female attributes and any sexual appeal to avoid a wider sense of phallic order (Schneider, 1997). To achieve nudity, while distancing myself from specific sexual features, I wore flesh-coloured underwear, as it revealed the female shape of my body and matched my skin colour, but covered my sexual features, creating a sexless yet feminine body.

3.4 Perceptions

In the workshop performance I created a staring encounter (Garland-Thomson, 2006) in which I encouraged the audience to look beyond the materiality of my body to the embodied experience of ME that I portrayed through gesture. As the 'procedural author' of the scenario, I was in control of the framing of the situation and the process of invitation to the audience (White, 2013), choices which became subject to scrutiny, as it became apparent that I had not clearly marked the beginning and end of the performance event. I pre-set the studio for when the audience entered, with the circles of sand and the clock ready, and before I began the performance, told the audience that they should feel free to move around the space to look at me. I also included this in the programme I handed out (appendix 3), which established a point of contact and provided an early point of entry to the performance for the audience as I posed questions for them to consider as they watched me (Bennett, 1997).

I began the performance by stepping into the sand circle, marking the taking-up of my kinesphere, but as I needed to be undressed when I performed the gesture, I took my clothes off within the circle. This was awkward as I had not wanted to make the act of undressing part of the performance as it held connotations of stripping and therefore potential themes of fetishisation, and I was attempting to distance myself from sexual specificity (Diamond, 1997; Heath, 2008). I was unsure whether or not I wanted the audience to watch me undress and as I had not clearly defined the beginning of the performance, the audience was unsure whether they were meant to. The ambiguity of this moment meant that both my and the audience's roles were unclear as I had not defined the performance frame and therefore when the act of 'looking' should begin (Bennett, 1997; Garland-Thomson, 2006). This ambiguity also occurred at the end of the performance, as I had to step out of my sand circle to stop the alarm clock, a move that should end the performance by my previous theory, after which I dressed. A more explicit sign than stepping over the boundary of sand would have defined the performance event more clearly, for the audience and me, a point I intended to address in the next case study.

I expected that the audience would understand my intention of displaying my body as though naked by wearing a flesh-coloured bra and knickers, perhaps because of my own familiarity with denoting nudity in this way in dance, but my choice of underwear became a subject for interrogation. I was questioned in detail as to the 1950s style of the knickers, as audience members wondered if I had meant to echo the feminine ideal of this era, whereas I had simply been limited by choice in high street shops. Kelleher (2009) describes audiences over-intuiting, conditioned to read something into performance, which has an inescapable quality of "aboutness" (63), with every appearance, action or gesture, however arbitrary, being assumed to stand for something. This is described as self-referentiality, in which an object is perceived as *something*, and therefore inherently meaningful, with meaning generated through the act of perception itself, a process over which "the perceiving subjects have no control" (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 150). In my performance, the audience responded to the challenge posed by my appearance rather than attempting to understand its meaning (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 156), revealing the need to be more conscious of the many possible perceptions of details that I took for granted, but which work semiotically to form the audience's

overall perception. Despite my intention to decontextualise my body by stripping away clothing and adornments, my body was still culturally and socially inscribed, marked in particular by external physical objects (Grosz, 1994).

There was some movement from the audience but being only three in number influenced their decision making, as smaller audience sizes prevent a sense of collective, increasing individual discomfort and inhibiting confidence in response - I was aware of the audience taking deliberately slow and quiet steps (Bennett, 1997). Spatiality, created through the links between architectural space, performer and audience movement, and the lighting and noise levels, impacts perception of performance, and clearly impacted the audience's choices (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). Spatiality is both created by and creates atmosphere, unstable elements which are fluctuating and liable to change from the action of the witnesses to the event, particularly in the relative bareness of the studio I used for my workshop. In discussion afterwards, we agreed that a larger number of people would make the audience less conscious of their movement as a possible distraction, necessarily creating more noise, and drawing attention away from individuals. The audience members remained at some distance to me when they did move, which they noted was to avoid what they deduced as the performance space marked by the sand; as Bennett argues, the area occupied by the spectators is a crucial factor in their reception of the performance and their understanding of their relationship to the action (1997). One person asked how I would have felt or reacted if someone had breached the sand boundary, a point that I had not given much consideration to as I was sure that no-one would break this rhetorical boundary, although this question provoked an interest in experimenting with proximity as my research progressed into the subsequent case studies.

I had used sand for the practicality of marking the floor in a way I could easily remove, but audience members took interest in this material, noting the similarity of the colour to my skin tone and underwear. One person's impression was of my body rising from the earth, and she saw themes of the female reproductive cycle, childbirth, and nature represented by the circular pattern of the sand and my repetitive motion that uncurled and reached upwards. Another person drew similar links between the body and earth, with themes of female rituals and religion in the sand circle and my movement. These responses, and my own idea that encircling myself with a natural material echoed a 'natural' human state, demonstrate the influence of pervading theories of the body, particularly essentialist notions of the female body, seen as closer to nature through its reproductive cycles (Grosz, 1994; Hargreaves and Vertinski, 2007). The process of creating the sand circle as a physical manifestation of my kinesphere meant that I had a sense of ownership over the space, and made me view it as a performance space uniquely my own. The notion of a stage on which I would be performing, and that stepping into it began that performance, brought familiar conventions of performance into this setting.

I had predicted that the clock's presence both visually and aurally would be a clear indication of the passage of time, which linked with my repeated and deteriorating gesture, but this was not something the audience inferred; as Jerzy Limon suggests, time does not have its own substance or universal symbol (2010). The audience saw the clock as a partner in the performance with me from the way I had marked it within its own sand circle. They

wondered whether the alarm would go off and what I might do when it did, but did not take the connection further, showing that the physical presence of the clock had not offered the simple denotation of the passage of time I had expected. While the audience's understanding of performance is "subject to their perception of an extensive code system", I realised that abstract concepts that are subjective and experiential needed to be managed with greater simplicity to make connections for them (Bennett, 1997: 142). Although I had attempted to maintain focus on my body through minimal use of set, props and clothing, associations were inevitably made as all performance elements are considered of equal significance by spectators, until they have become accustomed to looking beyond them to the performance action (Bennett, 1997). Again, my methods of framing had been unclear - demarcating the clock within a sand circle had drawn attention to its physical significance rather than denoting time as a concept. As McConachie explains (2008), framing draws attention to the specificity of the thing which is within the frame, requesting that it be viewed differently from what is outside the frame; the audience had accepted that the sand circle denoted my performance space, continuing this strategy to view the clock likewise as a performer. Once I had explained how my sand circle reflected my kinesphere, the lack of foundation for giving the clock a sand circle was additionally evident. The audience members' questions indicated that I needed to go through a process of more intense reflexivity when making framing choices, as these details had distracted attention away from the concepts of embodied space and time that I was investigating. Beyond the impressions of fertility and life cycles, there was little interpretation of the repeated gesture itself, and no mention of my embodied experience of invisible disability, despite it being addressed in the programme.

The clock's presence also proved a distraction for me, as I had forgotten to release the catch that strikes the bells, so the alarm would not ring after the 15 minutes. Unfortunately, I realised this fairly soon after I began, meaning that my somatic experience of performing the gesture was hampered by conscious decisions about how to deal with the end of the performance. I stopped the gesture as I had planned after 15 minutes, leaving my sand circle and going to the clock as I would have done, but without an obvious conclusion to the action of the performance. This oversight contributed to the autopoietic feedback loop as, while the audience may have been unaware of my internal struggle, my experience had been marred by this additional worry, and I questioned how I attributed concepts of success or failure to my performance (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). White (2008) asserts that the feedback loop in interactive performance events means that risk is involved for both performers and audience, and while as procedural author, the performer is generally considered the active or controlling party, this can be a misleading binary (Alston, 2014). In this case, my experience as participant had been threatened by the performance's potential to unfold differently that I intended. This is an inherent paradox in planned live art events, in which moment-to-moment liveness and happening carries a sense of risk and potential failure which exists as one of live art's most vital and valuable components (Heathfield, 2004). Contemporary circus performance *No Show* by Ellie Dubois (*No Show*, 2018) plays with these concepts, as the performers humorously describe the many potential risks and failures that could occur in their physical acts as well as playing them out deliberately. Far from detracting from the show's success, making these failures visible builds a picture of the performers as both highly skilled and

daring artists in their acceptance of the liminality of their performance, which, as a live act, is always liable to change (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). Helen Duff similarly approaches expectations of the performer's role and the possibility of failure, constructing a character through which she uses clowning techniques to play out the uncontrolled actions her mental health condition creates in her real life (*Vanity Bites Back*).

For me, the need to control the performance event was partly due to dance training, in which physical control was exalted and performances followed predictable and repeatable patterns, but also because through my experiences of chronic illness, I have learnt to measure personal competence by the careful control of illness intrusiveness (Charmaz 1991). Performance artist Rita Marcalo, who has epilepsy, similarly expresses "My body is about control. I have spent years training it so that I can gain 'mastery' or control of it", but she explores giving up this control in her performance *Involuntary Dances* by engaging in activities which can bring on seizures (quoted in Johnson, 2013: 115). At this stage of the research, I was not yet aware of how deeply held my need for control is due to the implications of letting go on the regulation of my health, so was not able physically or emotionally to test the bounds of my control. However, the workshop had drawn my attention to the risk involved in live performance and my desire to maintain control as procedural author, ideas which I would continue to explore in the next case study.

3.5 Drawing conclusions

This initial case study had set me on a path of enquiry into how somatic perception could shape my performance practice. I had found value in the movement and gesture I generated from an authentic phenomenological experience (Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999), a process which had allowed me to explore my awareness of disembodied body-space through body imagery, challenging prevailing assumptions about the limits of the body and body-image (Bleeker, 2008; Fraleigh, 2018; Grosz, 1994). Working with experience from this pre-reflective realm in the "performative dimension" of somatic practice had allowed me to take my body as both subject of these experiences and object of intentionality (Ravn, 2010: 30), an important step away from a background in which the body was viewed objectively as a tool to be used in one's art (Gray and Kunkell, 2001; Mazo, 1974; Mitchells, 2014; Pickard, 2015). My movement practice explored space as a dynamic phenomenon experienced and created through the body (Østern, 2014; Ravn, 2010) and recognised my lived experience as one of the "particular variations of embodiment and ways of perceiving the world" that work by disabled artists offers (Bleeker, 2008: 1).

Although my intention with this first case study had been to reveal an aspect of my embodied experience of ME, the audience's responses had focused on pervading and essentialist notions of the body (Grosz, 1994; Hargreaves and Vertinski, 2007), demonstrating that as Albright asserts, "the embodied experience of dancing can provide a

counter (and resistant) discourse to representations of the body *even while* creating those representations" (1997: 3, original emphasis). I had hoped to create a resistant discourse to my apparently whole and able body, "de-naturalizing ablebodiedness" (Cosenza, 2010: 8) by asking the audience to look beyond the materiality of my flesh to the embodied experience that my movement described. However, there had been inconsistencies in the way I framed my body for performance which drew attention to the method of framing in itself, and with unclear framing parameters, there were gaps in the spectators' cognitions about how and when to view me (McConachie, 2008). These points were outside the concepts of lived experience and invisible disability I hoped to investigate, but contributed to the ongoing reflexivity of the research, by requiring me to be more specific in the ways I posed my enquires in performance.

Moving towards the next case study, I would have to be more explicit in the way I framed my embodied experience as one of disability identity, in order to 'come out' as an invisibly disabled performer, and make this the focus of the audience's attention (McRuer, 2006). As a disability constituted through the experience of chronicity, coming out in performance would require me to more clearly link my movement with the passage of time (Charmaz, 1991). I would need to further research and experiment framing time in performance to communicate that my slow repetitions of the gesture carried a sense of endurance through the 15 minute performance, which in chrononormative terms was a short period of time (Cosenza, 2014a). I also began to wonder if wearing underwear to represent nudity had been a way of hiding myself, an effort which had conversely, attracted attention, and considered whether part of my outing should include total nudity to be transparent about my embodied experience. I wanted the audience to see beyond the cultural inscription of my female body as a sexual object to the embodied experience beneath that is human, not explicitly sexed (Jones, 2004). I was also aware however, that because of that same cultural influence, revealing my body made my act a feminist one because as Grosz maintains, "one's sex makes a difference to *every* function, biological, social, cultural, if not in their operations then certainly in significance" (Grosz, 1994: 22, original emphasis). I took these enquiries into the next case study to address how and why nudity could be a strategy to reveal lived experience, and to more deeply analyse how this might influence perceptions of the gestural body. As I moved forward, I would also begin to address my methods of controlling the performance transaction, exploring how audience interaction would influence the ongoing feedback loop of a live event (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Heathfield, 2004; White, 2008).

Chapter 4: Case Study 2 - *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See*

4.1 Introduction

The audience feedback after *Untitled* had drawn my attention to the discrepancy between my expectations of the audience's perceptions and their responses. The ways that I had framed my body had drawn more attention than the gesture I performed, so I felt that I did not have adequate responses from the audience about their perceptions of my movement. For *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See*, I continued with the gesture I had developed in *Untitled*, re-framing it through spatial and temporal elements to focus attention on my lived experience, questioning how the audience constructed meaning from my physicality. This redressed the first two research questions:

- How does the gestural body function as an effective site for communication through space and time?
- How does the displacement of the embodied space influence perceptions of what is performed?

I also continued to investigate elements that influenced the subjective experience of the passage of time and how I could use these to communicate my lived experience of invisible disability, addressing the final research question:

- To what extent do changes in space and time influence our perceptions of stylised gestures in performance?

In this second case study I would also explore methods of giving up some of the control of the performance event by increasing the level of audience interaction, investigating how this participation influenced perceptions of my body for both me and the audience (White, 2013). This would coincide with my use of nudity as a device to reveal lived experience, further exploring perceptions and expectations of the female body in performance. I was fortunate to have two opportunities to perform *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See*, the first being an event I held for my research and the second a month later when I was invited to perform at the *Performing Risk* symposium held at Canterbury Christ Church University. This gave me the opportunity to use reflexive strategies between the two performances and gain further insight into my own perception of the performance.

4.2 Continuing practice research

Reflecting on *Untitled*, I had experienced a sense of risk in displaying my body in a way that deviated from the rules of performance I had previously followed, but felt that I could take this further. I was moving away from the notion of the body as the performer's property to be used for her art (Mitchell, 2014) towards the artistic ethic of sharing personal experience and aspects of self-discovery through performance that Grotowski describes (1968). I came to see my previous decision to wear underwear, despite my intention to appear naked, as a way of hiding my 'true'

self (a concept which I had not analysed deeply at this stage) and felt compelled to take the concept of risk further by revealing myself totally naked. My intention was to remove the final physical barriers to viewing the embodied experience of chronic illness, an interpretation of unveiling the true self (Malik, 2008), an act of literal uncovering that holds links with the uncovering of queer outing in which an individual no longer intentionally covers or plays down characteristics that may otherwise out them (Branfman, 1997). Uncovering myself meant outing myself as invisibly disabled, asking the audience to look beyond my flesh to the lived experience of the soma, but also revealing the flesh of my body that bears no trace of disability, borrowing from Phelan to question where the vanishing point of my disability is (1993). By voluntarily adopting the position of visibility that disability usually occupies (Kuppers, 2001), I questioned whether I would be re-contextualised once my disability was made clear (Marsh and Burrows, 2017). This question was similarly broached by Kate Marsh and Welly O'Brien in their performance *Famuli* as part of Coventry University's *InVisible Difference* conference (2015), in which their choreography played with concealing and revealing their respective bodily differences. If the difference in contextualisation is the way the audience look, I would attempt to elicit the 'engaged staring' that Garland-Thomson describes as a quest to know and understand something challenging on the staree's appearance (2006); as my disability is not 'stareable' with an obvious visual marker, this created the challenge in itself (Garland-Thomson, 2009). By using my whole and therefore apparently able body as a vehicle to display my invisible disability, I would challenge the assumption that disability is visible, or rather the assumption that that which cannot be seen does not exist (Cosenza, 2014b). This idea has been produced through the idea of ability and disability as a binary of presence or absence, as Fassett and Morella describe, "an ontological light switch that indicates possibility or futility, rather than as a meaningful spectrum" of experience (2008: 140). This denies the liminality between disability and able-bodiedness, a borderland that invisible disabilities occupy through their invisible presence, and which queer and crip theories destabilise (Cosenza, 2010). My outing would be a performance (Bunzl, 1999), which asked that my body be read crip or queer, opening up a view to previously unseen differences, and questioning disability as a visible identity category (McRuer, 2006).

At this time, I was also bringing feminist performance strategies into my work, so my nudity provided a vehicle for me to question my performance choices as a feminist and my expectations of the audience's perceptions of me as a female performer. However, I was unclear where the overlap between nudity as a device to reveal embodied experience and nudity as an act of feminist performance lay. This created a paradox in that as a feminist, I did not want to be objectified, reduced to my physicality and assessed on the success of the way I reproduced accepted notions of gender (Butler, 1988), yet I was consciously framing myself as object for the audience's gaze. This position could be aligned with Diamond's use of Brechtian and feminist theories in performance criticism (1988), in which she argues that while the female body explores the concept of looking, "the Brechtian-feminist body is paradoxically available for *both* analysis and identification, paradoxically within representation while refusing its fixity" (89, original emphasis). In this case study then, the body operated as both analytical strategy and object for analysis (Conroy, 2010). My intention was for my sex to be viewed invisibly (Schneider, 1997), opening out an

intersubjective view that looked beyond the specificity of my sex to the lived experience of the visceral body (Jones, 2004), but it also provided a strategy to question spectatorship, drawing attention to the concept of 'looking' itself, rather than the object being looked at (Mulvey, 2005). In *Untitled Feminist Show (UFS)* director Young Jean Lee explores concepts of humanity and identity through six female performers' naked bodies, requiring the audience to move past their initial reactions and discover meaning in the nakedness (Solga, 2016). Kim Solga recounts her own reaction:

> I realized that I was both gawking at them and struggling to look away. I wanted to show their bodies respect but did not know how. Finally, I realized that I did not need to stare; instead, I could choose to bear witness to the bodies... as she passed me, each performer looked right into my eyes. I fought to meet her look, and not to blink. (Solga, 2016: 28-29)

I hoped to confront the audience's expectations of their own spectatorship, challenging them to see past their initial reaction to nudity to what my gesture and physicality communicated.

Despite my attempt to achieve a neutral position outside sexual difference, its influences are pervasive and subtle, insinuating themselves into every scenario (Grosz, 1994). In the overlapping intentions of this case study, my choice to appear naked was inevitably an act of feminism as I followed the conventions of female objectification, but by framing myself in this way, I disrupted the usual binary of active (male) gazer and passive (female) object (Mulvey, 2005). Anna Furse (2018) illustrates how a woman might stake a claim over the objectification of her body with the case of Queen Elizabeth I who re-appropriated the Blason, a cultural trend of describing women's bodies in poetic detail. Elizabeth I famously exposed her upper body, breasts and belly to her courtiers and visitors, in "an explicit act of self blasonry... taking control of the body-politic through her own revealed, virgin, untouchable flesh" (Furse, 2018). Acts such as these draw attention to and challenge the long-standing gender binary that governs Western codes of female objectification by adhering to that same framework (Jones, 1998). Jones' queer feminist durationality (2012) argues that additionally, "certain enactments of the female sex *look back*, establishing the reciprocity of the gaze", and preventing the woman from being viewed as mere passive object of the gaze (172). This reciprocal gaze, brought about through a reversibility of seeing and being seen, entails intersubjectivity between self and other, establishing the body/self as therefore both subject and object, as the production and reception of the work of art is carried out between the artist and the spectator in ongoing reciprocity (Jones, 1998).

Although I intended to appear naked to out myself as invisibly disabled, as a way of enacting intersubjectivity, and as a feminist act to challenge conventions of female objectification, I was aware that the audience may make different judgements about my choice (Solga, 2016). My social and cultural background, including the influence of performance culture in which undressing communally was commonplace, had been influential in my accepting view of nudity and had given me an understanding of bodies as shared, in performance arenas. I was surprised therefore, that approaching the performance I felt nervous, wondering how the audience would react, and

whether they would judge me on my choice to appear naked, perhaps thinking that I was being exhibitionist or narcissistic. Jones argues that narcissism though, through its focus on the self, "inexorably leads to an exploration of and implication in the other", reflecting my intention of using my body to open out an intersubjective perspective (46). Making my own body, through which I experience the world, a focus, is vital in order to have some knowledge of invisible disability on which to build research. As Jones continues, "The enacted body/self is explicitly political and social" (46-47) through its desire to share experience and open out to otherness, a contingency of the performing self which precludes the simplistic or regressive label of narcissism (Jones, 1998).

As I have identified, I also believed that in my performance I would display my 'true' self, a reality that I felt I had to explicitly share with the audience, and which therefore held a greater sense of exposure and risk for me. I am aware that in my learning journey at the time I had not yet fully explored the concept of identity as an enduring process of identification, rather than as a fixed status that existed somewhere in one's interiority (Grosz, 1994; Jones, 2012). This meant that uncovering myself, both literally and as a queer act, placed me in a position of vulnerability (Fassett and Morella, 2008). Despite being comfortable with using my body in performance in the past, I had always been playing a character or a performing an idealised version of myself, a performance persona which I felt would now be absent (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007). I was aware that I would be performing myself, enacting my own experiences from the past in the present, but I had not considered that in autobiographical practice, the self is both subject of the performance and its medium – there is no clear divide between the performed self and the 'real' self (Heddon, 2008). As Heddon articulates, "the 'auto' signals the sameness of the subject and object of that story: that is, the 'author' and 'performer' collapse into each other as the performing 'I' is also the represented 'I'" (2008: 8). While autobiographical performance draws attention to the self as a performed role, one of its formal strengths, this also complicates notions of truth because a split or multiplicity of selves is implied. At this stage, I had not found my own understanding that this multiplicity of selves may be what constituted any sense of a true self but was concerned with the notion that Grosz refutes of a true self concealed somewhere in the body that may emerge in particular circumstances (1994). To quote Diamond, I had not yet found my "conceptual footing" in this area of performance practice (1997: v), a naiveté seen in some of my approaches to this case study which endure in this record of the research as a vital part of my reflexive learning process.

4.3 The workshop

4.3.1 Framing my body

In this performance, I wanted to continue to represent my embodied space through physical markers as I had done in *Untitled* with circles of sand, but to more clearly mark this area as belonging to the transactional convention of performance (Elam, 1980). I used a stage block to frame my body as a spectacle for view and as a visual signifier of

theatrical performance, and while the space would never be truly blank, I kept it as lacking in other signification as possible (McConachie, 2008). These choices reflected the cross-disciplinary nature of my practice, as while I designed the space to be un-mediated, this design was in itself a construction, bringing a sense of theatricality to the live event, proving Shalson's point that theatre endures in performance art (2013). I positioned the stage block in the middle of the space, allowing the audience to view me from all sides as one might a statue on a plinth in an art gallery, and to encourage the audience to consider their choices in movement and proximity, I requested that they move around the space to look at me, an invitation to participate that I made both verbally and in the programme (appendix 4). Presenting myself on a stage block echoed fetishistic conventions that view women's bodies, especially nude, in an objectifying way, but in this active choice, I took the "quiet authority" and resistance that artist's model Elizabeth Hollander suggests can come by voluntarily offering oneself as object for attention (quoted in Albright, 1997). Hannah Wilke similarly offers her body for attention in her art (figure 19, p--), highlighting her sex as female, but also suggesting that her role is male in her active authority as artist (Jones, 1998). While acts such as Wilke's have attracted criticism as an example of feminine idealism and unfeminist narcissism, these arguments overlook the impossibility of taking her body as mere object, since it exists as both object of the art and location of the subjecthood of the artist, a unique and complex merger of embodied subjectivity (Grosz, 1994).

Fetishism is also seen in views of the disabled body, which take a medical view of physical difference to create an acceptable form of objectification (Millett-Gallant, 2010; Garland-Thomson, 2005a, 2005b). Artists such as Mary Duffy, Marc Quinn and Joel Peter Witkin re-examine fetishistic and medicalised views, framing disabled bodies to foreground their 'brokenness' and solicit stares (Millett-Gallant, 2010). Ann Millett-Gallant (2010) explores how in Witkin's photographic work, "the fetishization of the body is fully sensationalized and made into a theatrical spectacle – fetishized bodies are spotlighted, placed on pedestals, and framed in excessive stage sets" (12). I follow this convention of medical fetishisation, presenting my body as spectacle by undressing and displaying the entirety of my body for the audience's view on a pedestal, an act which, like Witkin's photographs, "serves up the disabled body on a platter" (ibid). In this encounter "Starers become doctors by visually probing people with disabilities" (Garland-Thomson, 2005a: 32), yet this medical view of my body reveals no visual marker of brokenness or disability. Siebers calls for a disability aesthetics that "refuses to recognise the representation of the healthy body – and its definition of harmony, integrity, and beauty – as the sole determination of the aesthetic" (2010: 3). His disability aesthetic is met by work such as Marc Quinn's sculpture *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (figure 12) and Mary Duffy's *Cutting the Ties That Bind* (figure 13), which subvert the bodily aesthetic of neoclassism through Lapper and Duffy's unusual, and therefore deviant, bodies. My body however, subverts this disability aesthetic, by conforming to the image of wholeness, health and beauty that Siebers strives to move away from. The literal wholeness of my body brings into question both the notion of disability as a physical lack that may be seen, as well as the presumption that a body which displays the visual markers of wholeness equates to ability and health, and subsequently 'goodness' and 'success' (Hargreaves and Vertinski, 2007; Marsh and Burrows, 2017). While "full

disclothsure" is possible (Levine, quoted in Schweitzer, 2000: 65), this total baring reveals no visual mark of disability, drawing attention instead to my lived experience of ME, with this somatic knowledge the only available evidence of this medical condition.

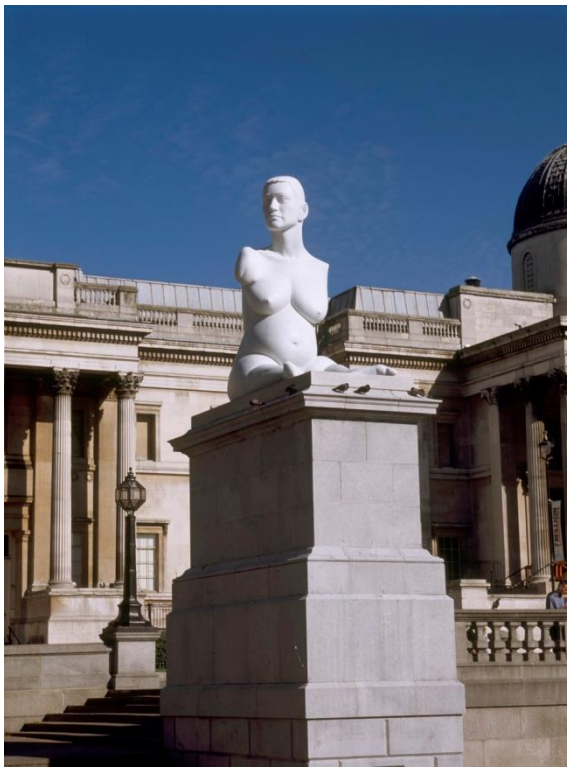


Figure 12. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (Quinn, 2005)

Figure 13. Film still of Mary Duffy performing *Cutting the Ties That Bind* (Duffy, 1987)

To draw awareness to the rhetorical interaction and relative positions of power between myself and the audience, I wanted to break the performance frame, and address them directly (Elam, 1980). This effect is seen in Laurie Anderson's performance *Happiness*, which she concludes by addressing the audience directly saying, "It is the end of the play and the actors come out and look at you" (quoted in Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007: 68). Engaging in informal proxemics in this way breaks the usual barriers between performer and spectator, reminding the audience that the performance occurs only at a certain time and challenging their expectations of their role in the event (Bennett, 1997). To begin the performance, I addressed the audience with the words, "I am going to start the performance now", defining my position of power as procedural author and confirming the parameters of the performance frame (White, 2013). To move away from this position of power, giving up some of my control of the performance transaction, I would need to raise the relative power of the audience by offering them an invitation to participate. Live art events which include personal interaction can increase audience engagement in

terms of the experience of the event and the "imperative to make meanings" from it (Heathfield, 2004: 9). One such example is interactive performance *The Privileged* (Haydon, 2015), in which the audience, cast as zoo keepers, must follow instructions in caring for a polar bear, played by director and performer Jamal Harwood, confronting issues of power and authority through the audience members' acceptance or refusal to comply with the instructions. In my performance, I enlisted the help of audience members as I undressed, asking them to hold items of my clothing, a process which increased the intimacy of the performer/spectator relationship through contact, and affected a call to aid (Grehan, 2009). It also drew the audience's awareness to how their choices of action formed an integral part of the performance event, and how their perceived risks of interaction, from embarrassment to potential physical harm, would influence their choice to engage with the invitation (White, 2013). Peggy Shaw's autobiographical work *Ruff* (2016) also makes the audience complicit in the performance by asking them to hold props and assist her with her increased medical needs since having a stroke. This invests the audience with a sense of unity and shared purpose as they take part in an act that both performer and audience share as witnesses (Solga, 2012). By making the audience complicit in my uncovering, they shared in framing my body for performance as a feminist act, and participated in the conscious choice I took to reveal myself as invisibly disabled.

4.3.2 Framing time

In the previous case study, I had found that the clock's sound increased my somatic awareness by echoing the cyclical motion of my gesture, but using visual indicators to link the passage of time to the deterioration of my gesture had been ineffective. I now wanted to experiment with how sound might draw attention to the passage of time, influencing perceptions of my body in performance and communicating my lived experience of chronic illness. In the previous case study, my perception of time passing as I performed the gesture through its process of deterioration was affected by my physical, mental and emotional state (Limon, 2010). David Wiles (2014) notes that the understanding of time was traditionally based on the limits of the human body, such as the heart beat, the cycle of breath and the pace of walking. For those with chronic illness or disabilities, the experience of time through the materiality of the body is highlighted as life is dominated by time and narratives (Sparkes and Smith, 2007). The chronically ill body is regulated through a relationship to time and duration, with an individual's desires dependent on physical factors that are beyond their control (Morris, 2008).

The subjective perception of time makes a shared sense of its passage difficult to arrive at, although this has been described as "atmosphere" or "mood" in performance (Wiles, 2014: 4). I wanted to experiment with the performance atmosphere, destabilising perceptions of time for the audience, creating what Jones and Heathfield have called "durational aesthetics", giving access to "other temporalities, excluded or marginalized within culture's increasingly rigorous temporal organization" (2012: 29). This could be described as an effort to queer time, taking

queer as a way of disrupting normalisations of the subject, opening it up to previously unseen perceptions (McRuer, 2006; Jones, 2012). I employed a composer to digitally alter a recording of a ticking clock so that the sound gradually sped up over 15 minutes, during which time the physicality of my gesture would deteriorate. As with the durational works that came to light in the 1970s and 1980s, this took time as a malleable phenomenon, drawing attention to time as an alterable construct (Jones and Heathfield, 2012). By altering the rhythm of the clock sound I hoped to enforce a warped sense of the passing of time to the audience (Wiles, 2014) and more prominently feature duration as a key aspect of the performance. I drew the audience's attention to the connection between my movement and the passage of time in the programme: "Consider your reactions to what I do and how they change as time passes" (appendix 4). I intended that the focus on the decreasing physicality of my body within the space - both through the small area I occupied within the studio and the pattern of deterioration - would contrast with the increased speed of the clock's rhythm reflecting the lack of control and shifting subjective experience of time that living with chronic illness creates.

4.4 Perceptions

4.4.1 Nudity

I used nudity as a device to represent the stripping away of layers of what, at the time, I considered my performed self to reveal the embodied experience of chronic illness beneath. I realised that nudity would be a taboo subject for some people, and addressed their experiences with the questions, "Did you feel uncomfortable at any point during the performance? When was this? What was your experience?" (appendix 5). Some responses described feelings of awkwardness or shyness: "I felt I will invade your privacy by looking at your body", "I did have a mild uncomfortable experience in the beginning of the piece – I always feel uncomfortable when many people are looking at a naked body" (appendix 6). Embarrassment may be a signal that an ethical process is taking place for the spectator as they search for an appropriate response (Hadley, 2014) since participation in the staring encounter re-constructs the social self with each new act (Garland-Thomson, 2006). My role as procedural author of the performance event was clear, yet these spectators' concern for my privacy shows their awareness of the social and ethical implications of publicly viewing a naked body. The emotional responses generated by taboos such as nudity contribute to the autopoiesis of the event, as behavioural changes and other perceptible actions affect the performance atmosphere and influence how other spectators perceive the performance, stimulating further reactions to the taboo subject (Fischer-Lichte, 1997). My undressing in particular made a number of respondents feel uncomfortable as in Western society this act is generally confined to private spaces that prevent visual contact, but in a public context carries implications of stripping, in which undressing is a sexual act for the voyeuristic pleasure of the viewer. One respondent stated that they felt uncomfortable when I undressed, writing, "I had to rise to the challenge of looking at you without feeling self-conscious, dealing with the feeling that my

looking was on show too". Another response suggests an awareness of the voyeurism that the performance addressed:

> Nakedness is somewhat of a social taboo – getting naked and getting dressed felt voyeristic [sic]. But then I thought perhaps this was the point – we are voyers [sic] of passing time. Only slightly uncomfortable when dressing and undressing, this passed quickly.

The responses referring specifically to the periods of undressing and dressing evidence the social connotations of stripping in which clothing plays a vital part in maintaining eroticism by prolonging the anticipation of sexual gratification (Schweitzer, 2000). Dahlia Schweitzer draws on Roland Barthes' contention that "it is only the time taken in shedding clothes which makes voyeurs of the public", going on to argue that the stripper is desexualised once she has removed all the layers of clothing and achieved a natural and "perfectly chaste state of the flesh" (quoted in Schweitzer, 2000: 68). While nudity drew the audience's attention to their spectatorship, it was this desexualisation that I hoped to achieve, a tactic that performance artist La Ribot similarly employs, arguing that although there will always be "intrinsic connotations", she intends nudity to stand for a lack of meaning in a dramatic sense (quoted in Heathfield, 2004: 30). She states, "If I failed to concentrate on this neutralisation or so called 'non-meaning' of the naked body, there would be no ambiguity, no questions, no irony created" (ibid). The ambiguity of how nudity will be perceived contributes to the myriad interpretations of meaning by the witnesses, and offers diverse potentialities and risks through the audience's unpredictable reactions as part of the live event (Hadley, 2014; White, 2013).

For many audience members, my neutralisation was successful and comments taken from the questionnaire and the group discussion reveal that they saw my body in a non-sexual way:

> There was a second when I just skipped thinking about you as a female, I saw you as just a human being representing male and female.
>
> It exceeded being you, a female, it became just a human being.
>
> I didn't see anything sexual about it, I just saw a body.
>
> The performance was not about nudity but how the body functions.

For these respondents, I had succeeded in framing the materiality of my body as a conduit for shared human experience, rather than drawing attention to my sexual difference (Jones, 2004). The shared experience of sexual specificity was also influential, as one woman explained in the group discussion: "for me it felt like it was a body, rather than any kind of gender but maybe because that's me talking from a woman's perspective". While a woman might find it easier to see past the shared sex, a number of male audience members speaking in the group discussion also said they had not been uncomfortable, with one clarifying that he had expected to. A number of responses reveal the audience's awareness of the implications of the gender divide on their spectatorship, demonstrating that the relationship with other audience members is an influential factor in individual experience (Bennett, 1997). One response agreed that my nudity had brought feelings of discomfort because "there were men

in the room", going on to suggest, "I think I would feel less uncomfortable if there were only females", demonstrating that social settings construct values and meanings according to sexual difference, especially in terms of spectatorship (Grosz, 1994). In discussion, one man admitted being unable to see past my nudity to my lived experience, hyper-aware of looking at what he considered an 'attractive' woman, and that in his perception this fixed him in the role of privileged male onlooker (Mulvey, 2005). He expressed how he was uncomfortable in the questionnaire:

> I think with the nudity right at the start. In relation particularly to me looking at you [exclamation mark crossed out]. Heteronormative I realise, but I felt pissed off at the idea of the male gaze! Always the male gaze.

This response highlights this man's awareness of how sexual difference holds significance for every social or cultural act (Grosz, 1994), and of the enduring discourse of the active male gaze. It also supports Jones' argument that certain performances in which a woman presents herself in an objectifying way are "reciprocally defining of the one who gazes", casting the (male) viewer as insecure of his power status (2012: 172). This respondent's discomfort in his role in the performance event may have been due to my establishing reciprocity of the gaze through direct contact with the audience (Jones, 2012), challenging the status quo of the performer/spectator dynamic, and requesting a change in value and attitude on the part of the spectator (McConachie, 2008). As McConachie contends, cultural models are resistant to change through time, and some people have more flexibility to change and to embody new cultural concepts. My performance challenged patriarchal structures, acknowledging the exploitation of women's bodies in art by mimicking these conventions, but denying the reduction of women's bodies to that image through my autonomy in presenting myself in this way (Diamond, 1997). The audience responses suggest a latent awareness of how my performance disrupted cultural models of interaction between the object of the gaze and the gazer, and I will discuss how the gender divide affected audience members' spectatorship in their active responses in the following sections.

While for some, my undressing had provoked discomfort, others found that requesting their assistance as I undressed helped to frame my body, making them complicit in my nudity and enabling them to see it in a non-sexual way. One man asserted that it was helpful for the audience to be with me through the process of undressing, rather than seeing me standing naked already, which others corroborated. Male and female audience members agreed that the act of undressing separated my social self from my performance act, as this response explains:

> The ritual of divesting and re-investing yourself with your personal effects before and after the performance meant that I could view your 'performance' self as distinct from the everyday.

In conversation one man agreed that "when I saw you do that... it wasn't 'Mo' anymore for me, it was just the body."

My own experience of this process was different as my intention in stripping to nudity was in revealing what I considered my true self (Heath, 2008), meaning that undressing was an act of self-expression and self-revelation in which I consciously displayed my lived experience in an outing that carried emotional weight and therefore vulnerability for me (Fassett and Morella, 2008; Malik, 2008). I had chosen clothing for the beginning of the performance to convey 'neutrality', wearing a loose black T-shirt, blue jeans and flat black shoes, with no make-up and left my hair down. For me, this outfit did not carry the same sense of performativity as the colourful outfits that I would usually wear; I was purposely trying not to convey my personality in a manner that could be linked to Branfman's conscious 'covering' of characteristics that might otherwise out him as homosexual (2014). Now, further along my learning journey, I understand that the self/identity is produced and inscribed through our embodied experience of social and cultural settings, and therefore cannot be reduced to an association of the real self with internal experience and a fictionalised self with the external body, but at the time, my thinking was more simplistic. I felt I performed 'neutrality' when dressed and the process of divesting myself of my clothing reflected a shedding of the layers of assumed neutrality to reveal the somatic experience beneath that I performed through gesture. My creation of the workshop with stylistic movement, staging and an audience confirm that I was performing myself while I was naked, but unlike the audience, for whom the framing presented an impersonal and neutral body ("it wasn't Mo anymore"), I perceived my true self to be displayed – I felt more Mo than ever. I had not come to terms with the complexities of the performativity of self as both a performance act and a social act (Goffman, 1990), and that the self that performs in the social realm is "the same body that is the instrument of artistic practice" (Garland-Thomson, 2005a: 33). As Grosz argues, while there is no one real body/self because we perform the roles and behaviours set out for us by the various social and cultural narratives in which we are positioned, our positioning within this framework may be unknown to us (1994). I acknowledge that I was more comfortable when clothed, at ease within the social conventions that this marked, a point that one respondent noted and which drew my attention to my positioning within the social frame: "the re-assertion of your social self with your clothes was a very striking moment. Interesting that this was when you spoke to us too".

Stripping to nudity then, revealed divisions between the social self and the performance act which the audience and I interpreted in different ways, with our opinions on neutrality contradictory. The audience's separation of me from my body could be attributed to a need to distance themselves from the body as a sexual object in case their reactions compromised how they were perceived in this social setting (Hadley, 2014). Solga's description of watching *UFS* reveals a similar division. Her words focus on the performers' bodies – "I wanted to show their *bodies* respect", "I could choose to bear witness to their *bodies*", a reaction of acceptance and respect, yet by describing them in this way, she dislocates the performer from her body (Solga, 2016: 28-29, my emphasis). It is the performers themselves who request the attention and respect of the audience, but Solga's phrases retain a hint of bodily objectification that demonstrate a privileged gaze, often seen as male, but in this case being the fully clothed audience compared to the unclothed and therefore vulnerable performers. This same sense of objectification is seen in the descriptions of my performance – "it was just the body". Although I intended to

present myself as an object for visual consumption, framing my body in such a way as to allow it to be seen in a sexless way, I used this strategy to portray my lived experience of ME, experienced through the soma or bodymind, incorporating physical, mental and emotional elements of embodied identity (Fraleigh, 2015; Zarrilli, 2004). The responses reveal more about the audience's need to separate the person from the body to be comfortable to discuss it. The audience's perceptions of the gesture display their interpretation of the cognitive as well as physical phenomenon I wanted to express, as I will discuss, but when dealing with the topic of nudity, there is a clear divide between me and my body in the audience's language. As Heathfield notes, "Performance explores the paradoxical status of the body as art... simultaneously questioning its objectification by deploying it as a disruption of and resistance to stasis and fixity" (Heathfield, 2004: 11).

4.4.2 Audience interaction and a community of care

My act of undressing was the turning point for audience involvement as I requested their help in holding my clothes – a literal invitation to participate in which their response became integral to the unfolding performance as they were aware of being spectated upon themselves (White, 2013). I hoped to reduce the perceived risk for the audience members to take part by undressing in a perfunctory way to avoid a sexualised view of me, an effort that the audience noted in the discussion saying that it was not provocative. I addressed them in direct manner such as, "Would you hold my jeans, please?" or "Would you hold my underwear, please?" I chose underwear that did not frame my body for erotic appeal, with black short-style knickers and a vest, which one audience member noted presented my body in a neutral way: "I think what helped in framing yourself as a body was your choice of clothing... you didn't wear a bra you just wore a t-shirt and shorts". I was aware that despite my requests, the audience's reaction to what I asked of them was uncertain as their horizon of expectations may be built on the general understanding that performance creators take authority for the action, while audience members are not directly involved (Bennett, 1997; White, 2013). A change to this status quo poses risk to each party, as both must surrender some control of their part of the exchange, and like Harwood's instructions for the 'zoo keepers', my requests questioned the levels of authority in the performance transaction, as the audience could accept or refuse what I asked of them, considering any risk that they perceived in their participation. All the people I asked complied with my requests, however, in the group discussion, one man stated that he would not have held my clothes if asked, a reaction that I knew was a possibility because as White suggests, "interactive work must be allowed to clash with those that it invites to participate" (2013: 19). I would have simply asked another member of the audience if someone chose not to accept my request, but his comments revealed the need for risk management in my performance, particularly in handling my clothing.

I decided not to wear a bra partly to eliminate this specifically female garment from my performance, but also so that as I undressed, the final garments I removed would be my knickers and vest, and I could fold my knickers

inside the vest, before asking someone to hold them. With this 'audience friendly' bundle, I was attempting to minimise a perceived risk to social order that Classen argues has come about in the occularcentric West, where barriers of touch and proximity in daily life and social interaction have resulted in "heightened awareness of bodily boundaries" (2005: 259). In my experience in performance training, boundaries of touch were broken through dance, friendly affection and the handling and sharing of clothes and costumes, but it was understood that knickers were never removed, remaining the final barrier to nudity and therefore to personal space. Intimate items, particularly those associated with the orifices of the body, may retain bodily fluids, which Grosz contends retain a sense of subjectivity, and when detached from the subject itself, produce a reaction of disgust (1994). Julia Kristeva argues that these items are 'abject', that which "falls away from [the body] while remaining irreducible to the subject/object and inside/outside oppositions" (quoted in Grosz: 192). These abjections reveal the privileging (and therefore fetishisation) of some body parts, while leaving others unrepresented, particularly in relation to the female body, what Grosz argues is "the consequence of a culture effectively intervening into the constitution of the value of the body" (192). Kristeva also identifies that there is a sense of threat in the bodily fluids of each sex, stemming from the unknowability of sexual difference, but which carries additional implications in a post AIDS crisis era, where the legacy of contamination and the subsequent risk to health is still in mind (in Grosz, 1994). Handing my underwear to a spectator then, was fraught with the social implications of potentially fetishised body parts and possibly real health risks in the minds of the spectators, increasing the risk I took in making this request of them.

Asking for the audience's assistance as I undressed allowed them to view me with less fear of invading my privacy and made them feel more connected to me as a performer, as one audience member explained:

> It made it more personal. I think from an audience point of view, it made it feel like it was ok to watch you doing that because you were asking for our permission, for our help, so it made it more of a connection for me personally to watch you undress yourself, because you were engaging with us.

This response shows awareness of how the essentially collaboratively process of my undressing made the performance space a meeting point of public and private domains – private through my action of undressing, and public in the audience's witnessing and participation in that act (Heddon, 2008). Their willingness to assist me may have been through recognition of my vulnerable position in a room of clothed and therefore privileged spectators; as one response stated, "[I] felt performer was safe and vulnerable at same time". While in theatre, the audience is cast in a role of separation which prevents a sense of community between performer and audience (Blau, 1990), live art events such as mine unify performance space and spectators' space, making performer and spectator joint witnesses to the event (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Heddon, 2008). For me, the sense of community generated through the audience's acceptance of my requests for help contributed to the autopoietic feedback loop, making me feel accepted and supported and mitigating the vulnerability of my exposure, both as a physical act of displaying my nudity and in outing my disability. As in Shaw's *Ruff* (2016), being open about having a disability, both through the

programme notes and by portraying my phenomenology through gesture, meant that I considered my requests as casting the audience in the role of care-givers, asking for assistance in the act of making my invisible disability visible (O'Brien, 2014). The audience's behaviour portrays their tacit perception of their role as care-givers, and their descriptions of personal engagement highlight the connection with me that was forged through interaction. These temporary communities, created through the communicative power of proximity, blend the aesthetic and the social, transforming its witnesses through the construction of new consciousness (Blau, 1990).

4.4.3 Space, proximity and social conventions

The framing of the space in *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* explored how perceptions of space influenced the audience's choices in movement and how this affected their perception of my body and gesture. The instruction that the audience should move around the space and view me from all angles was greeted with surprise as some audience members facial expressions showed. As one person stated in the group discussion, movement is "generally not expected of an audience member in 'traditional performances'", revealing how their horizon of expectations was challenged in this event (Bennett, 1997; McConachie, 2008). In the first performance the audience was smaller, less conducive to personal comfort, increasing awareness of the influence of audience action and inhibiting their movement choices; a number of responses suggested that movement might have disrupted the performance or spoilt the atmosphere, showing a reflexive awareness of the effects of the autopoietic loop (Elam, 1980; Bennett, 1997; Fischer-Lichte, 2008). In discussion, one person posited, "If everybody had started moving around I would have felt more comfortable to do that", a point proved by the larger audience of the second performance which demonstrated "homogeneity of response" in movement (Elam, 1980: 96). This increase in motion contributed an ebb and flow of energy to the atmosphere of the performance, a rhythm which the audience acknowledged impacted their individual choices of action (Wiles, 2014). This also affected my experience of the performance, as at these times I was aware of the audience's proximal choices in viewing me, which in turn drew my attention to my performance as a spectacle for their view.

The audience members generally positioned themselves far away from me, close to the walls, choices which portray a tacit understanding that in this spatial arrangement, power increased with greater proximity to the central point of focus (McConachie, 2008). Space also acts as a metaphor for knowing through vision, so greater proximity to me would be associated with familiarity while maintaining a distance would ensure I, as subject, remained foreign (Garland-Thomson, 2009), an important social implication considering my nudity (Hall, 2003). As one respondent explained, "I kept to the edges as that was what was expected of us/me – or so I felt". Nudity is often considered more taboo in live performance than in cinematic performance, as there is no screen to keep the action at a safe distance, making the space shared (Bennett, 1997). One person stated that my nudity "was kind of shocking in a small space and I was interested in that" and another linked the naked female body to concerns for

"proximity and safety". Grehan argues that the relationship between performer and spectator in performance art generates "an intimate space" in which proximity and touch (although not necessarily physical touch) are the means of communication (Grehan, 2009: 28). The audience's lexical choices such as "confined" and "invade" suggest their understanding of this intimacy, and their unwillingness to breach the invisible barriers of touch and proximity in normal social interaction, despite this being a scenario which did not prescribe to these conventions (Classen, 2005). One respondent stated, "I really wanted to approach you to do something in solidarity. Maybe to see what you want to say by interacting. However, I thought this might spoil the performance", a decision which prioritised the aesthetic value of the event over individual intention by allowing it to continue uninterrupted (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Shalson, 2013). In discussion, this woman suggested that this interaction might have been simply to stand close to me, which I would have interpreted as companionship through the shared experience of a female body, but when asked if my reaction would have changed if a man had done this, I posited that I would feel more confrontational and defensive of my right to appear in this manner. Grosz notes that we are we are just as quick to perceive and protect the area outside of the body as we are our internal body, and that "The size and form of this surrounding space of safety is individually, sexually, racially, and culturally variable" (1994: 79). My different reaction across the gender divide may have been because my nudity altered the quality of this space: Grosz explains that the area may be thinner in areas that we are more likely to tolerate touch with strangers, such as the hands, and thicker in privatised areas, which in the case of my nudity, increased awareness across my whole body. The audience were also aware that sexual difference influenced their proximal choices to me, with one man explaining that he wanted to move closer to me but did not, fearing judgement from the women in the room, saying "My relationship with the other audience members in that piece was complex". Postdramatic theatre, sharing themes with my performance style, questions spectators' security in their responses and behaviour by drawing attention to spectatorship as a contingent part of the performance event (Shalson, 2013). This man demonstrated awareness of how his response would be spectated upon, and that as a man, his response was more likely to be judged as sexually voyeuristic (White, 2013; Mulvey, 2005).

In this performance, I explored how the performer takes agency as object of attention and sets the bounds of acceptable or invited audience interaction (Shalson, 2013; White, 2013), as in Abramović's performance *Rhythm 0* (1974), and Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1965). Although I had been clear in my invitation for the audience to move around the space however they chose, I assumed that the audience would not interact with me verbally or touch me during the performance. It is noteworthy however, that no-one chose to breach the invisible barriers of proximity or touch, barriers which I did not explicitly enforce, but which were clearly perceived through the audience's proximal choices and verbal responses. This demonstrated the deeply rooted privileging of the visual sense and the concurrent debasement of tactility which establishes and maintains boundaries around, and controls access to individualised bodies in social settings (Classen, 2005). In discussion the audience questioned how I would have reacted if they had tried to interact with me, but I was only able to imagine as far as making eye contact if someone approached me and tried to touch or speak to me. For me, performance was a safe medium to

share my body in a performed outing of my invisible disability, due to the tacit understanding of the performer's position of power (Elam, 1980). From experience of the transactions of traditional theatre I assumed that the audience would accept the level of activity that I prescribed, and not take more authority than I allowed them, yet their questions highlighted that our interaction was governed more by the rhetoric of social convention than by any explicit parameters that I had put in place.

4.4.4 The gesture through time

One of my intentions with *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* was to explore the idea that time is "a product of structures of thought" and to examine how I might frame the experience of time for the audience to draw attention to its construction (Heathfield, 2004: 10). Preparing to perform *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* I wanted to time the deterioration of the gesture so that it culminated at the end of the 15 minute soundtrack, when the rhythm was at its fastest, reflecting a period of deterioration from a good level of energy to a low one due to illness intrusiveness. Because I wanted the audience to view the full process of disintegration, I briefed my technical supporter to cut the soundtrack if he saw me reach the point of total gestural deterioration, to save the possibility of the soundtrack continuing to play while I had reached the end of the movement. Although this gave me a sense of security before I started, I was preoccupied by this possibility in the performance, and less able to engage somatically. As with *Untitled*, I had assumed that the performance must go as planned, demonstrating how the conventions of traditional theatre endured in my expectations of performance, as in theatre, the performer aims for repeatability, while in performance art, the singular and transformational act is prized (Shalson, 2013). In the second performance I let go my need to control this element, realising that while I may have specific intentions as procedural author, the construction of meaning was dependent on the uniqueness of the event and its audience (Bennett, 1997; Bleeker, 2008; Elam, 1980; White, 2013). I was more somatically engaged and experienced a psychophysical connection meaning that I progressed more slowly through the pattern of deterioration and had not come to the end of the movement when the soundtrack ended. This link between somatic connection and the perception of time would become a focus for my practice in the final case study.

The audience responses showed that the soundtrack was influential in their perception of the passing of time and affected their perception of the gesture. My intention that the increasing rhythm of the soundtrack would be linked with my movement was corroborated with the audience's descriptions of stress, tension and a sense of anticipation, proving as McConachie contends that "Spectatorial empathy appears to be strongest when combinations of sound and movement entrain our bodies" (2008: 71). The audience also linked the increase in tempo with their perception of my gesture:

> I wonder how fast this is going to get, I wonder if it's going to get frantic, because it was dictating, you know, the speed of your movements.

> It made me focus a lot more on the muscle tension, because the music was getting more frantic and your moves were getting more frantic.

The descriptions of my movement as 'frantic' also implies that these respondents interpreted a sense of urgency, perhaps due to the neurological response in which watching someone doing an action brings about a similar experience as carrying out that action oneself (McConachie, 2008). The deteriorating pattern of my movement and the physicality of my body prompted the audience to reflect on growth, life and death, supporting Heathfield's contention that the presence of the body in live art events make it impossible to consider liveness without also death as the two are inextricably and connotatively linked (Heathfield, 2004). Conceptually, death may be considered as the end of time, marking the end of the natural cycle of birth, growth, life and death in a shared and embodied understanding of universal markers of the temporal progression of the human body (Morris, 2008). This normal order of meaning-making is likely to have been influential in a collective construction of meaning (Heathfield, 2004) as audience responses described an interpretation of this life cycle, with phrases including: "the circle of life", "female aging", "youth and inspiration, old age and death", "how time speeds up as you age", and "the body at its best and in its deteriorated form". Many respondents identified that their feelings changed as time went on, inferring a connection between my movement and the passage of time through their reflections on struggle, deterioration and loss (appendix 6). Negative words in the semantic fields of tiredness and exhaustion expressed a sense of degradation or deterioration to describe the gesture and an understanding that the time of the performance was constructed through my embodied subjectivity (Heathfield, 2004). One respondent articulated, "The music was very tense, especially at the end, the echoing and the speed, it sort of adds to what obviously you're trying to achieve with the tiredness or the exhausted nature", again demonstrating the strong link between sound and movement in spectatorial empathy (McConachie, 2008).

(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See requested that time be read queer, by drawing attention to its passage in a way that might de-habitualise or destabilise perceptions of time (Jones and Heathfield, 2012). By increasing the speed of the soundtrack and decreasing the displacement of my embodied space, I attempted to portray a new understanding of time and temporality (Lepecki, 2004) to reflect the subjective experience of chronicity – the body controlled through time (Charmaz, 1991; Morris, 2008). I intended that the cyclical but decreasing movement and the subtly increasing rhythm would disrupt the normal sense of time, what Henri Bergson calls 'clock time' (in Jones and Heathfield, 2012). While clock time is sectioned and proportioned through language, the subjective experience of time is composed through the thoughts, feelings and sensations of experience, and is therefore in a constant state of flux and ongoing creation. The responses describing that the performance seemed to last for longer than 15 minutes, that they wondered when the movement would end and what would happen when it did point to the audience's subjective experience of time and could be interpreted as describing a sense of endurance. One woman's response in the group discussion demonstrates how the link between my movement and the soundtrack caused a shift in perception: "I thought I'd imagined it speeding up... because I felt that you had slowed down so much that to me the music was just the same metronome with some added effects". Her response may

have been due to an embodied and empathetic reaction in which spectators mirror the rhythm of the performer's movement, which in this case altered her perception of the soundtrack's rhythm (McConachie, 2008).

My use of the altered soundtrack combined with my deteriorating movement in space presented time as a way of being and feeling, as performance artist La Ribot describes her own work (Heathfield, 2004). She uses time as a way to draw attention to the corporeal existence of the witnesses of the event, with time not as the central factor but a means of inviting individual response. My own approach similarly presented my experience of time as a shared event, allowing the spectators and me to find our own resonances and embodied experiences in the performance. In the group discussion, it was clear that the performance had prompted the ambivalent engagement that Grehan describes, as the position of other that I adopted required the spectators to come to an individual response (2009). One person reflected on the embodied perspective the performance encouraged in the audience: "I honestly did not expect you to be naked and perform in such a way that could get me engaged, thinking and reflecting on my personal experiences". A number of audience members highlighted their increased awareness of their spectatorship, noting how the performance made them interrogate their own beliefs about voyeurism, and come to a new perspective. Many people expressed interest in this self-reflection, suggesting that a performance of longer duration would offer them the opportunity to further explore their spectatorship. The concept of the subjective experience of time and endurance broached by the audience's responses and my own experiences of chronicity prompted me to reflect on the different interpretations of endurance, concepts that I explored in the third case study.

4.5 Drawing conclusions

In *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* I explored methods of outing myself as an invisibly disabled performer to address how the gestural body functions as a site for communication through space and time. Because my disability does not provoke stares, I orchestrated an unusual event for invisible disability, creating a scenario in which I chose to make my disability stare-able, managing my self-presentation and creating an opportunity to reciprocate the gaze through interaction, challenging the dynamic of the encounter and questioning normal social interaction (Garland-Thomson, 2009). To out myself, I used the concept of uncovering (Branfman, 1997), which I interpreted as both a form of queer outing and a literal process of undressing to make an aspect of my subjectivity visible to the audience. In this performance, I used nudity in three ways, which had generated a number of discoveries around the research questions, some of which overlapped or contradicted one another. The first use of nudity was as a way of uncovering the invisibility of my disability, questioning the assumption that disability is visible (Cosenza, 2010; Fassett and Morella, 2008; McRuer, 2006). *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* subverted the neoclassical references by disabled artists such as Mary Duffy and Marc Quinn through images of visibly disabled bodies, questioning Siebers' disability aesthetics through my whole and apparently healthy body. This new view, I

might call it an invisibility aesthetics, opens up a disability aesthetics that, in Siebers' own argument is "worthy of future development" (2010: 3) by recognising that disability is not a binary of visible presence or absence (McRuer, 2006; Fassett and Morella, 2008). For me, the notion of uncovering held the additional implication that I would be revealing my 'true' self (Malik, 2008), an idea which I now consider underdeveloped, but at the time carried a sense of emotional vulnerability and risk. It had drawn my attention to the division I made between my 'true' self, which I revealed through nudity, and my social self, which the audience had linked to my being dressed. I was beginning to understand the contradiction that Grosz describes of the body: "The body is neither – while also being both – the private or the public, self or other, natural or cultural" (1994: 23). Through this case study I developed my understanding of the self as multifaceted and in a state of ongoing identification; as Fassett and Morella identify, performance is "emergent from and formative to our bodies in ways that are palpable and meaningful" (2008: 152). Inviting the audience to participate in my uncovering by asking them to hold my clothes had created a community of care, which made me feel more comfortable to expose myself, both literally and metaphorically. There was risk associated with interaction both for me and the spectators, but what was an unknown and unknowable body for the audience became one they could identify with by my granting them permission to share in the performance through interaction, making my body an effective site to communicate my previously invisible disability.

The second way I used nudity was to reveal my body as innately human rather than sexually specific to draw attention to the embodied visceral experience that my gesture portrayed (Jones, 2004). As I have identified, making the audience complicit in my nudity through interaction was helpful to frame my sexual difference invisibly and allow them to focus on my embodied experience (Schneider, 1997). Audience responses interpreting ideas of fatigue, deterioration and exhaustion, and the strong connection they saw between my movement and the soundtrack show that elements of space and time, such as the displacement of the embodied space and its rhythm through time are influential in perceptions of gesture in performance. My intention of presenting time as a construction of subjective experience (Jones and Heathfield, 2012) was also effective to queer time, as the audience responses revealed their awareness of destabilised perceptions of the passage of time and interpretations of my movement as everlasting.

The third way I used nudity was as a feminist act, using my sex to draw attention to spectatorship and the process of looking (Diamond, 1998; Furse, 2018; Jones, 2012; Mulvey, 2005). The effects of my nudity were seen in both the audience's and my awareness of the implications of the gender divide on our roles as participants and in how we were viewed by others. The trend in movement choices that did not breach invisible barriers of proximity to me, and responses suggesting that I was in a position of vulnerability also demonstrated the pervasive influence of sexual difference, which can impede a view of the body as a site for communication by creating rhetorical social barriers to interaction (Classen, 2005). I was interested that a number of audience members felt inhibited to move closer to me because they were aware that their choices of proximity would be spectated upon as part of the

event, and I wanted to experiment further with methods of framing to explore how I might encourage the audience to move across the invisible boundaries to proximity with me.

Moving towards the next case study, I wanted to more deeply interrogate my understanding of the construction and performance of self (Goffman, 1990) with particular focus on the construction of self through chronic time (Charmaz, 1991; Jones, 2012; Morris, 2008). Continuing to investigate perceptions of the invisibly disabled body would be reliant on my willingness to offer myself as an example of lived experience, but this case study, whether through workload or the emotional experience of baring myself for the workshop performances had had an emotional and physical impact on me. I became ill between the two performances of *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* and struggled with symptoms of ME and depression for some months afterwards, meaning that my priority had to be maintaining stable physical, mental and emotional levels before I could consider framing my experience for research again. Moving forwards, I would have to balance the self-care needed to manage the fluctuations of my health with my intention of using my embodied experience as an analytical strategy in research.

Chapter 5: Case Study 3 – *Screening My(Self): Reflections*

5.1 Introduction

The second case study had left me with a number of questions and areas to explore further. By framing my body as an object for visual consumption, I had intended to question the visibility status of disabilities and make an aspect of my lived experience of ME visible (Cosenza, 2010; Fassett and Morella, 2008; McRuer, 2006). However, audience reactions were split between those who found my nudity a stopping point, and those who saw past my sex to the human experience of the body. The social and cultural taboo of nudity also influenced the audience's movement in the workshop space, and I now wanted to find a way of overcoming the invisible barriers the audience perceived in viewing me, to investigate the movement choices they might make without them.

I was interested in the process by which the invisibly disabled performer claims agency of her body, submitting to the needs of chronic illness but framing this experience for performance (O'Brien, 2014). This enquiry was particularly pertinent as I was experiencing a bad period of health which had begun during the last case study and continued since. Both my mental and physical strength were very low and had required me to take time away from my work, which had shifted my priorities as I now returned to research (Charmaz, 1991). I had been trying to accept that my output of work had been greatly reduced, as I had to concentrate on maintaining a basic level of health, what Morris describes as "that which must already be provided for" (2008). I wondered how I might approach my practice research within these reduced limits and without a further detrimental effect on my wellbeing. While the timing of this particular low period could be seen as inopportune, it forced me to consider ways of working that emerged from my needs, and to reconsider my perceptions of the work I should be producing (Marsh and Burrows, 2017). *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* had explored concepts of repetition and deterioration, and focused on time as a subjective construct of thought (Jones and Heathfield, 2012), ideas which I now intended to explore in relation to the construction of embodied identity in illness and disability (Charmaz, 1991; Leder, 1990; Morris, 2008; O'Brien, 2014; Sparkes and Smith, 2007, 2011). I wanted to include duration in my practice research but in doing so, needed to confront expectations and perceptions of duration with particular relation to disability. As Gómez-Peña identifies, the "cult of innovation" in performance art demands newer and more boundary pushing works from artists (2004: 79), an unhealthy requirement that overlooks the possibilities that work produced through different embodied realities can offer (Lepecki, 2004). I have learnt that it is through submitting to the needs of my body that I have control; by living within my capabilities, I can be emancipated from the struggle of pushing those same boundaries (O'Brien, 2014). What effect would taking control of my body by submitting to the limits of chronic illness have on my performance practice and on perceptions of my body? How would duration be a feature? I approached these enquiries in the final case study to investigate the research question

- How does the gestural body function as an effective site for communication through space and time?

5.2 Continuing practice research

The period of bad health I had been experiencing since the last case study had impacted me emotionally and mentally as well as physically, and regaining balance in this phase of psychosomatic cause and effect was difficult. I questioned how much of this relapse was due to the physical demands of my work in the previous case study, and how much of an impact the notion of baring myself to the audience, both literally and metaphorically, had brought about. Considering using nudity once again for the final case study, I realised that this level of exposure had had a greater emotional impact than I had anticipated. My challenge now was to use the process of undressing as a metaphor for uncovering but to minimise my nudity, both to avoid some of the inhibitions the audience had felt in viewing me, and to reduce the sense of exposure I felt in framing myself for the audience's view. While social and cultural taboos such as nudity or touch may make physical intimacy obvious, the act of looking itself can hold great intimacy, and many artists and scholars have explored ways of controlling or directing spectators' gaze (Jonas, 1970; Krystufek, 1996; Mulvey, 2005; Phelan, 1988; Sprinkle, 1992). Artists Joan Jonas (1970), Elke Krystufek (1996) and Annie Sprinkle (1992), each use intimate bodily actions in their performance art, but these become secondary subjects to the way the artist frames her experience for view. The artists control the audience's gaze and direct it to where they choose through carefully enacted invitations, which can engender a sense of agency by reframing embodied narratives on the performer's terms (Heddon, 2008). Performance artists Linda Park-Fuller and Tami Spry similarly achieve agency through performing their embodied narratives of illness, Park-Fuller describing how she presents herself as survivor rather than sufferer of breast cancer, while Spry finds that using her body for performance "enables me to speak the personally political in public, which has been liberating and excruciating, but always in some way enabling" (quoted in Heddon, 2008: 3).

I began to look at how I could frame my embodied experience in performance through veiling, as the central concept of this garment is the act of concealing and revealing (Heath, 2008), which aligned with my research into covering or uncovering as a form of queer outing (Branfman, 2015). Dance pioneer Loie Fuller used enormous swathes of fabric in her work at the beginning of the 20th century, distancing the veil from specific geographic, cultural or religious connotations to make veiling a theatrical device (Garelick, 1995). Fuller performed at the World's Fair in 1900, an exhibition of the technological advancement and colonial expansion of New Imperialism, at which a number of exhibits featured so-called 'exotic' or 'oriental' women, displayed behind windows living their 'colonial' lives for the public to view. Rhonda Garelick (1995) argues that Fuller's work acted in response to this method of presenting women as spectacle to the public, evolving from veils to include glass screens and mirrors. One performance of Fuller's featured a two-way mirror at the front of the stage, allowing the audience to watch her dancing as she watched her own reflection. Garelick contends, "In placing herself inside a glass case

(and one of her own creation), Fuller literalized and played with the scientific voyeurism of the other spectacles" (92). This visionary performance confronted the fetishistic convention of the display of colonial women, by creating a scenario in which the gaze operated one way only, challenging the accepted notion of the active gaze decades before Mulvey's seminal work, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (2005). By using the mirror as a screen that both separated her from the audience and functioned as a window through which to view her, Fuller presented herself not just as the object to be viewed, as a butterfly might be seen pinned behind glass, but the taxidermist as well, actively presenting herself as subject for the audience's voyeurism (Alloula, 1986). This was a pioneering move by Fuller, and one that resonated with my own research through the paradox of the feminist presenting herself as spectacle for the audience (Conroy, 2010; Diamond, 1988; Jones, 2012). This concept was also broached by performance artist Carolee Schneeman in her body-based work in the 1970s in which she, like Fuller, questioned if she could be "both image and image-maker", using her visual actions to assert her own authority over the presentation of her body, confronting previous taboos and destabilising male artists' configurations of the female body (Schneeman, quoted in Johnson, 2013: 1).

I began to consider ways that I might re-frame this paradox for the final workshop performance. In the previous case study I had experimented with feminist theories through fetishistic conventions which objectified the female body by placing it on a pedestal; I now carried this notion forward, actively placing myself as object for view behind a screen. In my performance, a screen would operate as both a physical veil or boundary between the audience and myself, and as a method of mediatising the gaze (Garelick, 1995). This resurrected ideas from my first case study when I had considered controlling the gaze through mirrors and screens, drawn to my reliance on the mirror from dance training, where self-surveillance was vital to further physical skill but privileged the visual sense, placing it above somatic engagement. I wanted to explore the use of mirrors in the construction of the sense of self, drawing on research into the development of subjectivity through mirrors (Bleeker, 2008). Hadley asserts, "[The infant] becomes a subject, with a social identity, and agency, only when it is able to see itself as an integrated individuated whole", a view which takes its own image as object (through the mirror) but recognises that it has a simultaneous experience as subject doing the looking (2014: 39). I intended to use mirrors in my practice to bring together the subjective experience of my disability with the objective view a mirror would afford me of how I looked in this performance. I approached these ideas to explore how two-way mirrors might be used to control both my own and the audience's gaze of my gestural body, creating a new staring encounter that privileged the visual sense to further investigate the visibility of my disability (Garland-Thomson, 2005a).

5.3 The workshop

5.3.1 Framing

I took Fuller's use of a two-way mirror, developing it from a one-dimensional screen (appendix 1, journal pages 98 and 104) to a box that would screen me on all sides and provide me with a 360 degree reflection of myself when standing inside it (figure 14). The notion of screening suggested the physical separation or veiling of my body from the audience, but also referenced the mediatisation of my body as image to be viewed (Garelick, 1995; Mulvey, 2005). The concept of screens that simultaneously hid and displayed was encapsulated in the title *Screening My(Self): Reflections*, which played with the word screening as both a method of concealment and display, interpreting the concept through the use of parentheses. By including 'reflections' in the title, I alluded to the mirrors that would create images of my body while also referring to the ongoing process of reflexivity that has been key to my practice research. The multiple images of me that the screens reflected resurrected Fuller's use of mirrors in her patented work featuring mirrors angled to form an octagonal room that reflected her image, filling the space with identical, synchronised dancers. Alloula (1986) compares this multiplicity to the mass reproduction of images of colonial women at the time; my work also played with socially acceptable forms of looking at both female and disabled bodies through the multiplied, mediatised images that the mirrors created (Garland-Thomson, 2005b). I presented myself as object of the gaze in a manner similar to performance artist Skip Arnold in *On Display* (figure 15) or Hannah Wilke's *What Does This Represent/What Do You Represent* (figure 16), in which Wilke constructs herself as "literally 'cornered' by the gaze" (Jones, 1998: 159). In my performance I was boxed in by the gaze, with the simple wooden batons of the screens creating frames that suggested the windows of sex workers in red light districts or peep shows (figure 17), codifying my appearance as fetish object. The spectators, who could move freely, carrying their gaze from any angle, seemed to be in a position of privilege and authority while I was static, trapped by the screens that allowed their view. However, by taking this position, and communicating that I could not see the audience but only my own reflection (appendix 8), I took an active role, with my own gaze pre-empting the criticism that the female body inevitably receives (Butler, 1988), and which would traditionally come from the active, and often presumed to be male, gaze (Diamond, 1997). Additionally, my movement, as opposed to a stationary pose, threatened the interpretation of my body as sexualised object, adjusting the visual codes of looking at female bodies for my own purpose (Jones, 1998).

Schneider argues that the work of female artists has the potential to disrupt normal or appropriate views of the body by making their bodies explicit and refusing to vanish, a disruption necessary to effect cultural change (Schneider, 1997). Drawing on Schneider's theory, my research attempted to make the invisibly disabled body explicit by being transparent about my experiences, a lexical choice used in performance to convey a quality of honesty or revelation. This was reflected in *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* through my use of nudity, in which I searched for the vanishing point of my disability, and allowed others to see through my performance of self to my lived experience of ME (Phelan, 1993). In *Screening My(Self): Reflections,* I continued to make the invisibly disabled body explicit through transparency, in both my research method of performing my embodied experience, and the transparent material that framed me for view. Artist Oleg Kulik uses glass and mirrors as filters to transform reality, offering a way to see through and alter what is perceived (Kulik, 2004). In my performance, the unique material of

the two-way mirrors, at once a solid screen and a window through which to direct the gaze, echoed the liminality of my disability as physical but not visible, present but see-through-able. In this way, the glass acted as a vanishing point at which I might interrogate vanishing points of both the female body and the invisibly disabled body. Schneider considers the female body as "Prime Signifier of the Vanishing Point" because the excessive representation of the female form means that it is fetishised, idolised and debased, but is always evocative, assumed to be representative of something while carrying no inherent meaning in itself, representing a lack (1997: 5). Similarly, my invisibly disabled body was represented in excess through the many reflections of the mirror box, seen as a whole and able-looking body, meaning that its lack may go unknown: its disability is un-seeable so the invisibly disabled performer disappears in her own vanishing point.

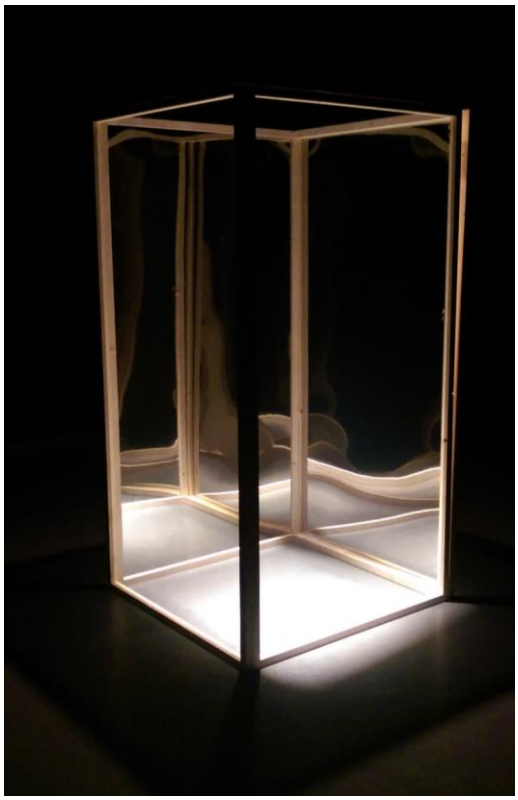


Figure 14. The two-way mirror box

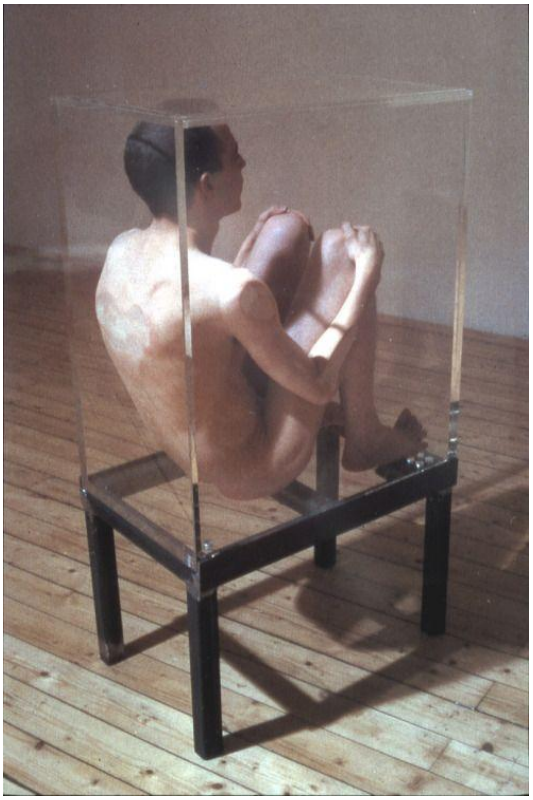


Figure 15. Skip Arnold performing *On Display* (Arnold, 1993)

Figure 16. Print of Hannah Wilke in *What Does This Represent/What Do You Represent* from the *So Help Me Hannah* series (Wilke, 1978-84)

Figure 17. Red light district workers in Amsterdam (Red light district workers)

The two-way mirrors also allowed me to explore this vanishing point through the many reflections of myself that the mirror box showed me. In my continuing investigation into the performance of self and the revelation of the 'true' self in performance, which of these reflections would show any more 'real' or 'authentic' a self than the others? Would any one of them reveal where the invisibility of my condition resided? The mirrors presented multiple images of myself, reflecting my live body. This meant that I could experience a merger of subjective and objective perspectives – I could experience myself at once as live subject of the performance and see myself as object for view within it through my reflections; as Kulik argues, glass is, "simultaneously material and ephemeral, and it is capable of 'sublimating' the most diehard oppositions" (Kulik, 2004: 56). Artists have incorporated mirrors and reflections into their work in media ranging from oil paints to photography and performance, placing the viewer into a position that merges subjective and objective perspectives (Jonas, 1970; Ulman, 2014; Van Eyck, 1434; Velazquez, 1656). Through my practice research, I had become aware that working with mirrors influenced my awareness of my subjective sense of self through my reflected image, and although I had moved away from them to let go of the aesthetic rules that my classical training had imposed, working with my reflection now allowed me to investigate reflective and reflexive possibilities (Bleeker, 2008; Whiteside and Kelly, 2016). This tactic was similarly explored by Joan Jonas in *Mirror Check* (figure 18), in which Jonas' used a mirror to construct a visual and metaphorical sense of self, narrating what she saw to the audience to control their view of her body, deconstructing the positions of power between performer and viewer (Warr, 2012). By using a two-way mirror, I also controlled the audience's view of me, framing my body for their view by showing them how I viewed myself. I

used my reflection to analyse my performance of self, creating different iterations of myself through the clothes I wore and in the transitions between them, as I will describe in the next section. In this way, the mirror became a tool to deepen my embodied sense of self by reflecting each self that I performed, and revealing my embedded habits and values through this process. This presented a multiplicity of selves in both my different performances of self through clothing, and the multiple images that the mirrors reflected. In my exploration of which of the performances or images of myself was the 'authentic' or 'true' self, and which of these might display the invisibility of my condition, it was this multiplicity that was the answer. I constructed my identity through my performance of self through time, including my identification as invisibly disabled in performances of outing, so this multiplicity of selves created myself as authentic in an ongoing process of construction (Bunzl, 1997; Butler, 1990; Fassett and Morella, 2008; Jones, 2012).

Figure 18. Joan Jonas performing *Mirror Check* (Jonas, 1970)

5.3.2 The gestural body

In *Screening My(Self): Reflections* I used clothes as part of my performance of self, drawing on Goffman's (1990) and Schweitzer's (2000) arguments that clothes are a vital aspect of the construction and presentation of self in social settings. I used different outfits to reflect the outward manifestation of three iterations of myself, and

through the gestural process of undressing and redressing in the clothes, I intended to question perceptions of the three selves presented. What would the process of becoming these versions of myself reveal about my experiences of each? I began in the same clothes that I had used in *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See*, intending to portray standardised and non-specific garment choices for women in Western society – blue jeans, a black T-shirt and flat black shoes. Although I now acknowledge that the body is inscribed by sociocultural experience, "marked by the history and specificity of its own existence" meaning that the concept of neutrality can never truly be achieved (Grosz, 1994: 142), at the time, I meant this outfit to cover my personality and therefore felt that I performed myself as neutral wearing these clothes (Branfman, 2014). The next iteration of self reflected my classical dance training: ballet tights, a leotard, a *chiffon* wrap skirt and *pointe* shoes, with my hair pinned into a French twist, choices that reflected embodied ideals of classical ballet (Pickard, 2015). Dressing in these clothes had been an important ritual to embody the ideal dancer for many years of my life, and I questioned whether I would attempt to re-embody this sense of self through this habitual process now (Whiteside and Kelly, 2016). Structurally, I wanted to suggest the process of deterioration from the previous case studies, so the third iteration would bring into visibility my experiences of relapses of ME and strategies I use to manage these symptomatic episodes. This is an iteration of myself rarely seen other than by my immediate family, partly because the changes the symptoms affect in my body language generally go unnoticed, and also because I manage my condition so that these episodes occur in the privacy of my home. By performing this self through the clothes I wore and my body language as I dressed in them, I intended to communicate some of the invisible aspects of my illness, in a process of conscious outing (Branfman, 2015; Bunzl, 1997; Cosenza, 2014b). These clothes were typical of what I wear as a method of self-care in a symptomatic episode – loose fitting trousers and a sweatshirt made of soft fabrics that will not put pressure on my limbs, and a number of layers to help control body temperature.

The process of embodying each of the three iterations of myself was an autobiographical act, in which I performed my experiences from the past, drawing attention to the performance of self. Bobby Baker's autobiographical works *Kitchen Show* (1991) and *Drawing on a Mother's Experience* (1988) similarly reference the self as a performed role, as Baker develops personal experiences into a series of live actions and gestures that make a performative act of her inner life. Heddon argues that in these performances, Baker both is and is not herself through a complex relationship of subjectivity and performance of self, a rhetoric that is crucial to autobiographical practice (2008). These acts bring about their own objectivity since performance is not reality and therefore necessitate a representation of that reality, requiring the performer to reach an understanding of that distance (Heddon, 2008). This is always an unstable area of autobiographical performance, with the representation of reality enforcing its representative quality, bordering on deconstructionist and postmodernist territories that could go on endlessly (Diamond, 1997; Heddon, 2008). As with Baker's *Kitchen Show*, I performed gestures that drew attention to my performance of self, such as my conscious attempt to perform 'neutrality', or the mannerisms of the dancer checking her appearance in the mirror. In acts such as these, the 'I' that was the subject of the piece and which was also the object that performed it, was simultaneously present and absent, the past self represented by the

present self, but in being only represented, the self of the past was missing (Heddon, 2008; Jones, 1998). This representation complicates notions of truth because "in the act of representing the self, there is always more than one self to contend with; the self is unavoidably split" (Heddon, 2008: 27). This drew attention to the multiplicity of selves that I was investigating, questioning which one of these was the 'real' or 'authentic' self, and to which one the unspoken narrative belonged. This already complex performance of self was further complicated as the performance produced a real, lived experience of disability for me. I was aware that my low level of health at the time of the workshop meant that the duration of the performance would require some endurance from me, as the emotional weight of performing a symptomatic iteration of myself for an audience, together with the psychophysical reaction that performing this private self produced, meant that I was likely to experience the very symptomatic episode that I intended to perform (Zarrilli, 2004). It would therefore be impossible to make a division between the performed self and the subjective experience of self that would coincide with the moment of performance. Heddon argues that in autobiographical works the binary of performance and reality collapses into itself through the same performing and represented self, proven in my performance (2008). It is not necessary therefore, to make distinctions between the real and the represented as both are present and absent in the performative act.

The only concept of a true self that could be arrived at is displayed through the "strategically complex and layered" multiplicity of selves in autobiographical performance (Heddon, 2008: 8). As Heddon argues, the concept of self is one that brings about identity rather than preceding it, meaning that it is through actions such as this performance, as well as the many other performative actions in daily life that I bring myself into being. Jones asserts,

> Representation does not secure the meaning of the subject. Nor is it secondary to the 'authentic' identity of the body... Rather, representation is the very way through which we take on our various identifications – both here and now... and in every moment in the future... The body always already carries with it every past encounter... (Jones, 2012: 211)

The iterations of myself in *Screening My(Self): Reflections* then, should be viewed less as a series of discrete personae or separate selves but facets of the same self, each reflecting a historical time, place or experience, but forming a single entity. To use Merleau-Ponty's analogy of the body as a prism through which we perceive the world, the facets of the prism could be said to represent the many iterations of self through time that make up an individual's identity. The presence of the artist's body in live events produces the self as a re-enactment, which "both exemplifies the iterative nature of all bodily enactment... and the yearning for authenticity and presence that continues to encourage us to privilege the 'live' over the 'representational'" (Jones and Heathfield, 2012: 16). Heddon agrees that "The 'real', even if intellectually understood as contingent, nevertheless retains its pull – and so it should, given that its impacts are often painfully tangible" (Heddon, 2008: 10). My performance displayed these concepts of reality and representation, layered in my live performing body, questioning whether my re-enactment of past experiences was any less real than my live experience in the present, and marking the

impossibility of separating the two. It investigated whether my experience of embodying each iteration would be perceived by the audience, addressing how the gestural body operates as site for communication.

5.3.3 Time

The timing of *Screening My(Self): Reflections* emerged from rehearsing the process of dressing and undressing, with a focus on the psychophysical connection brought about by my response to each iteration of myself (Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes, 2013). My physical, mental and emotional state caused subtle changes to how I embodied each performed self, influencing the real-time of the performance and I wanted to explore this experiential sense of engagement in the autopoeitic process (White, 2013). This meant confronting my sense of risk in presenting a performance in which I would appear to be doing little beyond dressing and undressing, but simply being present in the moment and responding to each iteration of myself, a process of meaning making in which "the transient and elusive nature of this presence becomes the subject of the work" (Heathfield, 2004: 9). In my research journey, this marked a further move towards minimal performance, offering new ways of viewing embodiment, subjectivity and temporality, and contesting the physical demands of the dance industry that I had previously been part of, what Lepecki describes as "an exhausting programme for subjectivity, an idiotic energetic economy, an impossible body" (2004: 127). I knew that my level of illness intrusiveness would affect my subjective experience of time passing, so there was also risk in submitting to the performance's temporality and allowing myself to experience each moment of embodied identity, subject to the physical symptoms of ME, stressors and emotional investment in the performance (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). In preparing for the workshop, I questioned whether my performance would fail to be durational if I was limited by my illness and what length of time constituted durational performance and for whom. As I had previously investigated, time is produced through subjective experience (Jones and Heathfield, 2012) and for those with chronic illness the link between the experience of time and the body is additionally complex. The experience of chronicity can lead to a "separate reality" in which definitions of achievement and success are measured in new ways (Charmaz, 1991) as markers of time belonging to the "rhythms of privilege" do not apply (Cosenza, 2014a). In *Screening My(Self): Reflections,* I again intended to queer time, opening up the understanding of duration to include my subjective experience of the time of the performance, which, dependent on my level of health on the day of the workshop, may include endurance as a feature. O'Brien (2014) distinguishes durational performance from endurance art, noting that while both carry implications of continuing through time or persistence, endurance art holds the additional meaning of suffering. He discusses a number of performers who take agency of their chronic illness by framing their experiences as endurance art. These acts are necessarily diverse and present endurance in different ways, from Jill Hocking lying on a bed covered in cabbage leaves that slowly wilted and decayed, reflecting the deterioration of her health, to O'Brien's bouncing on a trampoline to loosen the mucus that is symptomatic of his cystic fibrosis. For people experiencing illness "the lens through which they view the world (and through which the world often views them)

changes irreparably" (Lobel, 2010: 158) but by presenting these experiences of time in performance, we can open up what is often a narrow understanding of time to include more diverse subjectivities (Lepecki, 2004).

In the previous case study I had investigated time as a construct of structures of thought and the possibility of the perception of time being subject to revision and change (Heathfield, 2004). In this performance, I would continue to explore the effect of sound on the perception of time, altering the rhythm of the clock to slow down, an additional influence on my psychophysical reaction that would coincide with my deterioration into the final iteration of myself. I expected that as in *(In)visible: Tell Me What You See* this shifting tempo may influence the audience to draw parallels between my gestures and body language in a process of deterioration, linking the decrease in rhythm to my diminishing energy level. As before, the soundtrack lasted for fifteen minutes, but I accepted and allowed the possibility of reaching the final iteration of self before that time, wanting to focus on the moment-to-moment presence that would make durationality a feature of this performance. Like La Ribot's performance *Panoramix*, in which she combined many short actions of her previous performances into one durational work, I drew attention to time as an ongoing aspect of subjectivity (Heathfield, 2004). By re-enacting past iterations of myself in the present moment of the performance, I presented time as both the enduring process of becoming which extended beyond the performance, and drew attention to the time of the performance itself. La Ribot describes that in her performances, "I am not enforcing an exact length of time, I am simply giving an approximation, a possible time" in which each witness can discover their own understanding and experience of how time is produced (quoted in Heathfield, 2004: 30). Her performances do not focus on time as theatrical, a time which she describes "starts and finishes", but as "approximate", in which she provides "a relative period of time to use, a period of time that begins to be understood, and is made up by, each of us individually" (ibid). I also used this tactic to interrupt the hierarchies between performer and spectator, allowing each to coexist in the performance without pressure of obligation or responsibility and to open up their own understandings of time and temporality (Heathfield, 2004; Lepecki, 2004).

5.4 Perceptions

5.4.1 Embodied identity

I gathered feedback from the audience by giving out questionnaires immediately before the workshop that focused their attention on perceptions of the screen box, their experience of watching me through the two-way mirror and how the changes of clothes I wore impacted their impressions of me (appendix 8). I had planned to conclude the workshop with a group discussion, but a number of audience members left the studio before I could begin this, and the remaining people were tutors and examiners who were unable to provide commentary. This was disappointing as the group discussions in the previous case studies had been valuable for data collection, as

people are able to be more expansive in conversation than in writing, and the informality of a group can engender greater confidence than individualised feedback allows (Morgan, 1996).

I recorded my experience of the workshop in my journal before coming to the feedback from the audience in order to gain insight to my fleeting and transitory phenomenology prior to analysis (Kozel, 2007). From this entry, I can see how my somatic awareness came in waves, with my focus shifting between body-as-subject and body-as-object, an experience that somatic practitioners argue occurs in the pre-reflective realm (Fraleigh, 1987; Ravn, 2010). My journal entry describes my shifts in focus between the audience's and my own perception:

> Catching sight of my anxious expression and that moment of objectivity that helped me to choose to experience the 'now' differently.
>
> Undressing and feeling that surge of awareness that accompanies nudity, feeling exposed and wondering what they thought of me doing this, what they thought of my body. Distracted into the moment by a twisted bra strap...
>
> ...feeling the thrill of magic, of otherworldliness that saw me balance on the tiny platform, knowing that others would be watching me in that moment with wonderment. The reality of my changed body, my lack of musculature that made this process, so habitual years before, unfamiliar. (Appendix 1, journal pages 114-115)

These reflections demonstrate moments when I saw my body-as-object by considering how I appeared to the audience; realising that my expression was anxious, wondering what the audience thought of my nudity, or considering their reactions to my *pointe* work. They also show how this awareness called my attention back to my body-as-subject; realising that I felt anxious, that I wanted to fix my bra strap or that I could no longer perform as I used to. Fraleigh posits that the body can be experienced as either body-subject - recognising the "unity of body and self in action" and experiencing the world moment-to-moment, or as body-object - denoting the attention given to the body as object for consideration (1987: 13). However, taking the body as object is complicated since one's own body can never be fully objectified; it always retains an element of self-ness (ibid). Ravn similarly agrees that in this realm of consciousness, the body cannot be reduced to mere object as when we reflectively examine our subjective bodily sensations we take our body as object *for experience* (2010). My description demonstrates this complex merger of body-as-subject and body-as-object, with the mirror precipitating my shifts in awareness between the two.

Mirrors are used in the development of self by affording a distanced view of the body; as Bleeker explains, the subject can take up an understanding of itself as a unified body/self "from a point of view outside the body" (Bleeker, 2008: 6). This objectivity is vital in the way we choose to present and construct our sense of self, demonstrated in my performance as the mirror allowed me to view my attempts to embody each iteration of self, contributing to this embodiment (Goffman, 1990). Whiteside and Kelly's study (2016), which applies Goffman's presentation of self to an adult ballet class, argue that outward appearance is a vital factor in the understanding of embodiment, a term they use to describe both the somatic sensations of executing prescribed ballet movements,

and the conscious outward portrayal of ballet habits and values that construct the notion of 'being a ballet dancer'. I put this theory into practice as I consciously engaged in movements, dress and styling to attempt to embody three iterations of myself. The clothing I chose offered both a view of the self I intended to embody, and a view of the attempt of that embodiment through dressing, a process which Goffman contends assists with the movement from one performed self to another (1990). By displaying this process, through undressing from one set of clothes and redressing in the next, I revealed the oncoming sense of embodiment, or attempt thereof. For example, dressed in the leotard and tights, I found a disparity between the embodied self I expected to see based on my past experiences of wearing those garments and my current sense of embodiment.

> The familiarity of the garments and the expectation of their fit on me... Looking at myself dressed up in my ballet clothes and feeing for a moment that I was playing dress-up, trying to resurrect a part that was no longer mine and this making me uncomfortable, unhappy somehow. (Appendix 1, journal pages 114-115)

I was aware of the disparity between the past self I performed and the present self that attempted that performance, what Fischer-Lichte describes as perceptual multistability (2008), and what McConachie calls oscillation (2008), a shifting awareness between personal presence and the representation of a character, in this case, my self-representation. This shifting perception occurred because the physicality of the past self was different to my present self, brought about by the effects of chronic illness in the intervening years. This drew my awareness to my sense of self as belonging to neither, but as emerging through an ongoing process of durationality which incorporated both past and present selves (Jones, 2012). As Fischer-Lichte contends, bodily acts

> do not refer to pre-existing conditions, such as inner essence, substance, or being supposedly expressed in these acts; no fixed, stable identity exists that they could express.... Bodily, performative acts do not express a pre-existing identity but engender identity through these very acts. (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 27)

I included questions to address whether the audience would notice any change in my body language as I performed each iteration: "You saw me in three different changes of clothes. How did your impressions of me shift as you saw me in each different outfit? Did my behaviour change at all as my clothing changed?" Responses noted that in my ballet clothes I behaved as though "on display", that they "made you assume a certain attitude of strength and assurance", and that "you definitely 'appeared' more confident" (appendix 9). This suggests that the audience focused on my gestural body language as I attempted to embody this version of myself, but were unaware that this attempt fell short of my expectations. As Fischer-Lichte notes, in the self-referentiality of autobiographical performance, it is clearer to the performer when these shifts in perception are happening (2008).

In the final outfit I wore, I had begun to feel the physical strain of the performance, making me feel vulnerable and exposed, uncomfortable displaying this experience of my invisible disability publicly. The following passage from my journal describes the change after the iteration of myself in ballet clothes:

> Realising the effort those momentary few steps had cost me and how breathing was suddenly harder, the energy to stand seeming more than I had. Feeling the tightness in my thighs and knees, the energy dissipating from my limbs. Telling myself that I was allowed to feel like this now, and the workshop was to allow me to show that feeling, but how hard it was to be honest, to let the internal sensations that came in waves, the symptoms that were almost imperceptible in a body that was somehow numb, to show on the outside. If I allowed my arms to shake, my hands to tremble, was I somehow hamming it up, performing something that wasn't there if it didn't normally show on the outside? (Appendix 1, journal pages 115-116)

This passage shows that I was considering how the tacit experience of my disability complicated the explicit act of performing my disability through this final iteration of myself (Henderson and Ostrander, 2010). In this instance, it was impossible to draw a line between the real and the represented, since both were imbricated in my live performing body (Heddon, 2008). I was unsure whether the inner sensations of my disability would be communicated through my gestural body, and I was wary of bringing something into visibility which would not ordinarily show in my behaviour – "was I somehow hamming it up, performing something that wasn't there if it didn't normally show on the outside?" If my experience of disability was not apparent to the audience, would I have failed to out myself as invisibly disabled or would this lack of recognition affirm the invisibility of my condition? Framing my experience of ME for performance, which had now become an act of endurance, made me question having to perform my disability in order for it to be recognised as part of my identity. Butler argues that it is in the repeated acts by which we identify ourselves that identity is constituted, and in invisible disabilities, like homosexuality, "it is precisely the *repetition* of that play that establishes as well the *instability* of the very category that it constitutes" (quoted in Albright, 1997: 9, original emphasis). Invisible disability could be viewed as an unstable identity category, once again drawing attention to its liminality as present but not visually clear, experiential but not easily communicated (Albright, 1997).

Few audience responses commented on perception of my physical sensations, with more comments on changes in my emotional state. My discomfort at revealing this private iteration of myself may have contributed to the broad theme of "hiding", as they described that my confidence seemed lowest at this stage, that I appeared "glad to be covered" and it was as though I could "take off the mask" I had previously worn (appendix 9). In empathetic reactions such as these, spectators ascribe an emotion or intention to the performer, generating meaning through a process which relies on their ability to embody another's emotional state (McConachie, 2008). The audience responses also suggest the difficulty in interpreting the subjective experience of disability through visual means (Kuppers, 2001) and as Charmaz identifies, public audiences to chronic illness "only know slices of this person's experience" (1991: 37).

5.4.2 Voyeurism and audience privilege

The audience showed awareness of their privileged position through a trend in responses describing a sense of voyeurism as they watched me perform the private actions of undressing; one comment articulated, “I wanted to watch, yet knew almost shouldn’t”. My performance requested the audience to move beyond their feelings of voyeurism, asking them to go from ‘separated staring’, in which the starer wants to look away, in this case through a sense of social propriety, to ‘engaged staring’, which Garland-Thomson describes “reaches out rather than shrinks back. It meets rather than dismisses. It intrudes, most often benevolently, because it is on an urgent mission for knowledge’ (2006: 188). Phrases like “unsettling” and “weirdly invasive” describe the audience’s feelings about watching me, and their awareness of the possible intrusion they made into my intimate actions of undressing and examining my body in the supposed privacy of the box.

The solid but transparent material of the two-way mirrors operated as both a window to frame the audience’s view of me and as a physical screen between us, creating a division between the spectators’ space and the performance space. I expected that this would minimise the perceived risk for the audience to experiment with their choices in proximity without the pressure of me as procedural author spectating on their choices, which was proved right in their movement (Heathfield, 2004; White, 2013). For the two-way mirrors to work effectively I illuminated the inside of the box with spotlights, and kept the studio unlit, contributing to the performance connotations of the event (Welton, 2012) and further suggesting the fetishistic imagery of peep shows. The relative darkness the audience were cast in increased their sense of personal space allowing them to respond instinctively (Bennett, 1997), and from the recording of the performance I could see that there was more audience movement than in the previous case study. The majority of the audience moved around the space, looking at me from different angles and experimenting with their proximity to the box, and some came particularly close, with their faces just inches from the screens, actions which had not occurred in *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See*, when the physical presence of my naked body carried socially and ethically loaded considerations in relation to proximity (Classen, 2005). With the addition of a barrier and the assurance that I would be unable to see them, the staring encounter was not relational as I could not return the gaze (Garland-Thomson, 2005b). The audience members could allow themselves to stare, secure in the knowledge that I would not see them doing it; as Garland Thomson suggests,

> The risk... in visually objectifying another is being caught doing it. Such fascinated looking is simultaneous domination and subjection... the excessive, indecorous enthrallment of staring subjugates the starer by begetting shame. (Garland-Thomson, 2009: 44)

The audience movement and particularly their close proximal choices point to the influence of the two-way mirror on their spectatorship in the staring encounter. Compared to the previous workshop when audience members avoided approaching me assuming it would be inappropriate, disruptive or uncomfortable, the physical barriers that the screens provided and the two-way mirrors worked to remove this discomfort, allowing them to move more freely.

I also used the two-way mirrors to retain a sense of privacy, minimising the exposure I felt after *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See*. Although I knew I could be seen in the mirror box, I could not see the audience, which created a vanishing point of perspective (Schneider, 1997). The audience's view was at once distanced and directed by the framing of the mirror box, which gave the viewer an omniscience like God (and subsequently, an active, male power, as in 'God the Father'), but also afforded them a disembodied invisibility – the viewer was everywhere, but to me, nowhere in particular (Schneider, 1997). I questioned how experiencing this vanishing point would influence my perception of my performance, as the body reacts physiologically to being stared at (Garland-Thomson, 2009). I had undressed in front of the audience in the previous case study, but I was no longer making them complicit in this act through interaction. Knowing that they were watching me offered a fresh perspective on my habitual actions and the values that were embedded in them for me, as this description shows:

> Seeing the strange opaque pinkness of the tights as if for the first time, and wondering how this had come about as the ideal look for ballet dancers' legs, the absurdity of this simulated natural perfection from an outsider's eye, not accustomed to the habits and values that ballet has set out for it followers. (Appendix 1, journal page 115)

I had designed the lighting to ensure the two-way mirrors worked reliably and that I would see only my reflection in the mirror but nothing of the room beyond. Standing in the mirror box, I was aware of the vanishing point in which the audience were invisible to me, but the sensation of being watched made me doubt the mirrors for a moment:

> Briefly considering whether I could see anyone in the audience, thinking I had better not try in case it made me uncomfortable, giving in to curiosity because it was a part of my perception of the event if it did make me nervous, following my line of sight and seeing nothing anyway... taking comfort in my screens as a barrier and my reflections as company, pinning me to the present moment. (Appendix 1, journal page 116)

In this passage, it is clear that the vanishing point the screens created did afford me a sense of privacy – "taking comfort in my screens as a barrier and my reflections as company". Schneider observes that in classic perspective the subject of the gaze is "blinded" (1997: 67), and I had voluntarily taken a position in which I prioritised my own gaze through seemingly private self-surveillance, meaning that being unable to reciprocate the gaze protected me from the intimacy of contact with the audience (Jones, 2012).

5.4.3 Time, duration and subjective endurance

In *Screening My(Self): Reflections* I explored durationality both through the concept of identity emerging through time, reflected in my performance of past iterations of myself, and through a focus on my subjective experience of the passage of time in the performance, influenced by my chronic illness on the day. The soundtrack of the clock was the only indication that I intended time to be a feature, and I had deliberately not addressed the audience's perception of time in the questionnaire to see whether they would link it to my movement independently.

Unfortunately, owing to an oversight by my technical assistant, the track did not slow down as I had planned but maintained a steady rhythm. I had anticipated that the gradual deceleration of the soundtrack would influence both the audience's and my perception of the duration of the performance, for me, adding to the psychophysical response to my performance, increasing my fatigue. As it happened, the soundtrack did affect my perception of time, as the lack of decreasing rhythm that I had expected to occur from five minutes into the edited soundtrack made me feel that I must have been so affected by having an audience that I had come to the end of my performance in around four minutes – a radical shift in my perception that points to the difficulty in monitoring perception of time without an external marker. Having reached the final iteration of myself in what felt like a much shorter time than I had intended, I was concerned that I had failed in my exploration of durational performance. Despite the physical and emotional effort that the performance had cost me, evidencing that for me, it had been a performance of endurance, I was aware that expectations of durational performance from those without experience of the chronicity of invisible disabilities may be different, and they may be unaware that my performance had been one of outing myself as invisibly disabled. If "we learn who we are from the responses we elicit from others" (Garland-Thomson, 2000: 334) this might mean that my performance was viewed in a different context to the one I intended, confronting the shifts in visibility that questioned 'who' or 'what' I am as a performer (Marsh and Burrows, 2017).

Discussing the long durational performances of the 1970s, Abramović expresses that it is only by going through these processes that the artist understands the energy that they both require and generate (in Heathfield, 2004). The position of subjection that the performer places herself in for performance art can act as a transformational event, and while these transformations may leave physical traces, acts of endurance can also leave marks, albeit invisibly (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). I was aware of the traces of endurance from both the previous case study and this one but as these were visceral sensations they were unlikely to be read by the audience. The "cult of innovation" that demands newer and more boundary pushing work (Gomez-Pena, 2004: 79) and sets up an "exhausting programme for subjectivity" (Lepecki, 2004: 127) has led audiences to equate acts that make visible marks such as cutting and bleeding with the notion of risk and endurance, whereas other forms of endurance, such as performances of duration, require more from the artist in terms of "risk to thought, to perception" (Abramović, quoted in Heathfield, 2004). In my performance, I had experienced risk in the vulnerability of outing myself as invisibly disabled (Fassett and Morella, 2008), and in the subsequent risk that my performance of this disability might have failed to effectively communicate with the audience (Heddon, 2008). As Jo Verrant's ironic and imaginary Disability Arts Rulebook suggests, disability should only be performed in ways that reproduce the image of disability according to accepted social models, generally as visually clear, and not exhibiting any signs of suffering: 'thou shalt not produce work that relates to pain or fatigue or anything that speaks of disability in a way that could be interpreted as weakness'" (Verrant, quoted in Lobel, 2013: 117). My performance had confronted my own awareness that expectations of disability may not be met by someone with a chronic illness, the experiences of which are unseen. This was evidenced by the audience feedback, few of which showed perception of my

physical exhaustion towards the end of the performance. As Kuppers points out, "Disability *is*, but isn't clear. Pain and muscular effort *is*, but isn't readable, and knowable" (2001: 39), an unreadable and unknowable presence that produces invisible disabilities as liminal, existing between physical presence and invisibility.

In this case study, I demonstrated the endurance of the performance of self by an invisibly disabled performer. Shalson argues for a new view of endurance within theatre in which the acts that go into theatre performance, the work of representation and repetition, become the acts of endurance (2013).

> Rather than situating endurance as what distinguishes the 'real' of performance from the pretence of theatre, this reading asks what it might mean to endure the imitated, the rehearsed, and the repeated; to take theatre literally, and to remember that such wilful acts of endurance are also acts of love. (Shalson, 2013: 161)

In her reading, my performance can be seen as existing between the reality of performance art and the representation of theatre, an act which blurs the lines of the two with a desire to perform and to make one's own experience a pivotal part of the event for both self and other. In this act, I endured the attempts to re-embody past iterations of myself, an endurance which came about through the mental and emotional effort of attempting to re-enact iterations of myself that my present self was no longer able to fulfil, and the physical effort that this attempted performance of self cost with a chronic illness. As Shalson goes on to describe

> To write of the endurance of theatre is to resist from the start a sense that *real* endurance is only involved in situations of extreme bodily pain, exhaustion, or discomfort. It is to resist the assumption that degrees of bodily difficulty are readily determinable, or that the line between genuine suffering and 'playing for sympathy' is always easy to draw. (Shalson, 2013: 161)

By enacting this performance of self, representing past iterations of myself in the present, I acknowledged that the time of the performance, and its related concepts of duration and endurance, could not be easily quantified. As in La Ribot's performance *Panoramix*, the re-enactment of past actions demonstrated that the witnesses were "in the grip of an impossible temporality – fleeting and enduring – a time that does not have its own time" (Heathfield, 2004: 8). Time was at once the duration which my acts had lasted, and the ongoing, enduring time through which my identity was constructed, beginning many years before this case study and continuing afterwards. Through my representation of iterations of myself, I could feel resonances of the present moment with the memory of the actions I had performed in the past, which now collapsed into each other in the present performance. Wiles (2014) draws on Aristotelian theory to argue that time is experienced only through the relationship of past, present and future – we exist in the 'now', but we can have no concept of 'now' without simultaneously thinking of 'before' and 'after' as directly related. We form an understanding of the self as existing through these multiple moments in time, with these layered selves forming the narrative of our life. For Sparkes and Smith (2007), the disabled individual's experience of time is particularly significant in the formation of their narrative of self, as it is likely to include past selves quite different from their current self, as my performance had shown.

Through the process of practice research and the methods of documentation I have used in this PhD, my own self-narrative as constructed through time has been shown in sharp relief, as seen in *Screening My(Self): Reflections.* The performed actions of undressing and dressing into each set of clothes, and the accompanying sense of embodiment with each, demonstrated just some of the iterations of myself through time, and of the disparity between the past and present selves. The following extract from my journal reveals how the workshop performance gave me a view encompassing past and present iterations of myself.

> Catching sight of my buttocks, their soft wobbly texture, feeling the passage of years, the deterioration of fitness from what I used to ask of my body but knowing that in this moment it did what I asked of it, balancing on one leg as I put on ballet tights. The familiarity of the ballet leotard and skirt, with all the memories of hoping and dreaming infused into their fabric, into the way I dressed myself in them. The familiarity of the garments and the expectation of the their fit on me and again that speeding-up of time as I fast-forwarded through the many occasions of wearing them to now, seeing how my body has changed, has failed my expectations, and how I am coming to terms with the new version of my body and of myself, adjusting my expectations to the levels of an invisibly disabled body... (Appendix 1, journal page 114-115)

Henri Bergson argues that however brief any perception may be, it exists in a "durational circuit" through which we link a "plurality of moments" in our memories (quoted in Jones, 2012: 192). This effort of memory brings the notion of 'reality' or 'authenticity' into dispute, suggesting that it is not in any one moment, but through the processing of these moments that we arrive at an understanding of our subjectivity. My performance demonstrated an understanding of this subjectivity as becoming through time, through the presentation of multiple selves, both in my performance and in the reflections that the mirror box created. The presence of my live performing body was the vehicle to present these multiple selves, but the process demonstrated to me that it did not hold any more authenticity than the other images of myself I presented. Fischer-Lichte similarly stresses that a stable understanding of the body/self cannot be arrived at:

> It constitutes a living organism, constantly engaged in the process of becoming, of permanent transformation. The human body knows no state of being; it exists only in a state of becoming. It recreates itself with every blink of the eye, every breath and movement embodies a new body. For that reason, the body is ultimately elusive. The bodily being-in-the-world, which cannot *be* but becomes, vehemently refutes all notions of the completed work of art. (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 92)

Screening My(Self): Reflections brought my past, present and future selves together in a palimpsestic performance document. The past iteration of myself was seen in the attempt to embody the ballet dancer I used to be; the present iteration of myself performed the actions of the workshop; and the future iteration was referred to in the title of the performance with the word 'reflections', commenting on the reflective process that would come after and in which I am now engaged. The four screens that simultaneously hid and displayed me, and produced a group of eight reflections, provided a physical portrayal of the multiplicity of selves layered through time, in a similar way to Jindeok Park's technologised dance choreography in which she layered video recordings of herself through time

in a single performance document (2015) or Bill Viola's multi-media installation *The Veiling*, which suggests the multiplicity of subjective experience through time (figure 19). My performance of self-representation also captured some of the indeterminateness of mimesis that Diamond describes as "both the activity of representing and the result of it – both a doing and a thing done" (1997: v). This at once enforced the representative quality of my performance, while highlighting that there is no true or authentic self at any point, either past or present. Any iteration of self is part of one enduring self. It is in the ongoing becoming of self, of cycling through many iterations of self that lead from one to the next in an enduring palimpsest of meaning-making of the self or self-production, that any sense of a true or universal self might be arrived at (Jones, 2012).

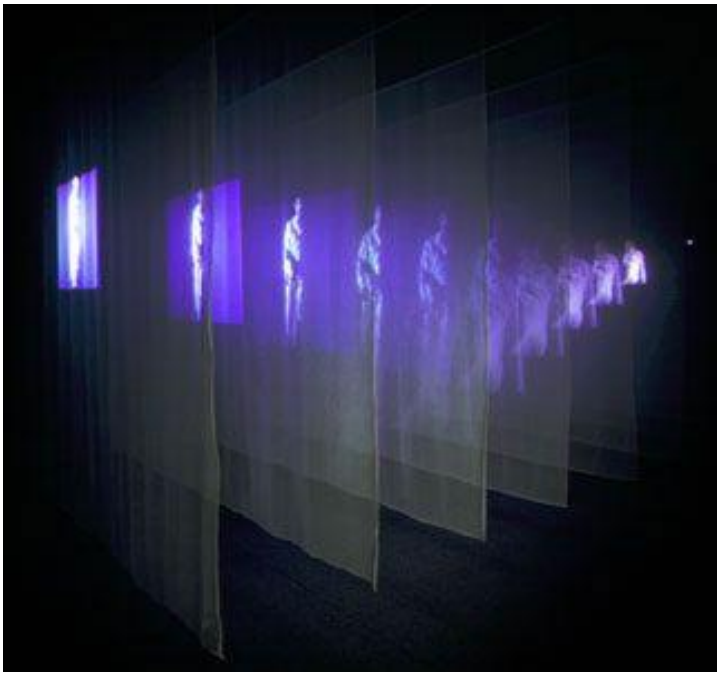


Figure 19. Bill Viola's *The Veiling* (Viola, 1995)

5.5 Drawing conclusions

In this final case study, I explored the gestural body as a site for communication, taking agency of my chronic illness by literally framing my experience in a box of two-way mirrors that at once displayed me for the audience's view and provided a physical screen between us. The two-way mirrors demonstrated that the audience were more comfortable in their spectatorship with the screen between us, as both a physical barrier and a method of preventing me from viewing their proximal choices, and allowed me to feel less exposed in my performance, by placing the audience in a vanishing point of classic perspective (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). This unique material also explored my body as existing in a vanishing point, as it allowed a comprehensive view of my body, but did not

necessarily reveal the invisibility of my condition, either through my performative actions or in the multiple images of myself that the mirrors reflected. My condition was still invisible, with no one image of myself offering truth or authenticity. The mirrors allowed a merger of subjective and objective perspectives as I could experience myself at once as live subject of the performance and see myself as object for view within it through my reflections, recognising that how we are perceived by others constitutes our sense of self through an understanding of ourselves as both body-subject and body-object (Grosz, 1994).

As I have argued, I used my performance as a way of taking agency of my chronic illness, framing my representation of past iterations of myself as an act of endurance, both in the emotional investment of this act of self-advocacy, declaring my identity as invisibly disabled in a form of outing (Cosenza, 2014b), and in the psychophysical reaction that this performance prompted, bringing on symptoms of ME (Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes, 2013). Using one's own experience in acts of live performance can be a transformative event offering new insights to its witnesses (Heathfield, 2004), but can also impact the performer, leaving them with scars produced through the exhaustion of crossing borderlines between reality and representation (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Kulik, 2004). For me, this was proven in the emotional and physical after-effects of *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* and my experience of enduring the work of representation and repetition in my performance of self in *Screening My(Self): Reflections* (Shalson, 2013). These acts showed me that while they did impact my wellbeing, they were a necessary way to draw attention to the experiences of people with invisible disabilities who may not otherwise be represented in performance. As Asentić articulates,

> We wish to endure the cuts although they're painful and leave many of us exhausted, burned out and disappointed... We wish to continue creating new social facts that will be our contribution to a society of solidarity and complementarity... We wish to continue to mobilise other precarious groups in our society, and to claim responsibility for the public good. (Asentić, quoted in Marsh and Burrows, 2017: 24)

Using my own experience as an invisibly disabled performer, and the influence my condition had on my perception of the duration of the performance recognised that the experience of time is subjective, and attempted to open out new views of temporality that incorporated the chronicity of chronic illness. This case study demonstrated that while subjective experience itself is difficult to communicate (Limon, 2010), the performer's body language can display the way she reacts to that experience and the audience may make their own empathetic inferences based on their embodied social and cultural experience (McConachie, 2008; Kelleher, 2009).

As an autobiographical performance, this case study explored the complex layering of reality and representation, arguing that these concepts collapse together through the live artist's body (Heddon, 2008). I have argued that our sense of embodied identity emerges through time, and that we construct a narrative of the self through an awareness of a multiplicity of selves through time (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Jones, 2012; Sparkes and Smith, 2007, 2011; Wiles, 2014). By presenting some of these iterations of myself in performance, I explored how the habitual processes of performing the self can reveal the values we hold about how we choose to be seen. These habits and

values may be seen in body language and behaviour, which, in the context of autobiographical practice, influence the gestural body as a site for communication. As my performance focused primarily on my own exploration of the presentation of self and my subjective experience of the passage of time, it has been difficult to achieve a distanced and objective view of my research in this case study. It has nevertheless offered me new insights into my understanding of how the self emerges through time, as Fraleigh describes, “self appears in its works” (1987: 31), or as Cosenza articulates, 'I used physical performance as a method of processing, communicating, critiquing and learning' (Cosenza, 2010: 2). While the invisibility of chronic conditions suggest an intrinsic difficulty in communicating subjective experience through the gestural body, as seen in *Screening My(Self): Reflections*, the invisibly disabled body occupies an important space in performance and in our minds, challenging the received discourses of both disability and performance, confronting the accepted notions of what disability is and what it looks like (Kuppers, 2001).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 In summary

In this research, I have used a practice-based methodology to investigate perceptions of physicality and meaning through the invisibly disabled body. I have explored how the body functions as an effective site for communication in performance by examining how elements of space and time influence perceptions. I did this by experimenting with factors of space, examining how my embodied experience of the displacement of space within my body-space is reflected in the displacement of space through gesture in the performance environment, and how the framing of the gestural body in the performance space contributes to its perception. I also analysed the extent to which changes in time, such as the speed and repetition of gesture, the manipulation of the codification of time through sound, and the differing subjective perceptions of concepts of duration and endurance are influential in the perception of physicality and meaning through the invisibly disabled body.

Through my central position as researcher-practitioner, I have gained a unique perspective into the role of the invisibly disabled body in performance practice, how it can offer new insight into performance practice through personal reflection, and how this embodied experience can be communicated in performance. The study has limitations, which I will address, and is therefore intended as a first step in my ongoing research into perceptions of invisible disabilities in performance, but the research presented in this thesis and the accompanying practical submission have enabled me come to some conclusions.

6.2 The invisibly disabled body and somatic awareness

Using my own experience of chronic illness in this research has led me to posit that the invisibly disabled body lends itself particularly well to phenomenological reflection and somatic practice owing to its near constant bodily self-reflection due to its subjugation by chronic illness. The experience of illness brings greater awareness of the body, as suggested by practitioners including Zarrilli (1997, 2004) and Fraleigh (1987), and theorised more deeply by Leder through the concept of the dys-appearing body (1990). In my research, my experiences of bodily dys-appearance have demonstrated the potential for a dualist reading that Leder, Zarrilli and Fraleigh describe the body naturally motivates, but I have discovered, as Leder contends, that it is precisely through the fluctuations of bodily disappearance and dys-appearance that the underlying unity of body and mind are proven. An embodied perspective, which takes the body as source for subjective experience, is attentive to the changes in bodily perceptions, promoting greater awareness of the possibilities of embodied experience. I contend that for the individual with chronic illness, an embodied perspective begins a cycle of self-awareness that necessarily moves

through unity and dualism. Physical symptoms draw attention to the illness as separate to the individual's intentions and desires and she feels subjugated, creating dualism, but by learning to live within the regulations of the body and its needs, the individual can achieve unity once again. Using her subjective experience to generate performance material through somatic or phenomenological methods, she is able to frame her lived experience for performance, and take agency of her body and her illness, claiming it as her own. This process occurs cyclically, induced by symptomatic episodes of illness, a regulation of the chronically ill body through time which in itself prompts greater somatic awareness. The individual must constantly analyse her illness intrusiveness or bodily dys-appearance in order to maintain a basic level of health alongside an ongoing research project or career path. This subjective experience of chronic time (Morris, 2008) or chronicity (Charmaz, 1991) means that the individual is engaged in ongoing somatic reflection, both through the rhythm of symptomatic episodes and through narratives of the self constructed through the chronic experience (Charmaz, 1991; Sparkes and Smith, 2007). In my practical research, I demonstrated awareness of this somatic reflection through time by exploring my subjective experience of temporality and how this might be communicated in performance. In *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See*, I explored how the audience's subjective experience of time could be manipulated through the digitally accelerated soundtrack of a ticking clock, and together with the decrease in displaced space through the deteriorating pattern of my gesture could communicate the experience of chronic time. In *Screening My(Self): Reflections* I represented past iterations of myself, reflecting both my subjective experience of this performance as one of endurance (Shalson, 2013), and the durationality of identity as emerging through time (Jones, 2012), in my case including the influence of chronic illness on the construction of my self-narrative through time (Sparkes and Smith, 2007, 2011).

The invisibly disabled performer's somatic engagement is also influenced by her unusual experience of spatiality. Leder's theory of bodily dys-appearance gives rise to the notion of the body or body parts as absent, which I have explored through my own experiences with ME, when low energy levels prevent me from using my body or limbs normally and leading me to consider them as unembodied. As Grosz has theorised (1994), internalised images of the body are constructed not just through its physical realities, but through embodied understandings that draw upon subjective representations of the body as existing in time and space, again pointing to the somatic engagement of those with alternative physical experiences. Presenting different forms of embodiment in performance is an important step in recognising the diverse possibilities of embodied understanding in those who identify as disabled or situate themselves across a spectrum of bodily difference. Tanja Erhart, whose fluctuating disability creates different states of embodiment in her practice, argues that it is important to address how disabilities impact on making performance in a constructive and playful way, beyond a medical view, to "find out what potentiality dis_ability experience brings into dance and aesthetics, and how to rethink the body" (quoted in Marsh and Burrows, 2017: 22). In my performance practice, I explored the potentiality of increased somatic engagement through my invisible disability, applying my own understanding of embodiment to my performance practice in different ways. The gesture that I performed in the first two case studies portrayed how my perception of unembodied body-space could be applied to Laban's kinesphere as a visual signifier of the diminishing potential

space that my illness brings about. These performances explored this diminishing space through repetition and deterioration, to explore how the change in displaced space, both within my body-space and in the external space of my kinesphere could influence the audience's interpretation of meaning though my physicality. In *Screening My(Self): Reflections* I explored changes to embodiment through my attempts to re-enact past iterations of myself, which questioned the understanding of embodiment as a fixed and stable experience, by pointing to the fluctuations that illness or disability can bring about in individual interpretations of the self as embodied.

6.3 Perceptions of the invisibly disabled body

Investigating the gestural body as a site for communication in performance has led me to contend that the invisibly disabled body carries essentially queer theories in the following ways. It has an intrinsic otherness, in that it does not conform to normalised expectations or predictable patterns of how the apparently able body should function, meaning that it additionally exists in a state of liminality, between visible recognition and physical presence (Cosenza, 2014b; Lindemann, 2010). This means that like alternative identifications of sexuality or gender, invisible disabilities must be performed in order to be recognised (Bunzl, 1997; Cosenza, 2010; Fassett and Morella, 2008; Henderson and Ostrander, 2010), requiring repeated identifications that reinforce the instability of its identity category (Butler, 1990; Albright, 1997). My embodied practice has also demonstrated the need for the invisibly disabled body to be viewed queer, a reading which refutes the possibility of a subject or meaning being fixed (Jones, 2012), encompassing a range of subjective experiences of concepts such as embodiment, spatiality and temporality, moving away from an unhelpful binary of ability and disability toward the recognition of a spectrum of embodied difference (Leder, 1990; Fassett and Morella, 2008; McRuer, 2006; Marsh and Burrows, 2017).

If the body is the lens through which we perceive the world, it follows that the world perceives each person through their body, as Grosz posits that subjectivity includes an awareness of how the outer surfaces of our body inform inner self perception (1994). To borrow Merleau-Ponty's body-as-prism theory and reverse it in this way, the array of influences we each derive from sociocultural settings is thrown into relief by working with the body, displaying the perceptions, habits and experiences that influence our world view, in the same way that a prism refracts white light into the seven colours of visible light. It seems fitting then, that the rainbow of colours produced is used by the LGBTQ+ movement to represent a spectrum of experience, in an effort to queer normative assumptions about identity, an aim I share in my research into invisible disabilities. Working with my body in practice research has revealed some of the influences on my emerging sense of identity through time, and how this impacts the gestural body as a site for communication, both at a performative level and in the ways I choose to frame myself for performance. In order to communicate my subjective experiences of invisible disability, I have had to learn to work from the fluctuating needs and capacity of my body with a chronic illness, consciously stripping away habitual movement patterns and embodied ideals that were part of the physical culture of dance

that I was previously part of but which set up unrealistic expectations about how my body should now work (Hargreaves and Vertinski, 2007; Lepecki, 2004). The difficulty I perceived in moving away from my previous ideals reflects that the body/self is not just inscribed by our social and cultural settings but is produced through these factors (Grosz, 1994), and is testament to the depth to which physical cultures embed their ideals in the bodies, minds and emotions of the people who follow them (Gordon, 1983; Gray and Kunkel, 2001; Mazo, 1974; Pickard, 2015). Our identity is subject to change in a constantly evolving creation of self however, and maturity affords us new values in how we practice our art, as Marsh and Burrows reflect:

> The body changes constantly, we are in an ever-shifting process of ageing and changing, as artists we might experience a period in our early career of pushing to 'fit' into prescribed or 'ideal' representations. Time and experience however seem to give us more confidence to act on impulse and practice our art form authentically and with a truth that is tied to our individual and transitional body. (Marsh and Burrows, 2017: 7)

In writing this conclusive chapter, acting as the final stage to my research through reflexivity, I can see the journey I have made away from the ideals and values that dominated my classical dance training. However, while my intention of using my lived experience with a chronic illness in my performance practice is to draw awareness to this often overlooked subjectivity, it holds similarities to the ideals of self-sacrifice and the value in suffering for one's art that I previously experienced in classical dance culture (Gordon, 1983; Gray and Kunkel, 2001; Mazo, 1974; Pickard, 2015). While Grotowski's contention (1968) of the performer's moral duty and artistic ethic to gift herself to the audience is not specific to any performance specialism, I question whether I have found a new way of interpreting an old value, finding worth in enduring the vulnerability of exposure to offer insight to more diverse subjectivities.

Working from my embodied experience of chronic illness has addressed the misconception of ability and disability as a visible binary, through my attempts to be transparent in how I presented my experience of invisible disability (Cosenza, 2010; Fassett and Morella, 2008; McRuer, 2006). At first thought, invisibility and transparency are semantically alike, both implying a quality of being present but unseen, of being see-through-able. Yet the invisibility of ME suggests being unable to be recognised, something which can be overlooked or seen past. I have explored how this invisibility holds emotional ramifications in both others' and self-perception; as fellow performers Hanauer and O'Brien have suggested, not being recognised for how you identify can be uncomfortable (in Marsh and Burrows, 2017). Disability studies and discourses have until recently, focused on people with visibly marked disabilities, an understanding perpetuated by publications such as Siebers' (2010) which focuses on a disability aesthetics that recognises the visual difference of disability over the traditional aesthetic of the whole (and therefore healthy) body. These views also point to the ongoing privileging of the visual sense, which has power but also primacy (Garland-Thomson, 2009), and has led to a perceived lack of legitimacy of invisible disabilities, based on the assumption that that which cannot be seen does not exist (Cosenza, 2014b). These issues contribute to the difficulty in communicating invisible disability in performance, a difficulty which I attempted to

overcome by making my embodied experiences transparent through my practice methods and materials, borrowing from McRuer's use of crip theory to suggest a displacement of the barrier of invisibility, and enacting an openness to new views of disability (2006).

This notion of transparency as honesty has necessitated an investigation into the processes through which I come out as invisibly disabled, again supporting the implication of queer theories in the study of invisible disabilities. I have experimented with coming out by revealing my lived experience through gesture, but have also explored how a process of literal uncovering contributes to perceptions of the gestural body to communicate the experience of invisible disability. I have used my clothing, lack of clothing and the act of undressing as a way of framing my invisibly disabled body as a site for communication, lifting the veil of invisibility in an attempt to reveal the lived experience of chronic illness beneath. Clothes are a vital part in the governing of social roles (Schweitzer, 2000) and are used consciously in how we choose to present ourselves, both for our own self-perception and to the perception of others (Goffman, 1990; Whiteside and Kelly, 2016). I have examined both the construction of self through clothing, as in the iterations of myself in *Screening My(Self): Reflections,* and have also used the process of removing these layers of performed identity to explore how nudity might represent another method of self-revelation (Malik, 2008). While my early thoughts that the 'true' self could be revealed through nudity have changed, as I now recognise that the body or self carries authenticity only in a continual process of identification through time meaning that one stable notion of a true self cannot be arrived at, my investigation did reveal that this method of "disclothsure" carries an emotional risk as a form of outing (Levine, quoted in Schweitzer, 2000: 65). I used nudity in an attempt to demonstrate the vanishing point of my invisible disability, displaying my body which passes as able-bodied through its apparent wholeness and perfection, but could only reveal the visceral experience of disability through performed gesture (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Quinlan and Bates, 2010). This questioned the perceived visibility of disabilities, asking the audience to move beyond their initial reactions to my nudity and look at me in search of the tacit embodied knowledge my gestural body communicated (Garland-Thomson, 2006).

By presenting my embodied experiences of chronic illness in performance, I draw upon Siebers' call for a disability aesthetics that embraces bodily beauty in a form that "seems by traditional standards to be broken", but request that this new aesthetics incorporate invisible rather than just visible difference – an aesthetics of invisibility (2010: 3). I have come to see invisible disabilities as the 'new other' – while disabilities were for so long the unspoken and unacknowledged other to the norm, but have now become increasingly recognised to the point that commercially successful integrated or disabled dance companies such as CandoCo have become 'establishment' (Whatley, 2007), the invisibility of chronic illness continues to resist recognition. If the term 'disabled' threatens to fix individual identity into an unchanging category (Kuppers, 2001), the threat to those with invisible disabilities is a lack of identification. As the new other, invisible disabilities exist at a vanishing point in an occularcentric society; they are invisible when taking a purely visual approach to their recognition, as Phelan asserts, "The vanishing point

also underlines the hole in the viewer's body: it points to what painting, and corporeal vision itself, cannot show, cannot see" (Phelan, quoted in Sandahl and Auslander, 2005: 138). Like artist Judith Scott's sculptures that conceal objects beneath layers of yarn, the subjective experience of the soma may be unknowable through the objective perception that others hold of the body. This new aesthetic of invisibility therefore, relies on performativity in order for its subjects to reveal their embodied experiences. In my research I have taken an embodied approach to the communication of invisible disabilities in performance in an attempt to move away from the lack of vision Phelan describes. By working somatically, the performer creates material that is derived from authentic embodied knowledge of her condition, and performing this promotes an intersubjective reading from the audience who draw upon their own embodied experiences in the perception of her gestural body. The framework of performance offers the possibility of communicating tacit knowledge, and of forging connections through embodied experience. However, the new aesthetics of invisibility must recognise the position of vulnerability that self-advocacy places those with invisible disabilities in, a form of additional labour that those with visible differences may not have to undertake to make their experiences known and have their needs met (Cosenza, 2014b). As Fassett and Morella acknowledge, "The issue of coming out as someone with a non-visible disability cannot be contained in a theory of impression management.... the notion of coming out as a choice does not adequately reflect the complexities of human relationships" (2008: 146). Coming out as invisibly disabled is a socially complex process into which there is currently little research, but which is an inevitable necessity for those whose embodied differences are overlooked in a society which continues to make ontological judgements about disability based on visual cues (Fassett and Morella, 2008).

The invisibility aesthetics that I call for encourages recognition of a more diverse range of subjectivities and addresses how these influence social and cultural interaction. My research has focused on my ongoing identification as invisibly disabled and how I communicate this identity to others in performance, what Garland-Thomson refers to as gaining disability literacy, an embodied understanding of disability through experience, or "disability epistemology" (Scully, quoted in Garland-Thomson, 2017: 329). While the research has been specific to my circumstances, I have found that it is through the intersubjectivity of performance that we can move towards greater awareness and acceptance of different embodied experiences. As Kuppers states, "We need to revalue the body as a source of experience and difference, before we are able to move forward with identity politics" (2001: 32).

6.4 Limitations of the study

My research has been based on subjective and personal experiences, so is intended as a starting point for my own and others' research into perceptions of the invisibly disabled body in performance. As autobiographical practice, this act of "self-making" is subjective (Garland-Thomson, 2000: 338), as my situation in the research brings about a

perspectival sense that "necessarily involves not seeing that point of view itself" (Merleau-Ponty, quoted in Leder, 1990: 12). While I have endeavoured to balance the subjectivity of my position in the research with the objectivity that reflexivity engenders and the objectivity of audience members' responses, embodied experience is influenced by social, political, historical and cultural forces, as autoethnography investigates, and therefore cannot offer an objective stance from which to judge their affects (Grosz, 1994). Bochner and Ellis warn that traditional ways of assessing the validity of research that look for objective claims of truth risk "delegitimizing the very essence of what makes the evocative autoethnography paradigm powerful", including the generation of reflexive and self-critical accounts that can inform and validate others' (2016: 239). Subjectivity is however, a limitation of the study as my personal opinions and responses inevitably influenced what I considered noteworthy (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Although personal accounts should not be trivialised as they can offer authentic forms of knowing through embodied experience (Fraleigh, 2015; Garland-Thomson, 2017), neither can they be taken as sources of absolute truth (Heddon, 2008). Research such as mine, which crosses borders from autobiography to autoethnography, accommodates subjectivity, replacing the claim of 'truth' with one of 'usefulness', as it is less important how factual a perceived experience was than how it is utilised in the research (Bochner and Ellis, 2016). My personal accounts should be taken as a way to consider the possibility of more diverse interpretations of concepts such as embodiment, spatiality and temporality that may resonate with others' experiences or prompt others to share their own accounts. The authenticity engendered through autobiographical practice can be conflated with authority, as personal experience is connected to wider examples of others' lives (Heddon, 2008), so I acknowledge that the relational ethics in my work may mean that my experiences are connected to others within the invisibly disabled community, but I do not intend my account to stand as an authoritative text in this area (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). My use of autobiographical methods is intended to provide one example of the lived experience of the invisibly disabled body and how it is perceived in performance as a contribution to an area that researchers acknowledge is lacking in exploration (Fassett and Morella, 2008; Hadley, 2008; Lobel, 2010, 2013; Sandahl and Auslander, 2005).

Autoethnography allows for "subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher's influence on the research", which has accommodated the flexible approach to the research design that I have had to take due to the fluctuations of ME (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011: 2). While these accommodations have been necessary in managing the research alongside chronic illness, I acknowledge that my need for control over my health has meant making changes to my research approach that were conducive to my physical, mental and emotional experience as researcher/research subject, which has to contributed to my failure to achieve a distanced reading of my work. Living with ME for around 18 years, I have learnt that I am able to achieve a steady pattern of health only through careful control of potential triggers to my symptoms. I have formulated methods of managing my activity and rest levels, visual and auditory stimulation and emotional stressors through years of trial and error to manage the restrictions of my disability and learn to live within them (Morris, 2008). When so much of the experience of chronicity is concerned with monitoring and controlling the elements that are within ones power, anything that threatens control comes

to be seen as a risk to health, as illness intrusiveness can make managing daily activities difficult or impossible (Charmaz, 1991). This has been influential in some of my choices of research design as I have perceived greater risk in some scenarios than a researcher without a chronic health condition might. Awareness of the constraints of a chronic illness is likely to be more vivid for the person living with it (Morris, 2008), meaning that the decisions needed to manage invisible disability are often made tacitly, resisting explanation through the written or spoken word (Polanyi, 1961). Acknowledging the influence of these many subtle and varied needs in the context of the research therefore, becomes a form of self-advocacy; additional labour within the research process to mitigate potential criticisms that the work may be lacking in validity (Cosenza, 2014b).

Choices such as the research setting, inviting audiences to the workshop performances, the duration of the performances and the processes by which I framed my embodied experience for performance have all been interpreted through my consideration of potential 'threats' to my physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. These considerations curtailed the 'reckless' creative capacity that Phelan describes young artists sometimes have (2004), as chronicity has taught me that recklessness comes with a pay-off of illness. If the body's energy is the first element necessary for our subjective interaction with the world; to quote Morris, "that which must already be provided", I have learnt to use that energy frugally (2008: 414). In this study, my difficulty in taking risks and need for control over the research process may be seen as a contribution to new knowledge in the area, a recognition of a limitation of the invisibly disabled body in performance that allows for a fuller embrace of its potential through deeper understanding (Heddon, 2008). As Denzin and Lincoln acknowledge, the qualitative researcher understands that her personal history, gender, and social and cultural background shape the research, which embraces "constant tensions and contradictions" (1994: 4). I recognise the ongoing tension of conducting research into perceptions of the invisibly disabled body, when the research subject's tacit perception of her health needs influence the research; as I have previously argued, the invisibly disabled body acts as both research subject and gatekeeper to the research, preventing anything other than a subjective view.

Managing my symptoms of ME has meant considering perceived risks to my health as well as logistical issues such as travel and the location and duration of practical research activities. The research setting of the studio at Canterbury Christ Church University should be viewed as a necessary adaptation in the context of my health needs. It allowed me to develop as near to a routine as was achievable and to see this setting as a constant in the unstable and unpredictable pattern of chronic illness (Mullins et al, 2017). However, the localisation of this setting meant that the audiences of the workshop performances were small, limiting the quantity of data from their responses, in particular for *Untitled* and *Screening My(Self): Reflections.* Greater publicity of the performances might have encouraged larger audience numbers, but this was not something I could achieve at the time, because the risk I perceived in sharing personal experiences through performance meant that the process was already emotionally loaded for me. It may also be noteworthy that despite my embodied and sensorial approach to the creation of movement material, none of my case studies made allowance for touch from the audience. My need

for control influenced the risk I perceived in sharing my body with them, meaning that although my research participated in discourses around the division and merger of subjective and objective perspectives, I kept the audience at a distance, preventing the possibility of closing the gap of perception across these points through touch (Grosz, 1994). My research approached the concept of invisibility in a visual way, pointing to the influence of visual privilege on my outlook, possibly due to my past experiences in theatre performance in which there were always clear divisions between myself and the audience. Although intersubjectivity implicated both starer and staree in a reciprocal and embodied act (Garland-Thomson, 2005b; Grosz, 1994) I relied on the visual sense as a source of knowledge and understanding (Garland-Thomson, 2009).

6.5 Applications of the research

This research is situated in an interdisciplinary context, existing between and across areas of practice and research including performance art, live art, theatre, spectatorship, feminist theory, queer theory, disability arts and disability studies. The driving force across these territories is a focus on embodied practice, which offers a valuable contribution to researchers and practitioners within the performance community exploring how different embodied experiences influence performance making. Researchers and practitioners are calling for a broader understanding of disabilities as a socially constructed identity category (Garland-Thomson, 2017; Hadley, 2014; Henderson an Ostrander, 2010; Marsh and Burrows, 2017; Siebers, 2010, 2015; Snyder and Mitchell, 2006). My work therefore, provides an account of the experience of identifying as disabled with the additional challenge of an invisible difference which confronts the perceived binary of ability and disability as visible presence or absence (Cosenza, 2014b; Fassett and Morella, 2008; McRuer, 2006). My focus on the processes through which I communicate my invisible disability may be of interest to researchers using queer and crip theories, as I provide examples of the experience of passing as able bodied and the choice to out or uncover my chronic illness that contribute to the understanding of invisible disability as a liminal identity category that requires performativity to be recognised (McRuer, 2006; Branfman, 2015; Bunzl, 1997; Cosenza, 2010, 2014b; Lindemann, 2010; Jones, 2010; Quinlan and Bates, 2010; Snyder and Mitchell, 2006).

The research offers an example of a single subjectivity to stand alongside other embodied accounts in research and performance, offering a view of embodied differences as a "a variety of ways of being in the world", forming a spectrum of lived experience in a deliberate move away from unhelpful binary distinctions of ability and disability (Henderson an Ostrander, 2010: 3). My work addresses the misconception that disability or chronic health conditions mean a lack of ability or competence, and my flexible and adaptive approach demonstrates that incorporating different needs and capacities into practice-based research is possible and may offer new potentialities to performance-making (Hadley, 2014; Kuppers, 2004; Lobel, 2010, 2013; Marsh and Burrows, 2017; Quinlan and Bates, 2010). This thesis uses a combination of written and practical methods, supporting the value of

praxis and pointing to the particular importance for the researcher with a chronic health condition to develop reflexive strategies to manage their research journey as they navigate the already uncertain terrain of chronic illness (Barrett and Bolt, 2007; Bolt, 2006; Charmaz, 1991; Freeman, 2010; Morris, 2008; Mullins, 2017; Nelson, 2013; Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011).

Another area of possible application of this research is to disability studies which take a somatic approach to the perception of illness or disability and its influence on the construction of disabled identity. Subjective and personal accounts are increasingly being regarded as valuable sources of data in the growing field of psychosomatic approaches to disability studies (Brighton and Sparkes, 2014; O'Brien, 2014; Morris, 2008; Mullins, 2017; Sparkes and Smith, 2007, 2011). The intersection of disability studies and disability performance means that these subjective descriptions are being explored through performance, as seen in Kuppers' project *Traces* that sought to develop awareness of disabled individual's embodied space through somatic engagement (in Sandahl and Auslander, 2005), and the performance *Mirage* by Australian company Igneous which drew on the medical use of mirrors to aid recovery in the experience of phantom limb syndrome (in Hadley, 2014). My concept of disembodied body-space used to create gestures for performance, and my autobiographical accounts of identifying as invisibly disabled through time may therefore, be of interest to other researchers investigating how subjective perception influences embodied identity (Grosz, 1994; Leder, 1990).

My journey through this research has given me a number of lessons in disability, and offered me a reflexive view of the ongoing process of identifying as disabled; as Garland-Thomson re-phrases Beauvoir's iconic phrase – one is not born disabled, but rather becomes disabled (2014). This embodied knowledge has helped me to develop disability literacy, embodied knowing through lived experience of disability. This can aid a move towards 'disability cultural competence' a strategy which Garland-Thomson describes as "a knowledge translation project through which the interpretive knowledge-making tools of critical disability studies... can serve as an opportunity to actually shape policy and practice through the field of bioethics" (2017: 325). While I acknowledge that my research and personal experience does not invest me with authority on the subject of invisible disabilities, and that as a subjective account, my work cannot stand as an example for others' experiences, it has provided me with direct experience of the hurdles that those with invisible disabilities face in HE settings (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011; Heddon, 2008). As Hadley argues, views about the needs and possible pathways to change in culture are directly influenced by the experience of disability and of claiming disabled identity (2014). As I have previously argued, the inherent lack of visibility of chronic conditions is a barrier to their recognition and therefore to how the additional needs of those with invisible disabilities are met. Even in the course of this PhD, I have encountered a number of situations where, despite the focus of my research, I have had to self-advocate in ways that would be unnecessary from those with visible disabilities (Cosenza, 2014b). Like Garland-Thomson (2017), I question the extent to which interdisciplinary critical disability studies, which has been emerging and operating for around twenty years is actually influencing policy making, as the "interpretative limits" that surround disability access are

particularly complex in the case of invisible disabilities (Hadley, 2014: 18). My university-based research setting has suggested the possibility of further research into the perception of invisible disabilities in the higher education community, using this thesis as a starting point. Hann's Charter for Practice Research (2016) and Whatley's (2007) integrated approach to dance on the undergraduate course at Coventry University have prompted me to make first steps in the development of a charter for integration specific to students with invisible disabilities or chronic illnesses in HE. Further research is needed in this area to investigate the support currently available for students with chronic health needs; my experience suggests there are issues related to invisibility that are not currently being addressed as their needs may be different to those of visibly disabled students and which are already offered. These changes may include minimising the additional labour that invisible disabilities demand through repeated acts of self-advocacy, and ways to adjust the concept of inclusion for students whose chronic health conditions do not present in predictable ways, picking up on Alexandria Mullins et al's study (2017). I would also suggest further research into the influence of chronic time on the student experience, drawing on Cosenza's theory that time gives a sense of belonging by recognising that the student with chronic illness is likely to feel this lack if they cannot keep up with the rhythms of their time-privileged peers (2014a). This investigation of time may also need to acknowledge that in the cyclical patterns of chronic illness, guilt may be associated with leisure time through the belief that it is unproductive, so new markers of achievement through time may need to be created (Charmaz, 1991; Cosenza, 2014a).

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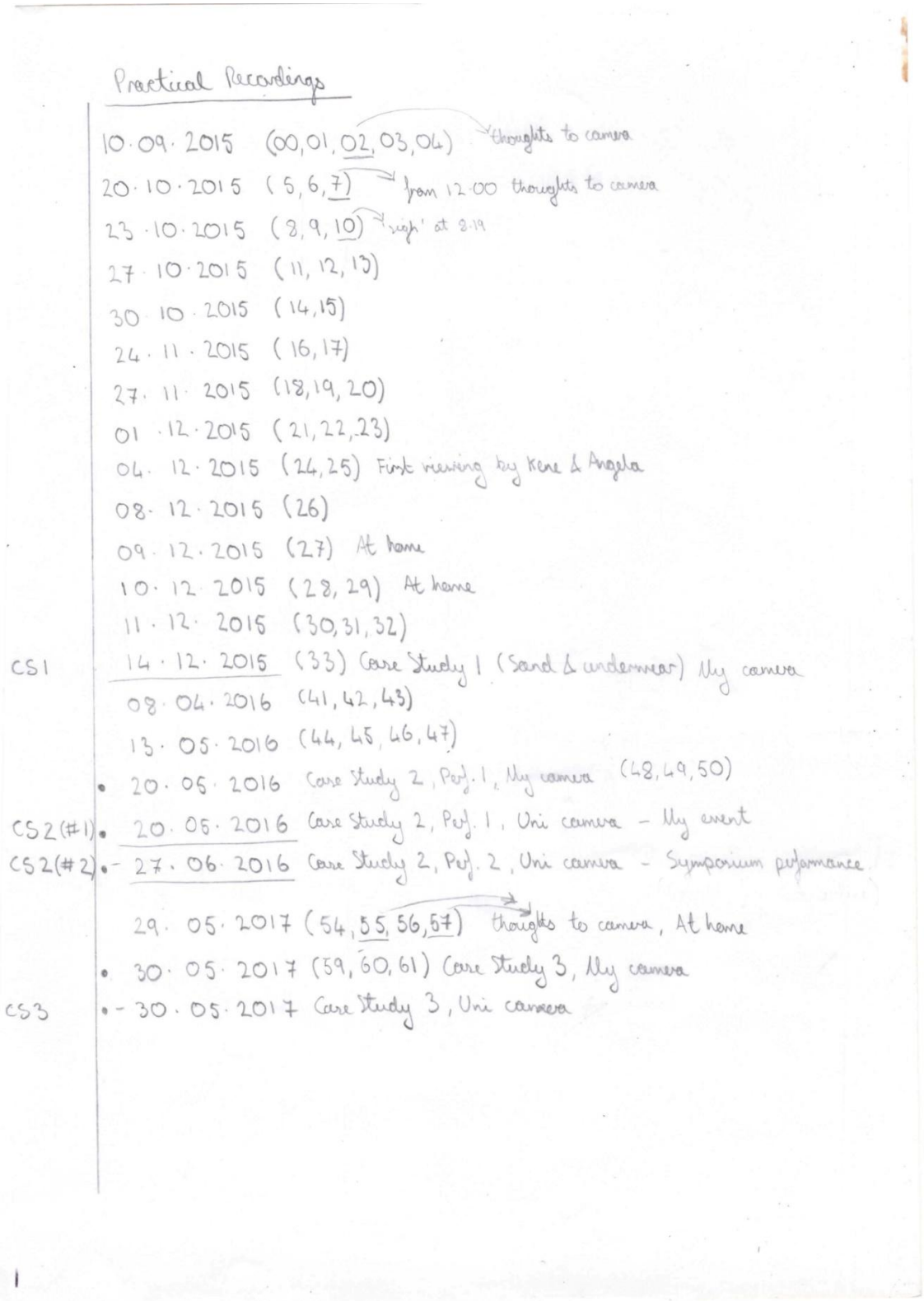
Appendix 1: Practical journal scans



Practical Recordings

10·09·2015 (00,01,02,03,04) thoughts to camera
20·10·2015 (5,6,7) from 12:00 thoughts to camera
23·10·2015 (8,9,10) 'sigh' at 8:19
27·10·2015 (11,12,13)
30·10·2015 (14,15)
24·11·2015 (16,17)
27·11·2015 (18,19,20)
01·12·2015 (21,22,23)
04·12·2015 (24,25) First viewing by Rene & Angela
08·12·2015 (26)
09·12·2015 (27) At home
10·12·2015 (28,29) At home
11·12·2015 (30,31,32)
CS1 14·12·2015 (33) Case Study 1 (Sand & underwear) My camera
08·04·2016 (41,42,43)
13·05·2016 (44,45,46,47)
• 20·05·2016 Case Study 2, Perf. 1, My camera (48,49,50)
CS2(#1) • 20·05·2016 Case Study 2, Perf. 1, Uni camera - My event
CS2(#2) • 27·06·2016 Case Study 2, Perf. 2, Uni camera - Symposium performance
29·05·2017 (54,55,56,57) thoughts to camera, At home
• 30·05·2017 (59,60,61) Case Study 3, My camera
CS3 • 30·05·2017 Case Study 3, Uni camera

Mo Pietroni-Spenst

Practical Research Journal

The gestural body in performance: a practice-based study of the perceptions of physicality and meaning through ~~space and time~~ the invisibly disabled body.

- How does the somatically engaged body function as an effective site for communication through space and time?

- How does the displacement of the embodied space influence the audience's perception of meaning?

- To what extent do changes in space and time influence perceptions of stylised gestures in performance?

October – December research practice plan

Questions to answer through practice:

Begin with...

Where will repetition take me?

- This is most closely linked to the third research question – **to what extent do changes in space and time influence our perception of stylised gestures in performance?** It also covers the use of space in the second question - **how does the displacement of the embodied space influence the audience's perception of what is performed?**

- **Consider first your own understanding of space.** Is this personal space? Your kinesphere? The performing space? Play with some ideas. How will I convey my notion of space? Could the pedestal/music box idea come into play?

  - Think of the Vitruvian Man, Laban's kinesphere and Sylvie Guillem's use of space and light in Two

- **Consider the many possibilities of the performed gesture**, experiment with different ways of performing using different qualities of timing, dynamics and use of space. These will (presumably) influence perception of the gesture.

- Think about the vocabulary of repetition. What is the expectation of how a gesture should be performed. What happens when that does not take place? Explore ideas around disintegration (link this to YouTube seminar about PaR) Disintegration will link with symptomatic elements of CFS and with the concept of invisibility.

- From the many ways of performing the gesture, **a few will go forwards** in the practice. Which will they be? Why?

- This new way of working moves me away from habitual working patterns; it doesn't feel like movement or performance that I'm used to. **Learn something new by going somewhere you haven't been before.** Continue in this vein, see what you discover.

- **Resonates with some of the attributes of CFS** as it confines the performer as well as presenting the possibility of fatigue affecting the performance. The parameters of **space could also be used to confine the performer**, or set her free.

  - Informed by Nelson, Barrett, Bolt, Kozel and Bausch
    Which ideas in particular? Are there keywords or phrases you could bear in mind?

3

And then, towards December address...

How can I make the invisible visible?

- This works towards answering the first question - **how does the gestural body function as an effective 'site' for communication through space and time?** The invisible internal perception of the soma is expressed (hopefully) in a visible way through the body.

- What do I mean by 'invisible'? Explore concepts of invisibility through others' writing/performance and see if it sparks any ideas.

- What element of CFS am I trying to make visible? What would it look like when it is visible? Keep it personal. Can you make the process of disintegration visible? Consider the layers of disintegration.

- Will performing these layers recreate elements of my experience (autobiographically), or induce those states in a 'theatre of experience' (through repetition)?

- What gestures might I use to express something of: CFS? Performers? Women? Use the visual as a general concept to bring these treads together.

    - Informed by Sanchez-Colberg, Conroy, Govan, Nicholson and Normington

And for later on ...

Am I placing a higher value on the audience's perception over the performer's?

- Do I want them to be considered equally?
- What about my position as performer and as my own audience (in the mirror or watching a recording)? How different are these perceptions? How can I effectively record my experiences as both?
- Am I trying to create movement for the audience or for myself as performer? (Do I need to rethink my perspective and remember that I am creating movement as research not as performance product?)
- Can somatically driven movement be aesthetic? (Are aesthetics important now or is this a leftover concept from my technique-based background?) What does my body create through somatically engaged improvisation?
- Can a performer's somatic movement be experienced by the audience?

    - Informed by Callery, Darley (need to do more somatic research)

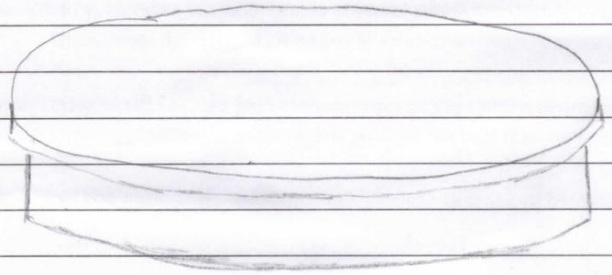
4

14.10.15 Practical Session

OK, so studio time today will see me exploring space, my understanding of how space can be articulated through the body, how space might affect the way I move.

I envisage spending a few sessions on this theme, playing with different notions of space, but at the moment I'm quite taken with the idea of a low circular stage block that revolves to showcase the performer in a very obvious way.

Reminiscent of ballerina musical boxes, side show performers' platforms, the pedestal of Grecian sculptures in marble, podium dancers' blocks



There lots to go into on this front but today I want to focus on the space my body can create. I'm thinking of Laban's kinesphere and of DaVinci's Vitruvian man - the space my body encompasses at its furthest extent.

Having watched a little bit of my first session recording (because the battery died), I can see I don't always project myself into the space that is available to me. Even when I'm focusing on my back or neck, I'd like to radiate a sense that I have potential space (that my arms and legs would define in their reach) to explore.

No recordings today because the battery died. Note to self - charge camera.

Go back to later -

Making a circle with the arms and swinging it, fingers interlaced

5

♩ Aravot - Roby's Album
Avishai Cohen

Space - the first frontier

Your arms create more space upwards than the legs when standing, but lying on your back the legs reach further to the ceiling

The arms and legs make great lines through opposition (L arm R leg front or) but you have to watch the angles, they need to flow to create length.
Opposition is useful for echoing lines and circles (L leg lunge, R leg back, L arm back, R leg arm forwards)

Straight lines create more space, cut across the body to make a circle within a circle -

Spinning with a limb out shows all your space at once - turn in arabesque

Flipping your tops for your bottoms is interesting - upside-down space, cartwheel

Have flexible hips and stronger hip flexors and thighs would really expand my space

Does your space grow and shrink as you move? Does it ~~grow~~ move with you, for example if you're on your back, is it all in front?

Repeating circular motions of varying sizes and speeds in different directions and orientations provides a sort of moving commentary on space as it is occupied, displaced, asserted

Yes, I'm learning lots from the process but would it be ok if I made my work product-driven? I'm playing with space like this to learn and take ideas forwards but I suppose nothing stops me from creating 'works during progress' that use ideas I like to make a performance product. As long as the 'work in progress' didn't get neglected.

6

Session recording notes - Impov. 19.10.15

(10.09.2015) ♪ Early Venetian lute music

As I noted before, I don't always use the facility my body has, and my body doesn't always make use of the space it could. Whether this is a question of me wanting to improve my movement technique for aesthetic reasons, or so that I better communicate my sense of space (and later, the gestures within it), I'm not yet clear. Maybe I'm becoming too caught up in the idea of separating technical proficiency and aesthetics from whatever it is I consider I should be doing. Perhaps embracing and accepting what my previous training has taught me will be a vital part of how I work.

I hope that as I become more accustomed to a) dance in general in terms of fitness
b) somatic engagement
c) improvising on my body
d) my own notion of space, I become better able to use that space and move my body within it in a way that I find pleasing to watch as well as to move.

➡ Keep going with improved repetition - you're getting somewhere.

➡ Just make everything <u>more</u>. Bigger, straighter, further, weirder.

Looks like I was interested in angles - flat backs and turning by 90°, pike and falling backwards. This plays to space quite well, by extending your reach and altering your orientation.

Funny how repetition lends itself so well to circles. More circles, reaching and space!

Go back to later:
supporting the face in the hand, tilting, circling, quick double bounces
hand gestures - explore - on the body, in the air

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Practical Session 20.10.15
Tues

Today, I'll continue to work on exploring my notion of space, working with the span of the arms and legs and the torso. I'll use circular, repetitive patterns again to describe the space around me.

♪ Aranea - Avishai Cohen

I've been making circles and lines with my arms, legs and torso and noticing how smaller circles feel different to bigger ones. The tighter circles tend to be closer to the body, with a smaller part of the anatomy - for instance, circling the lower arm from the elbow,
the lower leg from the knee,
or the head.

These circles are bound, have a feeling of constraint and induce faster repetition. That saying, this would probably be where some very articulate gestures would come from - rolling
the wrist, for example,
rolling the head,
or turning the ankle.
(One to return to for gesture)

Larger, freer, fuller circles definitely open up the amount of space being used, but at this point, I feel impeded by physical limitations - tight hip flexors, a lack of strength in my quads or my back, losing balance, my hip bones digging into the floor, and sometimes even another limb being in the way of making a full circle.

So I've set up this idea of how the body could move, perhaps in an 'ideal way', thinking of the body as an abstract concept as Collette Conroy suggests, which will always leave the real, specific body, my body, falling short of my expectations.

So how should I continue, right now, in this session? Change my expectations to meet my body's current capabilities, or work until I achieve a body closer to this abstract ideal body? The latter is not an option (as far as I'd like) and doesn't provide much in the way of research or documentation about my condition.

Moving forwards - fewer expectations - this is a little reminder to move

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like you, not the ideal you, but the you that exists right now. And sometimes that will be full of energy, on top physical form, with a good range of movement, and others, like today, you'll be fatigued, with a sore throat, won't be able to get your legs as high as you'd like, and won't last as long as you'd want. But that's ok too. It's all my body, moving in my own way.

23.10.15

Session recording notes - Repeated Gestures
(10.09.2015)

♪ Falling - Vavrai

While the slow tempo gesture has potential, perhaps it gives the game away too early by going into the full gesture. Try performing half the gesture to look like wings in various ways before showing the end pose up to speed.

Watch your eyeline! Looking in the mirror ruins the gesture! 'I am your slave!'

Holding the pose looks great. DO more of this.

The heavy drum beat works really well, coming in on around the third song. Try different music with drums and a lyrical melody.

The quicker repetitions work really well. Consider this the crux of the piece, perhaps before tipping over into deterioration.

Could the gesture be performed with different body hold - looser, slouched, wider stance?
Could you incorporate the torso move - letting the back curve over, the head drop?

The revolving stage is a really good idea! Go with your instinct! It would make the space that is used very clear, expanding from my body, but closing in the stage space. It would also clearly display the performer as an object for viewing, adding another layer to the ideas of the body as a strong or weak object that is subject

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to aesthetic judgement. The revolving aspect would add another element to viewing the body, seeing it from all sides, and would display the gesture more fully as well as adding an extra layer to the timing of the performed gesture.

➡ Consider the 'plotline' of the performance - slow, unfinished gestures to begin
faster, repeated full gestures for the body
deterioration to conclude

➡ Consider deterioration of the gesture and how this might look. Looser body, floppier arms, gesture not fully elaborated.

23.10.15


Session recording notes - Use of space
(20.10.2015) (Tues)
♪ Arevee - Avishai Cohen

As I said before, perhaps there is a danger in requiring something from my body that isn't there already, in terms of autobiographical work representing my perspective and lived experience of my body, but, a little bit more physical fitness - strength and stamina - will go a long way to showing off my use of space. A low side lunge looks great with a long arm line, but getting up from there is tricky! Get squatting! Work those quads!

The fan kicks are looking really good, again, a little effort goes a long way. Work on hip flexor strength some more, and also on glut strength, leaning forward onto hands and raising the back leg to the ceiling.

When making circles with the back (kneeling, circling forwards) articulate the spine more - get the head and neck more involved.

Work with the curves of the spine more to create space - cobra pose, rocking, rock & rolls, upper curves, high releases

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Think about making spaces with your body, like the linked fingers arm circle. What else could you do to create a space?

Think of going up now. You bend your knees a lot, to go down. Try rising, releasing and jumping to extend lines.

Go back to later:

'Female' gestures, and making the visual cues of femininity explicit - the yoni symbol, the inverted triangle, boobs, butterbs

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Practical Session 23.10.15 Fri

Today is my first Friday session at this time (3.00 - 5.00) and already my mind and body aren't sure about starting work this late in the day! So, let's remove pressure and judgement, remembering that the body/mind is a fragile thing at times and to work respectfully of that.

Today I will look again at space

thinking about working upwards, into the air through elevation

thinking about articulating the back and neck

thinking about creating spaces with the body

I will also think about repeated gestures

the deterioration of the 'strong' gesture

and considering slow, unfinished gestures that give an idea initially

Well, I got through exploring the first bit but fatigue is taking me today,

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glands up, empty headed.

I do seem to prefer getting down and low rather than going for elevation. I feel that that's a personal identity thing, not everyone is a jumper.

I worked on the upper back, so let's see how the recording looks.

I played with spaces too, again I cleave naturally to curves, especially through the arms. There are some interesting angles to be had with knees and elbows working in tandem, echoing or opposing. Again, let's look at the recording.

26.10.15

After speaking with Kere, I am mindful that I make clear links between how I work with space, those movements, patterns, rhythms etc, and what I intend to do with specific gestures. Although I have picked out a gesture - strength - I can see that this one gesture is limiting. I could add similar gestures to it, perform it differently, make it part of something larger.

Kere has also pointed out (as I hopefully knew already) that the movement of my body when I'm working on other things, space for example, is gestural in itself - gestures are being generated all the time. It is also quite likely that it is amongst these gestures (undecided, unplanned) that the interest may lie. The next step is to draw it all together.

I need to be aware that all the movement I generate, particularly the ones I think are particularly interesting and should come back to later, needs to be part of the whole picture. So, when I write that I'll come back to something later, it may be useful to note also how I see it linking with the ideas I'm trying to explore.

Maybe it's time for a mind map setting out some of the ideas I'm exploring, the questions I'm asking etc and how they all link together.

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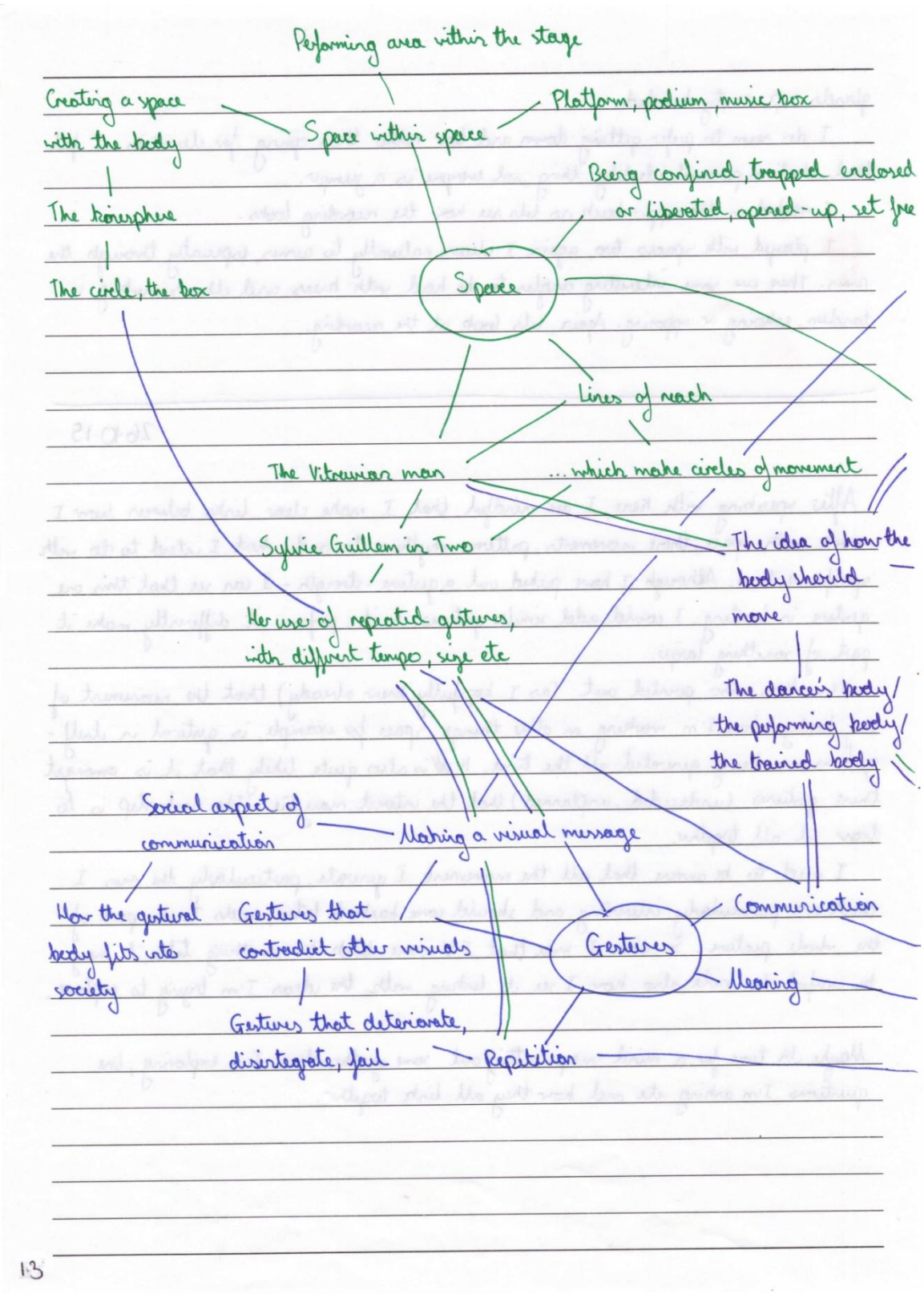
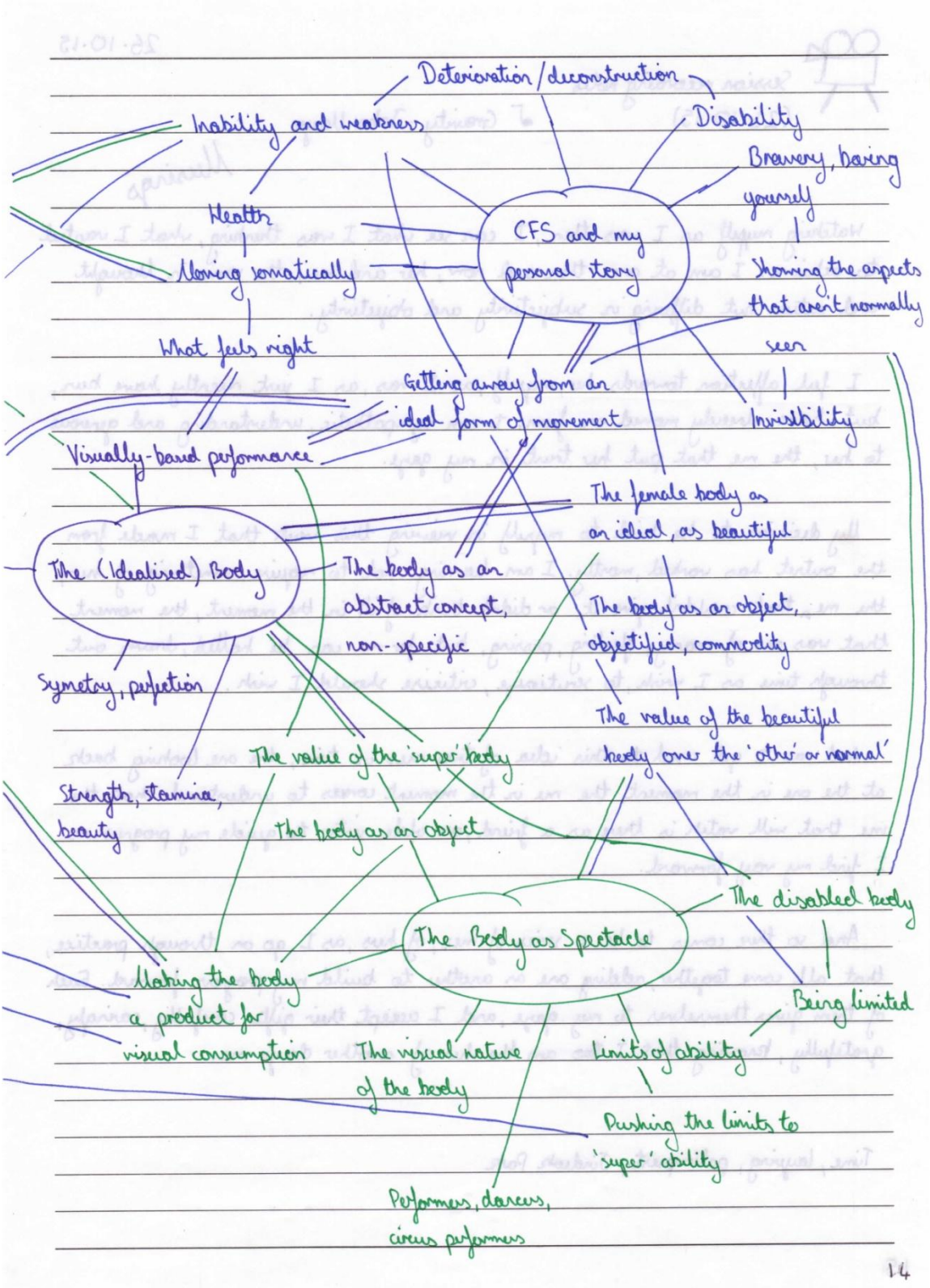

Performing area within the stage
Creating a space with the body
Space within space
Platform, podium, music box
The hemisphere
Being confined, trapped enclosed or liberated, opened-up, set free
The circle, the box
Space
Lines of reach
The Vitruvian man
... which make circles of movement
Sylvie Guillem in Two
The idea of how the body should move
Her use of repeated gestures, with different tempo, size etc
The dancer's body/ the performing body/ the trained body
Social aspect of communication
Making a visual message
How the gestural body fits into society
Gestures that contradict other visuals
Gestures
Communication
Meaning
Gestures that deteriorate, disintegrate, fail
Repetition
13


Deterioration / deconstruction
Inability and weakness
Disability
Bravery, baring yourself
Health
Moving somatically
CFS and my personal story
Showing the aspects that aren't normally seen
What feels right
Getting away from an ideal form of movement
Invisibility
Visually-based performance
The female body as an ideal, as beautiful
The (Idealised) Body
The body as an abstract concept, non-specific
The body as an object, objectified, commodity
Symetry, perfection
The value of the beautiful body over the 'other' or normal'
The value of the 'super' body
Strength, stamina, beauty
The body as an object
The disabled body
The Body as Spectacle
Making the body a product for visual consumption
Being limited
The visual nature of the body
Limits of ability
Pushing the limits to 'super' ability
Performers, dancers, circus performers
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26.10.15

Session recording notes
(23.10.15) ♩ Gravity - John Mayer

Musings

Watching myself as I was then, I can see what I was thinking, what I wanted to achieve. I am at once then and now, her and me, the same in thought and action but differing in subjectivity and objectivity.

I feel affection towards her, myself, as I was, as I just recently have been, but have already moved on from. I am sympathetic, understanding and generous to her, the me that put her trust in my gaze.

My decision to be kind to myself in viewing this work that I made from the outset has worked, mostly. I am learning not to require something of her, the me, that couldn't give it or didn't think of it in the moment, the moment that was one of many, fleeting, passing, but for me can be halted, drawn out through time as I wish, to scrutinise, criticise should I wish.

And as I get used to this idea of two mes in time, the one looking back at the one in the moment, the me in the moment comes to understand that the me that will watch is there as a friend, an older sister to guide my progress as I find my way forward.

And so there comes to be a series of mes, of hers, as I go on through practice, that all come together, adding one on another to build my progress forward. Each of them gives themselves to my gaze, and I accept their gifts carefully, caringly, gratefully, knowing that I too am the her of another day's me.

Time, layering, palimpsest, Jindeork Park

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Drawing on what Kere said, and also to maintain the generosity of spirit I've been talking about in viewing myself, it might be useful to recap on some 'rules' I have set myself, or some I need to instate.

It doesn't have to look nice.

Very tricky for me, since I want to look nice in so many ways: as a dancer to show my ability and training, clear lines, strength and flexibility; as a woman to look attractive, not fat, sweaty, short, but to look long, lean, full of energy and pretty; as someone living with CFS - for some reason, I still don't want it to show!

This is a safe place to have all.

In this arena, to myself and the people interested in my work, I can show them everything. I can look ill (maybe go without make-up!) (yes, on camera!), I can dance ill, I can 'underperform' - not having strength, stamina or flexibility is ok here, and it may well not matter if you can't see the lines of my body seeing as it's meant to be about the soma, right? (ditch the leggings and try baggy)

The bits I don't mean to do, may be where it's at!

So show all of it, the thought process acted out physically, the little gestures that weren't meant for anything, the bits where I give up and stop doing what I'm trying. Look at these bits.

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Don't limit yourself.

It's all relevant and part of the bigger picture. Don't plan that 'this bit' is what I'm doing, is what should be focused on and the rest isn't it. It's all it.

A few ideas...

To the audience - a gesture, a question, 'is this what you want to see?'

- What do they expect to see?
- What could I show them instead?

Using the audience as a mirror - see yourself in their eyes.

- You know they will pick out your flaws, so let them, use them, question the process of watching and being watched. Of presenting your body, which belongs to you, as an object for their pleasure, their consumption.

Performers' training in picking out their own weaknesses

- Movements, gestures that display weaknesses prominently
- showing awareness of them \ Fosse

Who owns a performer's body? Why is this a question? Because the performer gives her body for her art, a sacrifice, a tool, even for her it is objectified. She regards it dispassionately, flaws, weaknesses, her 'look'.

Does the audience have a claim over it? They pay for her livelihood.

Does her employer? He casts her.

Does she? She chooses what to do with her body. Or does she?

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23.10.15

Practical Session

Today, I'll bear in mind that it all counts

that this is about strength and weakness

that it's about the visible and the invisible

It must be going well in some capacity because I did 40 minutes straight off. I'm trying to get across, make visible the hidden side of being me as a dancer. What does it mean to be a dancer? What does it feel like? Like all the Pinterest posts, I'm trying to communicate the thoughts of perfection and inadequacy, of don't show them that you're tired, that it hurts, that you can't go on because they paid to see you look perfect.

I'm trying to show my weaknesses, the leg that won't stand straight, the posture that wants to drop, my face when it wants to fall. I'm trying to make visible how it feels to experience the coming-on of fatigue and the other symptoms of CFS. I'm dropping my posture slowly, like it's creeping over me, checking my gluteals, allowing the big, bright smile to fade away to worry and gormlessness.

I'm displaying my body in its feminine perfection, bevelled leg, tight bottom, pulled in stomach, long neck, straight shoulders, face bright, smiling and ready. I'm considering the requirement of my body to look female - boobs, bottom, long legs, pretty face, long hair - but not to show any female behaviour like boobs that jiggle, hair that gets in your eyes, unwanted body hair, to say nothing of pregnancy, periods and the like. When pregnancy happens, give up?

Maybe I'm a puppet, held by strings of requirement. Maybe I put myself there. Maybe I want to drop, let go.

Time to explore space and gestures of reaching, drawing back, pulling, shrivelling up.

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When so much of what you feel with CFS is internal, how can I make that visible?

Could lighting be used to portray the tingling, trembling, buzzing in your limbs?

Could it also be used for head rushes and visual blackouts?

Darkness for a zero day, displaying my body by a faint glimmer as I rest.

Bright flashes like electricity for muscle spasms and spinal buzzes.

Session recording notes - 'It all counts' 30.10.15
(27.10.15)

♩ Zoe Keating (long playlist on YouTube)

This idea of 'it all counts' seems positive - it has me more aware of every little 'meaningless' gesture I make, and I can go back and repeat them and play with them.

Don't give up on a move you find interesting. Keep with it.

Have female performance gestures and weak deteriorated gestures.

Talking is good'. It brings your ideas to light (and makes the gestures really clear for viewing)

Gestures with the hands - wiping sweat, scratching, grabbing - YES'. Sleepy head rolling.

→ Pulling out a tight ponytail - as an example of deterioration?
The ponytail works well for other symbols - swinging it, flicking it - as an example of femininity - then play with it loose

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→ So how about a piece that began with gestures and movement of the female dancer, requirements, constraints, rules - the ponytail, the smile, posture, inward space, performance - and played with some of these to deconstruct them one by one, perhaps repeating each with the new deconstructions to finish with a sloppy, effortful piece that is real and human and personal...

Keep going with facial expressions, dropping them, loving them slowly

→ The music box pedestal and the puppet dropping its use of space with fatigued limbs - also the toy that is in sections of head, body and legs, which you twist to mis-match heads and bodies...

Although many of my gestures in this recording look unconscious, they are not, in a change to previous sessions. What does this have that reflects the performance of self noted by Goffman et al?

→ The creeping fingers of energy, stealing back through your arms is rather beautiful; explore this further. The nurturing movement of drawing in from the space works well to portray the invisible. Also energy in the back of your head.

→ Sleeping positions are really interesting. Can this be explored alone or would it work better with a partner?

Trembling hands do work to portray the tingling. Do more of it. Flinching works to visualise the spinal spasms, as long as the face works with it. What about muscle twitches?

30.10.15

Practical Session - Observed by Kere & Angela & Kasia

First things first - there is no need to be nervous because this is not a performance. This is Kere and Angela watching you work and explore ideas, in the same way that they read your written explorations of ideas.

What do I want to show them?

- The 'is this what you want to see' - the pefect female performer, play with video space, strength, then explore your posture and movements and body. Jiggle your breasts, flick your ponytail, pull at your face, clothes, body.

- Back to 'perfect'. Then slowly let it drop, face fall, posture drop, puppet-like. Feel the fatigue in your body, stealing back through your limbs. Draw in from the space around you. Flop, dangle, look gormless. Tremble, flinch, twitch.

How do I get movement, moves of strength in there?

Should I use the mirror again? Yes, being observed may affect me enough!

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16.11.15

Thoughts after the observation and some bad health

Having people watch me work affected me more than I expected. I tried not to put pressure on myself in advance, but inevitably, elements ~~&~~ crept in that made it clear how much I still thought of it as a performance.

- I wanted them to think I had 'done well', which manifested itself partly in me trying to show them bits of different material that I've been working on - probably a little bit of everything I've done in the last few months - not terribly cohesive.

- I set up chairs for them, like an audience. Angela found this very interesting. My intention was partly good manners towards my supervisors but also to take control of the situation, which for me means turning the situation into one I recognise - a performance. The fact that I assumed they would be static and at 'the front', also says a lot about my comfort zone. They could have moved around, joined in, stood etc.

- I was much more concerned about their perception than my own. This effectively put a barrier on my internal awareness so I felt disconnected from my usual self. I had no flow, nothing felt natural, it felt awkward as I wondered what they were thinking.

Angela's comments afterwards that I question every decision I make have certainly got me thinking about my comfort zone and working beyond it. She suggested that I broaden my awareness of other ways of performing or creating performative work, to find out what might be the limits of discomfort and comfort for me, and see where I fit in.

An over-riding theme from Kere, Angela and Karina was that I use this time to indulge myself, exploring my work and myself. They reminded me that I have two years more in which to pose the questions and search for answers, and that 'it's all a work in progress - even the workshops - even the 'final performance' (so called).

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23.11.15 Thoughts on bad health and progress

I haven't done much practice in the last few weeks, so my progress has been slower, but it hasn't stopped. I have made mental progress.

I have progressed by:

1. Attending the Dance and Disability symposium and hearing some great speakers, seeing a couple of integrated performances and making some new contacts.

2. Sharing experiences and ideas with other people suffering or living with invisible conditions. Alessandro, who I've emailed, Paula, who gave me some great advice and helped me let myself off the hook, and a number of other people who have hugged me, smiled, sympathised, understood and accepted.

3. Sharing my current work with Jo, when I got to explain a lot of my ideas, confusions and channels of thought. I also read the musings on the intertwined of the past and present mess to her, which gave me a lot of confidence to develop these ideas, present them at a conference and link them to other aspects of my work.

4. Emailing with Karina, getting some references from her and starting to look into Velazquez's Las Meninas. This could be an interesting link to the subjectivity and objectivity in my process of viewing the recordings of myself.

5. I have done pretty well at accepting that my condition needs time sometimes, and that going through the process of looking after my body and mind at times like this is part of my over-all learning process in the PhD.

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So with regards my studio practice, Angela suggested that I question a number of elements (everything!).

I make decisions about how I work continually, many of which are unconscious or habitual. This is not to say that habitual processes are necessarily bad, but it's worth being aware which are and which aren't.

For example, I am choosing to record my ideas and findings in the rehearsed medium of a handwritten journal, as the security of this process allows me to question other aspects of my work.

So, some questions to ask myself:

Why do I dress in tight-fitting clothes?
Am I trying to look like a dancer?
Is it important to see how my body moves?
What am I actually most comfortable in?
What clothing might help me focus on somatic awareness?

Why do I face the mirror?
Do I consider this the front? Is that important?
Do I think how my body looks is important?
When am I focusing on visuals and when am I focusing on somatics?
Is one more important than the other?
What would happen if I had my back to the mirror?

Why do I dance to music?
Do I need music to move?
Am I focusing on rhythm?
Is there a particular genre that I am looking for?
How would my practice differ if I worked in silence?

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And some specific questions about the session that Kene, Angela & Karia watched:

Why did I face the mirror?
Why did I put them at the 'front'?
Why did I 'put' them somewhere in particular?
Why did I give them chairs?

Why did I explain that an advert might interrupt the music?
Why did I address them when it did?
Why did I change the music when it did?
Why did I choose that music?

Why did I dress 'like a dancer' on that day?
Do I want them to see me as a dancer?
Do I consider what I do to be dancing?
Is that a helpful/limiting way to think of my practice?

What about their presence made me behave so differently to my other sessions?
Was I more concerned about me using the session or them viewing it?
Why was it important to me to give the impression that I had achieved lots?
How much is lots?
Why did I explain that I would finish where I did?
Why did I feel the need to finish then?

How ~~was~~ my movement different to other practical sessions?
Do they tend to have a similar structure, pattern or otherwise?
Why were my thoughts so different?
Why did I have trouble engaging somatically?

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I had faced the mirror to engage somatically & visually simultaneously, but have now changed
An arbitrary decision based on old habits, but I do want them to look at my face
I want to control what my audience views and how. Could I let go of this control?
Politeness, the concept of an audience which is one I want to keep, although I may change how.

I wanted it to be clear that the advert was not part of the chosen music
I wanted them to exclude this time from what they saw.
I had been using the rhythm of the music to give my movement rhythm.
I was trying it out, I haven't yet decided on music.

I wanted them to see me as professional, a performer, it gave me a comfort zone
I want to be viewed as a performer and for my body to be objectified & for the audiences
It is limiting if it retains old habits without consideration but is a clearer path of my practice (consumption)

I felt distracted by their perception of my practice, and unable to engage somatically.
Them viewing it, although not in what I could learn from their perception, more as an achievement.
I must be unused to the forces of practice-based research and haven't completely adjusted my
Let go! This is not about quantity! Expectations to where achievement occurs and how.
I felt I should draw a line between 'performing me' and 'ordinary me'. Am I not the same?
I was uncomfortable with what I was doing and didn't feel any more would help me or them.

My movement was fleeting, never lingering in one area or exploring, eroticising many ideas
I generally have 2 to 3 recordings with one theme which develops and one other theme.
I felt I needed to show them all the ideas I have explored so far.
More concerned with their experience than my own. A useful lesson - one is not more
important than the other, I require balance.

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24
[redacted].11.15 Practical Session

No music

Today I am a bit tired so there is no pressure.
It may also help me to portray visibly some of what I am feeling.
I am happy with the progress I made recently, plus Rose says my progress is good.

- Today I continue to use this rehearsal medium of the journal to allow myself to explore other, new, ideas.

- I will not face the mirror so I can concentrate on how my body feels without the influence of how my body looks. I have shut the curtains and am facing the 'back'.
I will film my work again, so that I know there will be an opportunity to engage with the visual element of what I do.

- I will not use music - let's see what rhythm emerges from my body and its movement.

I am playing with my knees, how they want to bend today, give out from underneath me and carry me down with them. I'm exploring the rhythm that develops as one knee goes, then the other so that I lose height drop my body forwards and my arms swing forwards, until I push my knees back straight again and lift my body upright.

Gravity wants to pull me down and my body doesn't have so much strength as normal to resist. Most of my energy is in my torso, there is energy in my pelvis and in my chest but my shoulders want to slump, my neck wants to droop and sometimes my upper back wants to curve over.

So where is the energy? Somewhere in the bowl of my pelvis? Or higher up into my abdomen?

Rose noted that my work was emanating from the core. I play with swaying and rocking a lot, experimenting with repetitive movements emanating from my centre of gravity. I often bend my knees to make my centre of gravity lower, locating it in my pelvis.

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Is this where my energy retreats to when I feel fatigued? Maybe it's retreating to the base of the spine like other viruses... How amazing if I were to discover the source of M.E. through movement...

27.11.15

Session recording notes - Observed session
(30.10.15)

♪ Zoe Keating

I feel nervous just opening the file because I expect to dislike what I see. I expect to feel disappointed as I see myself falling prey to old ideas and habits.

Remember to be nice to yourself, Mo.
The Mo that danced that day was fearful of judgement.
Understand why she behaved that way, accept her effort and learn.

The movement is very fast, which is great to build up to when you have worked out that that is what you want, but doesn't allow much time to think and feel in the moment. Stay a while with something, explore its many possibilities, including seeing what happens when you've been there a while.

The Vitruvian man concept still feels strong, there's more to explore and discover there.

The grotesque dancer smile and the gamblers floppy body still need some more exploration too.

It's as though I'm afraid to do nothing. Sometimes when I watch myself, something interesting happens and I want to see stillness, or small movement around that

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one idea, but I move on too fast.

Session recording notes - knees & weakness
(24.11.15) No Music

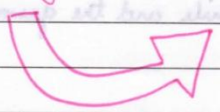
Odd to see me with no make-up, hair down and a big plaid shirt. I certainly look more 'ill', but what am I trying to show with my image?

Would a neutral or nude look work better? Might this work to describe ~~the~~ myself as a human, stripped back and also could be seen as a dancer in a mannequin / dancer / body sort of way?

The weak knee idea is an interesting way of changing my use of my space, but again I was rushed too quickly to see the flow of energy changing and my space being exited. I think I was interested in the rhythm my body might create.

I slowed down in the second recording, which works better. I achieved a greater sense of disconnection to the outside too - this was a somatic experience and this comes across through the slower movement, my easy breathing and my unfocused eyes.

Bearing some of this in mind...



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Practical Session 27.11.15

Today, I will try again to engage somatically, picking up where I left off with the slow weakening of the knees and dropping forward.

I may also go back to using less of my kinesphere, with the energy creeping in from my limbs to my torso.

Remember!

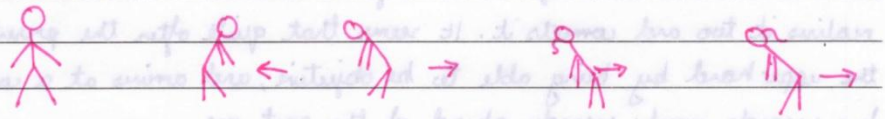
Work slowly

Explore an area fully, there are more possibilities than you first think

Don't be afraid to do little

No Music

I am discovering how the pelvis, its weight and the circle of movement it can inhabit, can govern the movement of my torso. If I allow my head, neck and arms to be relaxed, they will fall forwards, backwards or sideways, counter-balancing the movement of my pelvis.



The spine also wants to make a curve in any direction, curving over forwards, arching backwards, curving sideways, which I am trying to allow for by letting my arms hang and letting go of my neck.

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I have also gone back to letting my knees relax and find that the torso then follows the bended knee, attempting to get as low to the ground as possible.
This creates some interesting movement as the torso counter-acts the pelvis as it leans in its widest horizontal plain, then either continues that movement if the knee away from the hips bends, or retraces slightly if the knee on the same side as the pelvis bends.

The problem with playing with the movement of the head and neck is that you instinctively want to protect it, so learning to let go, and managing it, hurts!

I just had a great somatic experience or phenomenology, feeling energy retracing down into my arms and hands, at the elbow, ~~the~~ above the wrist and into the knuckles.

30.11.15

Session recording notes - pelvis, floppy arms, floppy neck
(27.11.15) No music

It's interesting when I'm watching myself and think, 'why didn't I keep my head in line then?', to find that a few seconds later the me I'm watching realises it too and corrects it. It seems that quite often the present me has the upper hand by being able to be objective, and arrives at a conclusion a few seconds, merely seconds, ahead of the past me.
How could an audience get an idea a few seconds ahead of the performance?

The weight in the pelvis that alters the position of my body is conjuring up images of Laban's plains of movement - the kinesphere again. It also looks quite doll-like, the bending in the middle with straight legs and torso and arms that dangle. This links well with the concept of an ideal body, one that

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is objectified and owned (by the audience?). Perhaps I could bring in the realistic Barbie doll... This may feel like I am looking at others' ideas, but it is the way I draw them together and what I then use them for that is mine and new.

If this is what I'm playing with, I need to remember my straight lines and neutral spine. Or if floppy is what you're after...

- Trust your instincts. -

- Go with it. -

- See where it takes you. -

How does this doll concept portray invisible elements of my illness?

- A barbie doll
- The ideal of a doll
- The possession of an individual by another or by an industry
- Moving in confined parameters
- Lost childhood

Am I forcing a concept or is one presenting itself? Kera said that most practice-based work looks like rubbish because its about exploring ideas not creating a product. Am I falling into the trap of trying to create a visual product because that's where I'm comfortable? Visuals matter to me, particularly as probably as I have been trained as a performer in the visual arts. The nature of an invisible illness or disability brings visuals to the fore.

It's interesting how similar the end of this session, when I was experiencing the energy flow returning to my arms and hands, looks to the original repeated gestures of strength that I played with back in recording of 10.09.15 and

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written up 23.10.15. The slow raising of the arms in a gentle arc and the repetition looks very similar.

Could I project onto my body with light to show channels of energy?

I can see where the energy has got to by how I'm holding my arms. This is great! In some way, I made that invisible ~~seen~~ sensation visible - but to myself, who remembers recording the words and what it felt like... hmm.

If I wanted to repeat this energy flow process to an audience, would I have to tire myself out first so that the performance is 'real' and 'in the moment'? This brings up issues with ethics, victim art and lived experiences. If I were to recreate it however, we are dealing with autobiographical performance and maybe concepts of time and repetition.

Toys - ballerina music box

standing / falling figure with a press-in base

marionette puppet

twisting blocks to make pictures of figures

doll

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Energy flow light projection

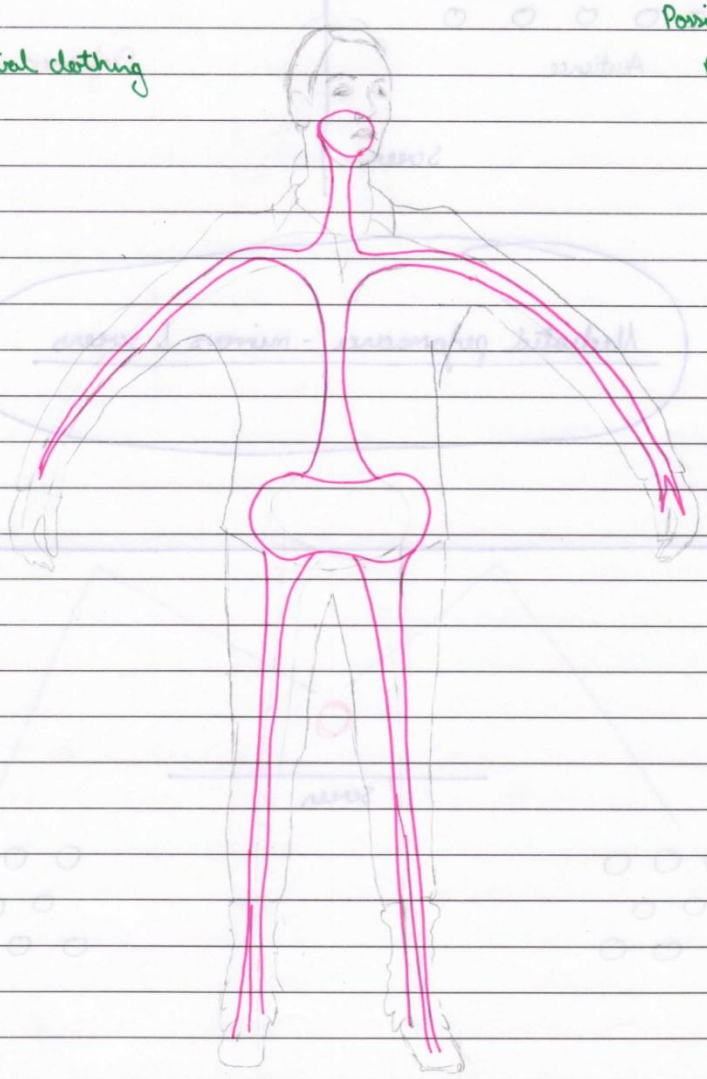
Coloured projections? Plain white/golden light

Low level lighting in room

Medical diagrams - nervous system

Possibly moving projection

Nude/neutral clothing



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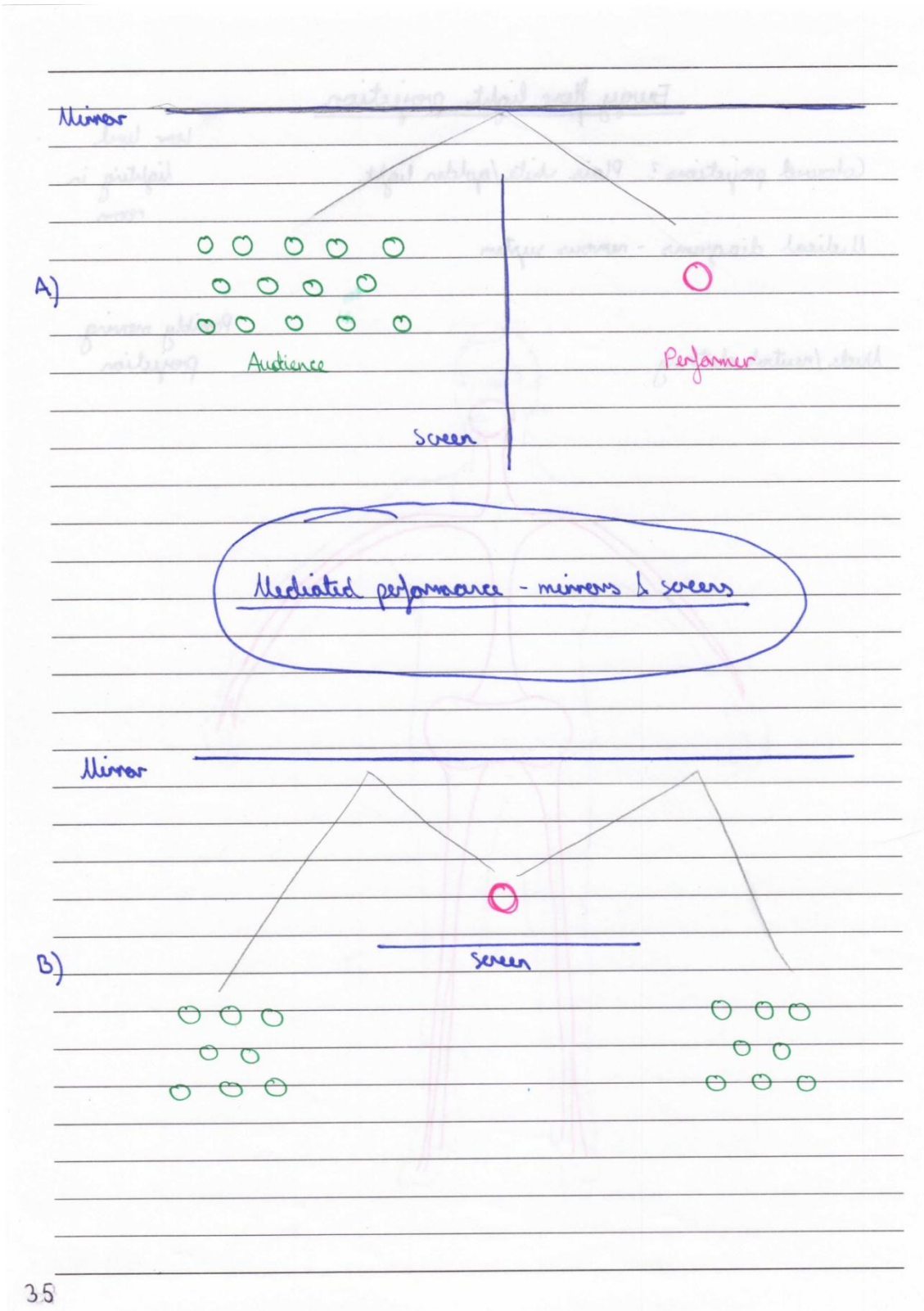
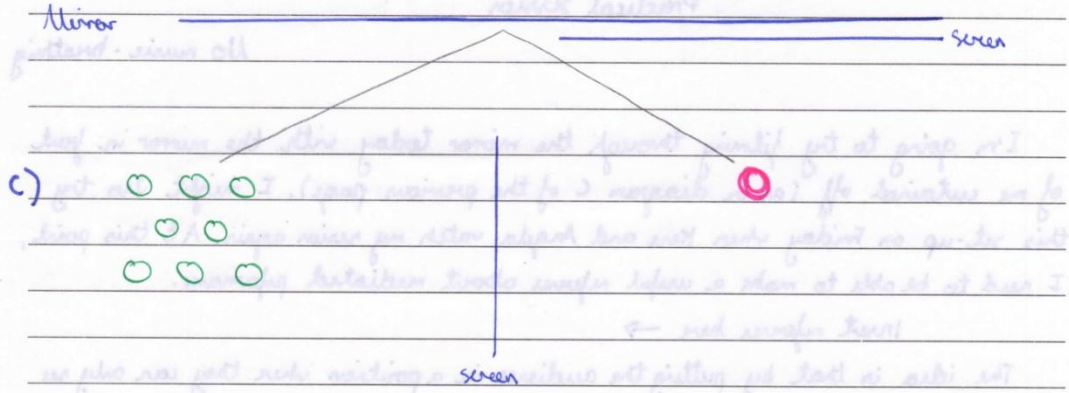
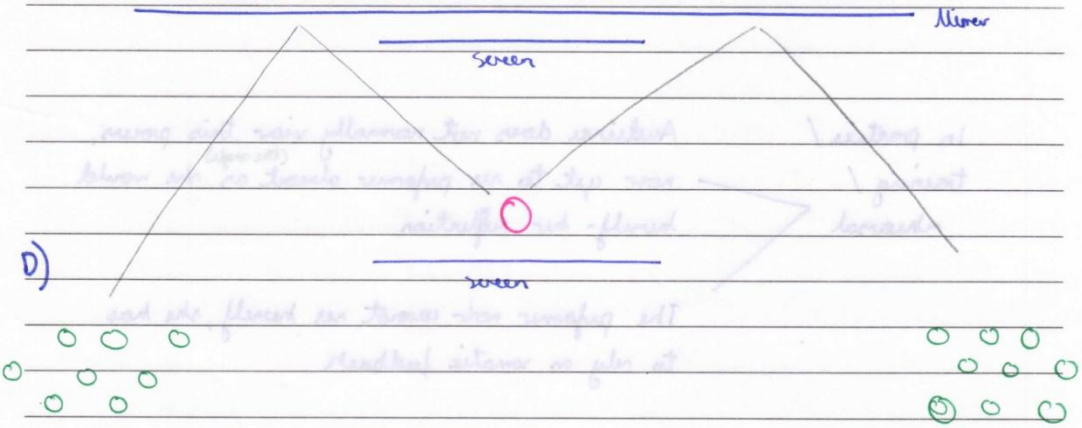

Mirror
A)
Audience
Performer
Screen
Mediated performance - mirrors & screens
Mirror
B)
Screen
35





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01.12.15

Practical Session

No music - breathing

I'm going to try filming through the mirror today with the mirror in front of me curtained off (as in diagram C of the previous page). I might also try this set-up on Friday when Kere and Angela watch my session again. At this point, I need to be able to make a useful reference about mediated performance.

Insert reference here →

The idea is that by putting the audience in a position where they can only see me through a mirror, they view me as I would myself. However, I do not have this ability as my view is screened also. They have the power I would normally, which is less than the audience does generally.

On stage
- Audience has full 'live' un-mediated view of the performer's body
- The performer cannot see herself

In practice / training / rehearsal
- Audience does not normally view this process, now get to see performer almost (true angle) as she would herself - her reflection
- The performer now cannot see herself, she has to rely on somatic feedback

Movement-wise, I'll go back to thinking about the channels of energy in my back, pelvis and neck, and how this makes my limbs behave. Let's continue with a rhythmic, repetitive flow of movement.

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So I've been playing again with allowing the energy to emanate from my pelvis up into my spine and neck. I'm trying to work out when my back would stay straight with the neck in neutral (as in a 'flat back') and when the energy would retreat to cause the neck to relax and the back to curve (as in 'rolling up').

If the energy is in the back and neck it stays straight, as it regresses, the neck first loses tension and then the upper back with the weight of the shoulders, and so on until the pelvis & hips are highest.

This is all assuming that I am in a standing position, which in itself assumes that there is energy in the legs. Although I often let the knees go as though the energy had retreated up the thighs, there is in fact tension remaining, particularly in the ankles as the feet are firmly planted.

This got me thinking about fainting - people's knees often buckle, they begin to move downwards in a vertical plane but then the head falls, creating enough weight in one direction to send them off-balance. Conversely, perhaps if the knees are locked, people can go over like a board in one direction, with little or no bending or buckling.

The puppet's own weight keeps them gently resting on the ground with their feet (if jointed) flexed along the ground rather than extended. Puppets have strings extending from their heads though. What if you could let go of the head string but retain a pelvis string. Could I be supported by a waist strap, allowing me to be in control of my upper body and let go of my ankles?

Why do I want to stay upright anyway? When I'm completely fatigued I have to lie down...

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04.12.15

No music.

Session recording notes - angled view in mirror, (01.12.15) hips, floppy body, doll

From the camera angle, it looks like I am looking in the mirror but I am hidden from my own view by the curtain.

I need to be careful that the doll concept doesn't dictate my movement patterns (unless I want it to specifically). It's all very well listening the movement that develops from using my pelvis as the focus of energy and movement but it's another matter if I pressure doll-ness and forget about inhabiting my space and displacing it, and the flow of energy in my lived experience of CFS, and the concept of presenting something invisible visibly.

What sort of doll anyway? A rag doll would follow the floppy pattern quite well, a rigid doll like a china doll or a Barbie would work better with feminist ideas... Maybe I could use the rigid doll to work from and then float out of it into floppy-body CFS movement...

Looking at my movement, there is a degree of focus on isolations, concentrating on focusing energy in one area or removing it.

Can my body be the space that I occupy, and can I occupy less of it by experiencing my energy receding?

The mirror also makes the audience more aware of themselves as watchers - they can see their reactions in the mirror.

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08.12.15

Practical Session

I'm in black shorty underwear and a black vest top today as a means of stripping away elements of costuming and avoiding gendered dressing. That saying, underwear is typically male or female but I want to draw attention to my sex rather than my gender in viewing my body with less clothing. It was too cold, kept clothes on.

I've been looking at images of dolls' bodies, the fabric bodies of Victorian china dolls, the overly sexualised ~~dolls~~ bodies of Barbies and even Bratz dolls, the 'realistic' but idealised bodies of adult sex dolls, and the bodies of 'normal' modified dolls, designed to better portray a healthy body to children. I've also come up with results about a number of anatomically correct dolls used for medical research or education in history, particularly female dolls with movable features.

The female body has been subjected to scrutiny for so many reasons, particularly as an idealised object seen as consumable by others. By displaying my body, subjecting myself to the gaze of the audience I am trying to better understand my own acceptance of a body whose worth has been as a commodity for dance - a tuned instrument with appealing aesthetics that is 'worth watching' - but which has invisible limitations in this capacity.

I am attempting to inhabit less of the space my body displaces, by focusing on the flow of energy in my torso, neck and limbs. I feel the energy inhabit every inch of my body, radiating from my pelvis into the tips of my fingers and toes, and then focus on the sensation of that energy needing to see how it affects my movement.

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(04.12.15 Practical when Kere & Angela came)

Some interesting questions from Kere and Angela. They're trying to get me to take a stance on a number of issues which I am currently sitting on the fence about.

- Do I subscribe to the understanding of the linked body-mind rather than the separate entities?

Yes. I do believe this. I often talk about the interaction between mind, body and soul, how each affects the other. In my lived experience of CFS, I have seen first-hand how inextricably linked they are.

In light of this, talking about your soul inhabiting your body as a place of residence, as though they have no connection, is unhelpful. Kere also seem to be getting to the stage where you may actually be controlling your energy flow.

- Why am I trying to reject the notions of me as performer and of rehearsed work and returning?

I think that I am unwelcome in or unsuitable for an industry in which my training & experience so far has led me to believe that only the perfect and superhuman can occupy. Does this mean that I don't believe in all the integrated performances & disability friendly companies that I've been looking at recently? How ridiculous. No.

Kere made the point that I have all this training, why not use it? Why am I choosing to reject it? There is nothing wrong with these concepts if I can use them for my current work being clear about their place.

Angela was interested in the phenomenological aspects of my work, as I focus on my lived experience. This is likely to be where the new knowledge is. I can link this to wellbeing or health as concepts, or use them to inform my work.

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The notion of subjectivity and objectivity is still a strong concept and links with gender, feminism and phenomenology. Is this what I am pursuing?

Kere suggests I look at the framework of the workshop performances I give. He suggests that I define whether the work is durational, with people popping in and out during an allotted duration of performance time, and for which I could provide some information about what I am exploring either verbally or on cards. The work might take a more traditional (a perfectly acceptable word & notion) structure, with an introduction from me or on cards, and a clear beginning, middle and end to the piece.

Rehearsed work is also totally acceptable, whether that is a rehearsed structure of an improvised piece, or a rehearsed piece totally. It could have repeated motifs that deteriorate. I could work with codified dance moves, I could use un-codified movement, as long as I take a clear stance, adopt a method and am able to explain my choices, backing it up with theoretical frameworks and referring to others who may have worked similarly.

Feminism and gender - how are they different? how do I feed them into my work? how do they help me develop concepts?

phenomenology and lived experience - how are they different? how do I use this method to explore my ideas?

disability - where do I fit in? what does the law say? what other theories and criticisms are there at the moment?

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05.12.15

A back-to-basics Grand Plan - Phenomenology

Looking back at Susan Kozel's Closer: Performance, Technology, Phenomenology, she lays out some fundamentals of creating a phenomenology. I also need to note that the ultimate aim is to share (disseminate) the data you collect (that you experience) with others.

1 Engage in a phenomenology, sensing your surroundings and somatic experience. Remove the main thought pattern from your thinking and notice instead lateral associations. Go beyond boredom, delving further to see whether any conceptual thoughts emerge.

2 After a break, record your experience through video, notes, dialogue to camera etc. (The brain-dump)

3 After another break, return to the notes to see if any significant themes or concepts emerge. Do these ideas fit into any current theoretical framework? Research these ideas further.

4 Begin to compose a document, deciding how much concrete sense description and how much reference to abstractions (cultural or theoretical ideas) will be included.

↓

5 This document needs to have a carefully considered voice and tone - am I speaking personally or in the third person, is the tone critical, sensual or investigative.

6 Share this document with a colleague to get an idea of its reception.

7 Re-design the ~~document~~ phenomenological process. It may be different each time.

8 Through repetition, adjust the document to have an appropriate form for the content. It's impact and resonance is dependent on the balance of abstract & concrete ideas.

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1 I have done some of this, through CFS management and in the studio as movement material. I may need to re-visit this process to remember any particular associations or experiences that emerged.

2 Again, I'm already doing this, by recording ideas in this journal, occasionally to camera, by recording the sessions on video and by engaging with the recordings and making more notes.

3 I have found that the duality of subjectivity and objectivity that I experience in viewing the recordings of myself presents a strong concept for further investigation. I have also considered the notion of inhabited space, although so far I haven't found an effective way to portray this. (Maybe some more thought on projected light?) The final concept is that of the female body as object for visual consumption.

4 This 'document' in my case will be a physical performance.
- In terms of sense description or abstract concepts how would I communicate the sense of remembering performing and feeling a certain way, while watching myself? What might I choose to say in terms of cultural ideas about this recording/viewing process? Who else theorises about this concept?
- The projected light could have some of the sense description of my energy inhabiting my body. I could make references to other cultural theories about the body/mind, energy channels, illness, somatic experience or disability.
- The female body would be an easier concept to present in a physical document, but I may have to work harder to come up with an original concept and new knowledge.

6 The document will be shared in the workshops (and in the session viewings already).
7
8 Each time I gain feedback the phenomenological process should be changing. These changes will work towards more in-depth workshops and the final piece.

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? The practical research is a means of gathering data. I've been conducting practical research for about three months now, so what data have I gathered?

- During the initial stages I found that I can describe my kinesphere by swinging my arms at their fullest extent, that this potential space (you have the potential to occupy it) moves as you move eg walking around or lying down (when it all ends up in front of you)

- We don't always use our potential space. We move within some of it. Similarly, by extending the limbs and cycling we can 'grow' the kinesphere. Sort of. I often feel impeded by my physical limitations (CFS) and don't use my kinesphere fully.

- I set up an 'ideal' way of moving, informed by my dance training but based on abstract concepts of 'the body' rather than a specific body (Collette Conroy). This means I don't meet my own unrealistic expectations.

- The performer's space could be defined by a circular block that revolves. The repeated gesture of 'strength' could be used to display an idealised body but comment on deterioration. I may not have pursued this concept far enough. It has strong possibilities still and addresses a number of issues.
! How is this phenomenological? Is it somatic? Is it enough that I would be having how I perform the repeated gesture on a phenomenology? The performance is therefore, the document.

- My level of comfort is somewhere in the middle - I neither like jumping and elevation particularly nor am well practised in getting low and using my weight.

- By recording myself and watching it back, I can be at once subject and object, remembering how I felt in the moment and seeing my movement for the first time. Having realised this, both the past and present me, a relationship develops between yourself and yourself. Could I put the audience
! 45

into this position? I briefly tried by placing Kere and Angela (as audience) in front of the mirror. Could I film the audience watching me perform, and then have them watch themselves in the act of watching?

- What I focus on may not be the element of interest or what I take forward.

- Spoken elements can quickly and easily convey ideas people may not perceive. (Does this defeat the object of gestural movement and making the invisible visible?)

- Being watched affects the somatic engagement. There is a decision to be made about whether the audience's or the performer's perception is given more value.

- Defining the performance space affects how the audience and the performer perceive the performance. Keeping an audience static and seated puts them in a different frame of mind than if they could move around. As creator of the performance, I choose how the audiences engages with the performance.

- Being aware of the choices I make in my performance gives me the opportunity to change these elements, and thus the perceptions of the performance.

- If I am controlling the way the performance is viewed, I need to commit to this.

- I am unclear whether I make a distinction between performing me and 'ordinary me'. Are they not the same person? Should/is the distinction here in what I am doing?

- My training has made it very difficult for me to give up control of my bodily movement. Maybe there's no need to. Visuals are important to me.

- The watcher can be more objective even than the performer looking at herself in the mirror.

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Moving towards a performance document, some questions:

- What is the relationship between somatic experience and a phenomenology? To have a phenomenology do you have to engage somatically? I think so.
- Why is what I did on Friday not somatic? Because I am moving in an unnatural way and because I am retaining control of my movement?
- Have I actually been engaging in the process of creating phenomenologically led work so far, by having sense experiences and now attempting to make a document from them?
- Does what Kogel says about phenomenology's starting point taking 'a position prior to, or beyond, the subject-object divide' negate the interest I currently have in myself as both subject and object through digital recordings?
- How can my previous training have a place in my current work if it is not somatic and keeps me in my comfort zone? Schön's argument that you may need to move away from technique to work with heuristically developed impulses
- Is it enough to put ideas together in a new way, creating a new enquiry, or should each element also be original?

intellectualise your assumptions, and justify your choices

Nolcars Theatre Co.

somatics - improv lots, get ideas, invite particular ideas, use them together or rework them,

the notion of 'rehearsed' is relevant to the analysis of the process, but not the enquiry

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07.12.15

The crux of the enquiry

Making invisible experience perceptible through performance

Difficulties - conveying personal experience which can be misinterpreted as the audience member may have no similar experience

the instinct to hide that which we deem a weakness or flaw, to prevent others perceiving us negatively

the performer's training which doesn't allow for non-performance, the performance of the self, rather than the interpretation of a character to come across

Personal challenges - understanding whether my previous training has a place in my enquiry, as it may keep me in my comfort zone

understanding the role I choose somatic movement to play in my performance or as a tool to experience my illness

choosing to display what I deem my weaknesses as I still believe this disqualifies me from 'being a performer'

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08.12.15

Considering the workshop of next week, 14th Dec

I am looking back at the plan I made for Oct - Dec at the front of this book. I am reminded that I began by experimenting with repetition of the 'strength' gesture. If I return to this...

I can create a performance in which I place my body in the centre of the room in a clearly defined circular space

The audience will be free to walk around me viewing my body as an object

I can dress in a way that defines me as a woman a dancer

By marking out a circular space, I am defining the performance space as my own kinesphere, the area that I could occupy (with my limbs) without taking a step

I could create a clear beginning, when I enter the performance space and assume my role as performer, a period in which I perform the gesture as people may expect it - strongly, quickly, using as much of my space as I can, and then allow the repeated gesture to deteriorate towards an ending

I could define the time I use by making a feature of a clock, exposing the limitations of my illness and drawing the performance to a definite ending

Is it acceptable that I deliberately perform the gesture in a number of ways? It is not wholly improvised, it is rehearsed. I have used somatic awareness to create this performance

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- I set clear control of how my body is viewed - perfect, imperfect, a normal body, a dancer's body, a stripper selling her body
- I request that people objectify me and make judgements

- Could the act of undressing be a part of the performance? It would make a clear statement about the body as an object for the audience's consumption.
- Would I have to do this within the performance space? Yes, if outside the circle is not for performance.
- Experiencing myself as object in others' perception will likely influence my own perception of what I am performing, shaping my lived experience

- The circular performance space could be a stage block, a taped or papered area... seated in a circle
- Is it enough at this stage to define the performance space based on ideas of the kinesphere? If I am interested in showing how this space shrinks, would I try to express that? I could use a spotlight that narrows...
- It confines my performance to that area

- The clock concept would define the performance time for myself & the audience as well as adding a layer of meaning
- A projected clock? A real clock? Time within a clock (15 minutes as Rose suggested?)
- Again I am confined by time
- Could the clock be projected onto the floor and I stand at the centre?

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09.12.15

Session recording notes and at-home practical
(08.12.15)

I'm considering the original strength gesture and also a gesture, which will be new that articulates the flow of energy from my pelvis to my extremities and back again.

I'm not sure whether to combine them, thinking about my energy and flowing into 'strength' or whether I should keep them separate.

I also need to find varying ways of performing the chosen gesture to reflect possible meanings or inferences. These could play with speed, repetition and size in space.

Then I will frame a period of deterioration, quite possibly three groups of 5 minutes within the fifteen minute performance.

In this recording I don't show enough difference between the repeated gesture and there is not a clear pattern of deterioration. The fidgeting doesn't have a place if it's not part of a gesture, although moving into the gesture and ending up in a fidget might work.

The differences should be as clear and simple as in drama class when students experiment with different speeds of a wave or headshake. Think simple. And big. Use your space.

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10.12.15

At-home practical session

I'm working on a gesture of energy radiating from my pelvis out into my limbs, that begins standing and slightly slouched forward, knees un-locked. ~~and~~ I just move my pelvis slightly forward, allowing a rolling motion up the body - the knees straighten, my back moves in line with my pelvis starting from my lower back and finishing with my head lifting. My shoulders then pull back and lift slightly, and as my arms begin to raise, I start to rise onto my toes. The motion continues into my lower arms as they lift, finishing with my hands, unfolding my fingers to straighten, beginning with my little fingers and ending with my forefingers and thumbs.

Positives - this is directly linked to my somatic experience of energy flow

it doesn't have any obvious meaning or connotation so audience members will have more of a clean state of perception

Negatives - it is not terribly rehearsed so it feels less prepared

it doesn't demonstrate energy flow in a way that I feel fits with my somatic experience

I'm having trouble making different versions of it different enough

I find it hard to deteriorate as I see the reverse half of the gesture as deterioration already

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I'm also considering going back to my original strength gesture

Positives - it has the benefit of being more rehearsed

the clear meaning would work well with changes in space and time

it would be easier to perform in different ways

Negatives - it doesn't have a clear connection with my somatic experience so relies on conventional interpretation (I could try and integrate my somatic experience in the performing of it though)

it isn't what Kerr said is a particularly interesting idea (the other one is)

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

I think I just felt my brain make the decision to go with the other one! The energy flow one. Great! Decision made! Now let's work on not sitting on the fence about how I perform it.

So, I need to first set up how it 'should' be performed.

It should be - performed to its fullest extent, fingers, toes, head, eyeline
- at an even speed - not slow, not desperately fast
1 - wide, taking one foot out to the side

53
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Conversely, when the gesture has deteriorated...

3

It could be - small, not using an extra step, not taking up much space
- not reaching to its fullest, the energy doesn't reach the fingers, toes or head
- slow, it would be effort to make what little movement is available

So in the middle...

2

It may - go through a phase of 'desperate' speed - repeating attempts to make the gesture
- only perform half the gesture, not making it to the ends
- take up a middling amount of space, a small step, half a nise, head and eyelids slightly raised
- the 'desperate' repetitions may be the thing to knock the deterioration into the next phase

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11.12.15 Rehearsal

Today I will do a dress rhearsal of Mondays Workshop, so I can practise timing - take the clock and set the alarm to see how accurate it is

sand - I'm going to try and buy some to draw on the floor with

underwear - again I'll try and buy some and practise in it to get used to the exposure and how it makes me feel

deconstruction - the most important thing. Remember your undressing, your setting up the expectation of the gesture, the change to a difficulty in using the space and inconsistent timing, a final shift to a deteriorated gesture, small & weak & slow. And then consider an end to the performance.

Well, I've just finished a full run-through and wanted to write down some thoughts before I watch the recording.

- I feel there may need to be a more obvious difference between the 'how it should be performed' gesture and the deteriorations. Perhaps my speed is the thing that will make a big difference.

- Does it matter if sometimes the gesture comes out a little differently - I wobble off my demi-pointe or forget the order of energy flow?

- If I'm going to look at the clock, maybe I should make sure it's exactly in my eyeline.

- Is it the end going to be clear? The alarm clock is fairly obvious as a point of finish, but should I turn it off? Do I get dressed within the circle?

55

- Make the original gesture wider - take a bigger step sideways and try to unfurl the arms a little more to the side

- Try not to use your face. Keep a neutral expression so you're not adding a layer of meaning to it already. No eyebrow raising.

- Remember the order: hips, knees, back, back, shoulders, head, arms, elbows, chin, lower arms, hands, eyeline, fingers

- So yes, you should reverse it

- Go for the full gesture at a higher speed for the beginning of the second section

- Once you have decided not to go to the fingers and toes, don't do that much again at all

- Make the deteriorations obviously smaller in the space

- By the end there could just be torso movement repeated

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14.12.15

Colour of the sand and similarity to skin tone

Rituals & cyclical nature, waking, morning, waiting

full motion

framing

framing of self & the body

performative self, Schechner

what is the connection between my experience & the clock / time

JERZY LIMON

Bert O. States

57

The Gestural Body: A Practice-Based Study of the Perceptions of Physicality and Meaning Through Space and Time

Abstract

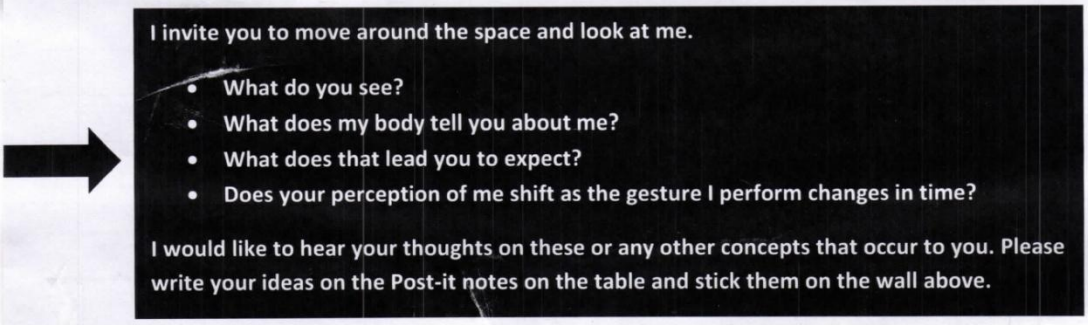
My research explores the concept of the gestural body in performance and analyses the differing ways in which meaning can be perceived. Rudolf Laban (1980) asserts that by deconstructing body movement, different moods can be created. In this workshop performance, I examine how making changes in the space and time of performed gestures can affect perceptions of the body.

My research takes a phenomenological approach, assuming the theory held by Maurice Merleau-Ponty that the body is the lens through which we perceive the world (2002). This concept was taken up by dancer and philosopher Maxine Sheets who developed the notion of the 'lived experience' of dance, referring to the act of witnessing dance by both performers and audience (1966). I investigate how my body, influenced by my performance training, socio-cultural position as a woman and experience of living with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome has influenced my lived experience. Following methods of autobiographical practice (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007), I seek to challenge the assumption of the 'hypervisibility and instant catgorisation' of disabled performers (Kuppers, 2001), by exploring ways of bringing my experience of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome as an invisible disability into visibility through performance.

Methodology

In my practical research I have worked somatically, to see how my internal experience of my body may inform my movement (Brodie and Lobel, 2012). Employing a phenomenological approach as set out by performance artist Susan Kozel (2007), and recording my somatic experiences through notes and video recordings has enabled me to develop a work-in-progress performance that describes an invisible aspect of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Ferdinand de Saussure's principles of semiotics come into play (Cobley and Jansz, 2012), as the gesture I have developed relies on simplicity of execution to generate meaning for the audience (Callery, 2001), eschewing Charles Sanders Peirce's notion of one 'correct' interpretation (Cobley and Jansz, 2012). The performance bears similarity to the work of performer Pina Bausch, with repetitive gestures generating impact through time (Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes, 2013), as well as exploring how the use of space can influence the gesture (Darley, 2009). I am also beginning to adopt a feminist perspective, considering how my sex and gender may influence the perception of my body and the gesture I perform (Butler, 1990).

In this workshop performance, I present myself for visual consumption, standing within a demarcated space and performing a gesture repeatedly for 15 minutes, allowing for that gesture to deteriorate through time. The workshop poses questions as to how the objective perspective of those looking at me may differ from my subjective experience. How might the presence of an audience influence my somatic experience? What are the audience's perceptions of me as a performer?



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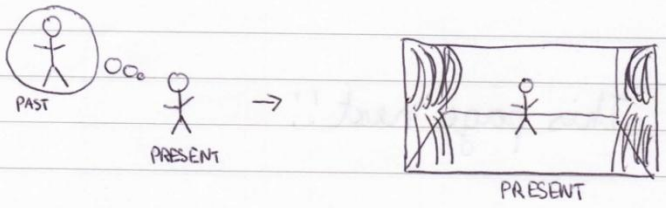
Autobiographical Performance

- The Performer performs a historical version of herself in the present
- Through time, and in rehearsal, many different versions make up the 'present' self for performance



Jerzy Limon's (2010) conception

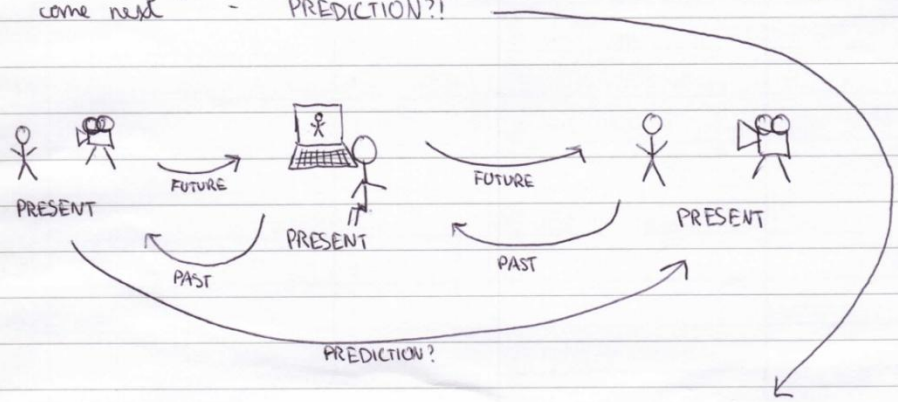
- The performer pretends to be a historical character where actions are played out in the present, concurrently with the performer and the audience's present
- No future or past, just an ongoing present

Character	Performer	Audience	
past, played out in simulated present	present time	present time	
past	present	present	future?

Reflexivity through Recordings

- I perform in the studio, experiencing the moment but knowing that a 'future self' is watching

- I watch the recording, seeing my 'past self' as if for the first time, but remembering what I was thinking and sometimes anticipating what should come next - PREDICTION?!



- Will there be a point that I can imagine what I will think of my practice in the future, in order to implement it in the present?

- What would 'future self' do?

- Deal with this in terms of conceptual perf. making, rather than having argued the case for technique eg 'practice makes perfect'

So all performers are performing part versions of themself (performing the character) even if simply in the process of improving physiologically through repetition.

And performers that follow technically specific pedagogies are able to learn this process of 'stepping out a step' by being self aware and following rules of technique

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Is Traditional Ballet Anti-Feminist?

- The woman's portrayal as fragile, weak heroine, reinforcing the dominant male role - pointe shoes, weight management, tiffs
  - ref. Pickard 2015, Mulvey 2005 (although now outdated)

- The movement towards athletic dance, away from artistic intention through narrative - the objectification of the superhuman dancer
  - from Margot Fonteyn's acting ability through dance with bad feet(!)
  - towards the highly extended Russian lines
  - the tutus getting shorter and flatter to display legs
  - the trend for mesh leotards

How would the actor / actress and doctor / doctors(?) debate fit in with feminist engagement?

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The Female Body and the Media:

- Is she somehow less of a 'real woman' if she happens to conform to the media's ideal body type - Channel 4's 'Big Ballet' documentary, Untitled Feminist Show

- Do women with these 'perfect' bodies have to behave differently? Victim blaming, dress codes, behaviour checking around men

- Butler and the sedimented gender constructs that have come to be so accepted, they give rise to prevalent theories about 'real' women

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17.03.16

Moving Forwards - Thoughts

Clearly, a long while since practical work or reflections on them. However, I have spent time investigating Feminism - practitioners, movements, themes, and how they may relate to my work.

On that subject, I've come across a point to consider - should I go all the way and be naked in my workshop performances? This is after reading Kim Solga's thoughts on Untitled Feminist Show, and the nudity of the six female performers. By appearing naked, they question the audience's gaze, or rather, what the audience sees, and how they go about looking.

(This links to Peggy Phelan's ideas on Active Vanishing, which I need to do research and understand.)

By appearing in underwear, I am attempting to be naked by being in a state of undress and by using flesh colouring, but I chastity keep the areas that would arouse sexual interest covered. Does this mean that I am saying that my virtue may be questioned?

Nudity

- I am trying to make myself 'human' rather than female?
- I am too nervous of bodily judgement to be naked?
- I am helping the audience not to be distracted by gender?
- Nudity is inappropriate in an academic context?
- I don't believe the audience could not focus on my sexual features?

What if I tried to have my body viewed in a more medical way? A functioning human body in a hospital gown, or by demarcating the space in some manner of medical way?

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Another consideration after the December workshop is the relationship between the clock and myself. - Are we partners in the performance?

Time
- Does the clock control my actions?
- Can I make the link between me and the clock more tangible somehow?
- How does my experience of CFS, performing, my body connect with 'time' as a concept?
- Is a clock the best way of portraying time?

could this be the link to the subjective / objective experience through time?

At the moment I think the clock is a good way to describe time, although I might look into an hourglass. Yes, we a partners but I want to make that link more apparent. I do like the concept of femininity, M.E. and time being cyclical in nature - these concepts seem to support each other well.

One of the key aspects that will strengthen my performance is the way I choose to frame the workshops and what I ask the audience to look at. I kept the framing fairly loose last time (looking back at the hand-out, so what do I want from the audience?

Framing
- Am I asking them to just consider me, my body and my lived experience...
- Or do I want them to reflect on the process of working as well?
- Do I want to bring the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity to the fore? (Ethics of spectatorship - Scheeman, Abramovic)
- How can I bring my subjective experience together with their objective experience of the performance?

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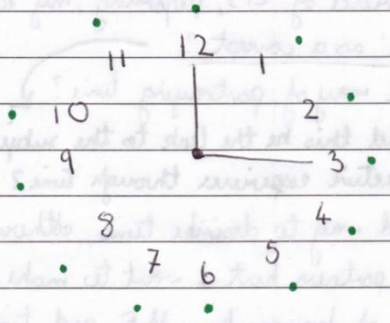
18.03.16

Considering Time

The clock ticking each second,
60 in a minute,
fifteen times.



The clock is circular, marking time around and around again

like the biosphere

like my reproductive cycle

like relapses in my health

Time repeats, but moves on continually
like aging
like female reproductive cycle
like my illness

How would it be if time sped up,
each minute getting shorter,
rushing towards the end?

What happens at the end?
The gesture has deteriorated,
illness has come to repeat the cycle again,
the onset of menopause and death and
a baby is born, to repeat the

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So if my gestures are deteriorating, becoming less and less, in less space and taking less time, the partner, the clock should reflect that. How can I get a clock to tick faster?! To make quicker minutes?

Could I make the idea of limited time something I talk about? Perhaps I could introduce the audience with, 'I need to get started, I haven't got much time', which might be a good point to ask for their help with clothes or undressing.

Can I make the audience complicit in my undressing by asking them to undress me? Undo a zip or hold a jacket? How would that involve them? They would have enabled me to display my body, they would have helped to create my state of nudity that they then witness by looking at me. I would be showing a disability in the dress I wear, a female expectation that I am nevertheless unable to manage alone, and showing a disability that could stem from weakness. Maybe they could help by redressing me once I have finished the gesture in performance, recreating or performing my own disability.

ebirth,
menstrual cycle, and to begin a new life

Feminism

Female

Binary

Passive

Purpose - reproduction

Expectations

The 'other'

Judgement

Visual consumption

Commodity

Alison Lapper Pregnant
by Marc Quinn

Vagina Scroll
by Carolee Schneeman

Works by Marina Abramovic

Lack of

The 'other'

Binary

Disabled

Passive

Negative

Fear of [illegible]

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'Super' body • Judgement •

Spectacle • Visual consumption •

Aesthetic

Commodity • Performer

Body as text •

understanding

Single category
(next unique cases)

Judgement •

Spectacle •

Possibility of
'super' body •

39 -

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08.04.16

Practical session - Somatic Improvisation and Considering Time and the Workshop Material

It's been ages since I've worked in the studio (since the workshop in December) and now that I've had time to allow my body to recover from a series of infections (ear and a perforated ear drum, nose infection, cold virus, and the accompanying M.E. symptoms through all of this) I'm ready to move the material forward.

However, I think it will be beneficial for me to spend some time first exploring my body somatically and experiencing my movement again.

I am wondering how this enforced 'down time' (puts a whole new meaning to the actors' idea of 'resting') helps me to learn about myself and my practice. I think God would not have it this way if I didn't have something to learn, and even after all these years I must still have things to discover.

So I really could do with some outside help in somatic practice and improvisation because although I can listen to my body and try and follow accordingly, it doesn't always seem to be saying that much.

One thing it did say today was

RHYTHM.

My body likes rhythm. I keep coming up with lots of reading material about rhythm as it's so interlinked with time and I've felt a pull there to research further but so far I've resisted it, thinking it could pull me off topic but this may be some wisdom that my body is trying to share with me. Listen to your body. Just like doctors say.

I can make good links with time and bodies and natural cycles and rhythm, which I think I've written about in this book before - the sun and moon's movements, tides, menstrual and reproductive cycles, heart and breathing rhythms, the often cyclical nature of my illness... I wonder what Martha Graham with her womb-centred movement and pleadings would have to say about all this...

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I was also thinking a bit about how my fingers twitch when I'm coming out of a zero phase (can I link this zero idea to the circles of everything else? The circle of sand I worked in, the circles of the clock and the cycles of time? And that I tick around to zero and then back up the numbers again?). Maybe I should include finger twitching in the repeated gesture before I raise my arms...

And then I came back again to this concept of suspending myself by the pelvis somehow so I can use my legs and feet more naturally without having to maintain a standing position. Or would the shift in my weight make it more unnatural to raise my upper body, taking me further away from the experience of how the gesture should be? Particularly as I'd usually be lying or standing... I need to try it to see how it works.

I also thought about the way the shape of my body, with a larger area at the pelvis and shoulders, weights me in certain ways. The hourglass shape bends in the middle like a sand bag, perhaps with a fairly even distribution of weight.

Time and the body keep showing similarities - circles and cycles and clocks, and the hourglass body shape and the sands of time, and the colour of sand and my skin tone, in a circle that I emerge from...

Walter came up with the idea of filming a clock, which I could then speed up or slow down, influencing how I perform the repeated gesture and affecting the audience's perception of how the time passes. Particularly as the overall time of the performance may last a different length of time to that shown by the filmed clock.

There would also be the interesting situation of more than one time existing in the present - the part filmed clock at normal speed, the new speed of the clock which I and the audience would work to, and the real time of the day (shown on the audience's watches when they leave). Fascinating! I could play, not just with repetition and disintegration, but with their (and my) perceptions of the time we experience together, effectively disintegrating that too.

Amongst all this perhaps making more of an action of displaying my hinterphere would be important, to make both temporal and spatial qualities demonstrable in the workshop.

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22.04.16

Rehearsing the repeated gesture

I've been talking with Rene about the idea of making the clock less of a partner in the performance, which will mean that rather than filming and projecting it, I'd just use the sound so that the focus is on my perception (and the audience's) of time passing more as a lived subjective experience.

So obviously not having a physical clock makes it a lot harder to keep track of time, but I did pretty well! I set a timer on my phone and I suppose I wasn't quite at the deterioration to its fullest extent, but I think it's shown me I could work without timing markers.

Ethan is planning to help me make a soundtrack of ticking noises that gradually speed up. Watch this space.

10.05.16 Practical Session (not filmed)

I've come to the studios to rehearse the deteriorating gesture with the clock soundtrack that Ethan has now revised to speed up from the third minute onwards. I'm interested to feel how the speeding-up clock works (or not) with the gesture getting gradually smaller. I don't know will they will work - I have a feeling they might be too at odds, making my movement difficult or uncomfortable, rather than nicely juxtaposed... It may be fine!

I'm also considering how I will begin and end the performance - I know I want the undressing to be a part of the performance and that I'd like to make the audience complicit in my act of undressing so that my nudity is a shared spectacle. I'm also considering taking off make-up and jewellery... I'll need to rehearse this to the camera to see how it looks and what I will say to people. At the end then, perhaps I should enlist the same people I used as I undressed to redecorate my

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clothes to get dressed. Perhaps they could hold them during the performance or put them somewhere...

So I had a practise without the soundtrack but with a timer and I finished with the gesture slightly under-developed. Then when I used the soundtrack I spent ages at the end with movement only coming from abdomen and knees - the speeding-up had affected me so much I had to stop it to see where it was ~~at~~ and it was at 14 minutes! The sound has such an effect! At the beginning I was in time with any ticks but almost felt I should be, perhaps another left over from dance training. Somewhere in the middle I started counting every fourth tick where there's a 'ping' for some reason, and that is perhaps what sped me up? No... I think I got too fast before then. By the end through the tick tocks felt really really in time with my body in a very meditative way... I need another go so I can try not to go too far ahead.

That time worked much better - I got to the end by the end and was less conscious of matching my movement to the soundtrack. More rehearsals like that and I should get the timing right in the workshop.

I didn't film any of Today, partly because I kept forgetting but I was also enjoying the idea that I can't look back. I'm not sure if that's because it's more work (!) or because I wanted to throw myself into the subjective experience...

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13.05.16

Practical Session

Today I'll film my session, repeating the rehearsal process from earlier in the week. I'll also try and include bits at the beginning and the end in which I ask the audience for their help in getting me undressed and dressing again.

I need to bear in mind that the movement mustn't begin to deteriorate until about three minutes in, when the soundtrack starts to speed up.

A timeline of the performance

Before 10.00 - the audience is arriving, standing around in the room, ~~the~~ brochure ~~a sign~~ ~~feet~~ invites them to move around the space, I am encouraging them in, inviting them to move around, giving out brochures

10.00 - I tell them that I'm going to begin the performance now
I stand near the platform (on the platform?) and ask people to ~~put~~ put my clothes to the side, both after my rings, hand me a make-up wipe
I stand on the platform ready to begin

10.01 - someone begins the soundtrack
I perform the gesture for 15 minutes

10.16 - the track finishes and I step down (?) from the platform
I ask the audience to re-locate my clothes and hand them to me
I tell them that the performance is finished now
I hand out questionnaires and give them time to chat & answer them
I tell everyone that I'm going to talk to them about

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the performance, ask them some questions and they can ask me some

Rehearsing the before and after bits was fine although I will need to practise this with some sort of audience to get proper timing and also see how I will be affected by the presence of an audience.

I worked pretty fast again - I need to be more comfortable in setting up the gesture a number of times to begin with - don't be afraid of doing nothing! This is the first time the audience have a chance to just watch you, your body, your movement, and you need to make the idea of the gesture truly clear by repeating it a number of times.

Maybe I didn't go too fast. I got the point of just using my abdomen and knees and then moving completely as the final few ticks echoed. Perhaps that's how it should be - full movement contrasted with little or none at the end.

I just want to address what I'm aiming for with the undressing.

- By making it part of the performance I'm making the act of stripping away layers tangible, to reveal my invisible disability, which you still can't see
- By asking the audience to assist me, they are complicit in my nudity, making the experience of revealing and viewing my body shared.
- I also use the act of stripping to the flesh to address the concept that we want to see bodies in performance, particularly that of a woman who is viewed as valuable because of her bodily aesthetic and bodily purpose - childbirth
- By bringing a feminist slant to my performance it raises the issue that I am seen as a woman and a performer, not a disabled person

Or can you see the disability, now I've used a gesture to demonstrate it? - That's the question.

That time worked well - I took my bra off too to get used to feeling unclothed in this space. The timing was also better - I suppose there will be variations in how far the deterioration goes, but I'm feeling much better acquainted with the process through rehearsing.

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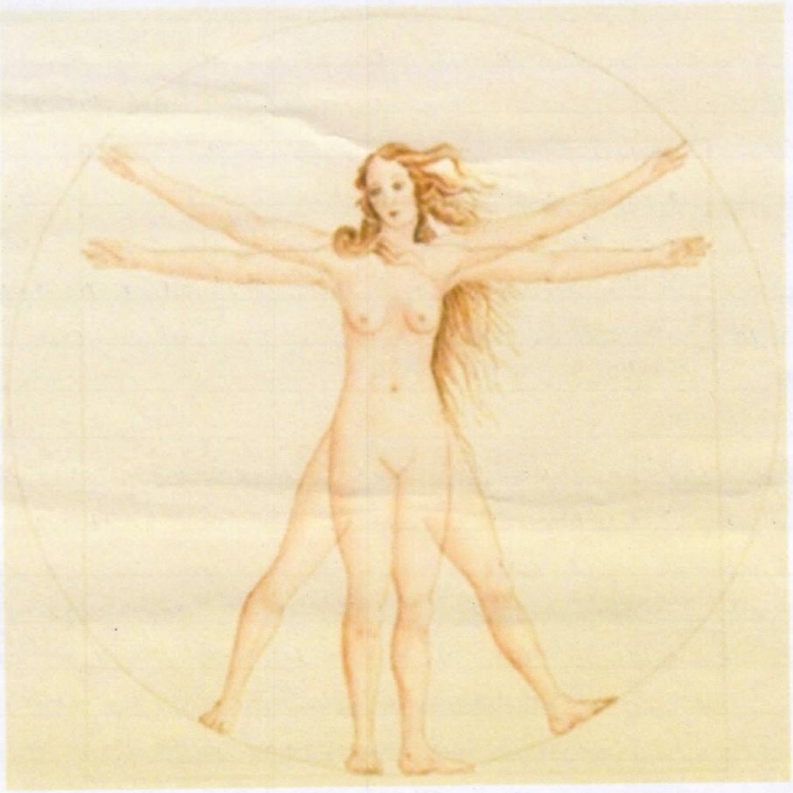
(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See



A work-in-progress performance exploring the perceptions of the spectator and the performer, and considering what is seen and what is unseen

Part of the research conducted by doctoral candidate Mo Pietroni-Spenst

10.00am Friday 20th May, Anselm Studio 2 (Ag09)

This short performance will be followed by a question and answer session

75

24.06.16

After the upgrade & before the symposium performance.

I need to consider how important the rehearsed nature of the deterioration of the gesture is. I'm not altogether happy that finishing in time with the soundtrack was uppermost in my mind during the workshop performance, and that came across to Angela as she commented on the 'thinking' nature of how I broached the performance.

I could not-rehearse today, viewing Monday as a 'let's see what happens' sort of thing. Or I could rehearse today practising getting into the moment and trying to be more present somatically. Angela's quite right; I do need some improvisational or somatic input.

I just spent some time standing quietly, checking in with myself feeling my inside, feeling the vertical pulling sensation between my abdomen and my pelvic floor, feeling the light tension tinsting down from my calves into my ankles and foot instips, feeling the 'coat hanger' tension across my shoulders, my light breathing, high up in my chest that went down behind my sternum and split to left and right, curving down to the outside of my rib cage. Playing with my weight, which I felt in the bottom of my skull and into the base of my neck, and in the balls of my feet. I let go of this hold and let it sway in tiny motions, rocking me on my axis.

I need more practice at noting or somehow recording phenomenologies.

I've decided not to rehearse. I need to work on letting go and letting things happen, although this way I'll be acutely aware of not knowing how it will go on Monday. So, I will either go fast and then I'll simply finish when I want to, turn and ask the tech. assistant to stop the soundtrack, or I'll be moving still when the soundtrack comes to an end. However it influences the audience's perception of the performance, it's important for me to be able to let go of this control and discuss the difference it made to my experience.

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02.08.16

Reflecting on the symposium performance...

My decision to allow the second performance to happen without me trying to control every detail seemed to be helpful.
- I didn't tell my tech assistant to stop the music early if I needed,
- I didn't rehearse to get the movement to coincide with the soundtrack
- I didn't worry when I forgot a few details, like giving out programmes beforehand (although this will have affected the audience's perception of my illness, as they had no other clue), or forgetting to take my rings off.

I felt more in the moment, I think, although I was still very aware of where people were standing & when they moved. I can't decide whether this continued awareness is a bad thing, meaning that I am still prevented from a true somatic experience, or whether it's part of my phenomenology. ?

I had said, after the joint performance, that it would be interesting to see the effect that more movement from the audience would have on me, and with 13 people there were periods when the movement of a few individuals would spark a period of everyone changing places. This did affect the atmosphere, I think it made the idea of being an active audience member easier to act upon. For me, I felt more like an exhibit in an art gallery and less like a spectacle - perhaps the smaller the audience the more pressure there is on the atmosphere.

This is one of those points that you need to take deeper.
Explore this idea. See where it takes you.

7:7

Moving towards the next iteration...

Ideas I have thought of including / exploring

- Suspending myself to have more use of my legs
  Makes the piece much more theatrical, now obsolete?
- Using a rotating stage block
  Reinforces the podium/spectacle concept, would encourage stationary audience
- Filming the audience to incorporate into the performance
  Strengthens the concept of spectatorship, makes it clear that this is the focus. Is it?
- Projecting light onto my body
  Would depict the invisible illness, although not through gesture

Feedback from audience members and supervisors

- Make the piece durational, with audience coming and going throughout
  More of a real-life, real-time piece? Abramovic. Would they get the message? Which is?
- Have the audience dress me, or care for me in some way
  Foster the 'community of care' concept, encourages interaction, sense of shared and sharing experiences.
- Make the paradox of stripping, the podium and feminist practice more clear
  Consider incorporating spoken word, this would break the atmosphere and could include conversation.?

Observations from the performances to explore

- Proximity continues to be an issue for the audience
  How can I encourage them to move as they want? Or remove the social discomfort?
- Might people be interested to interact with me?
  How much interaction would they want? Could I control it? Or invite the 'risk'?
- Men and women had very gendered reactions
  Both genders being present made a big impression on a few audience members. Could I have single-sex audiences to exploit this?

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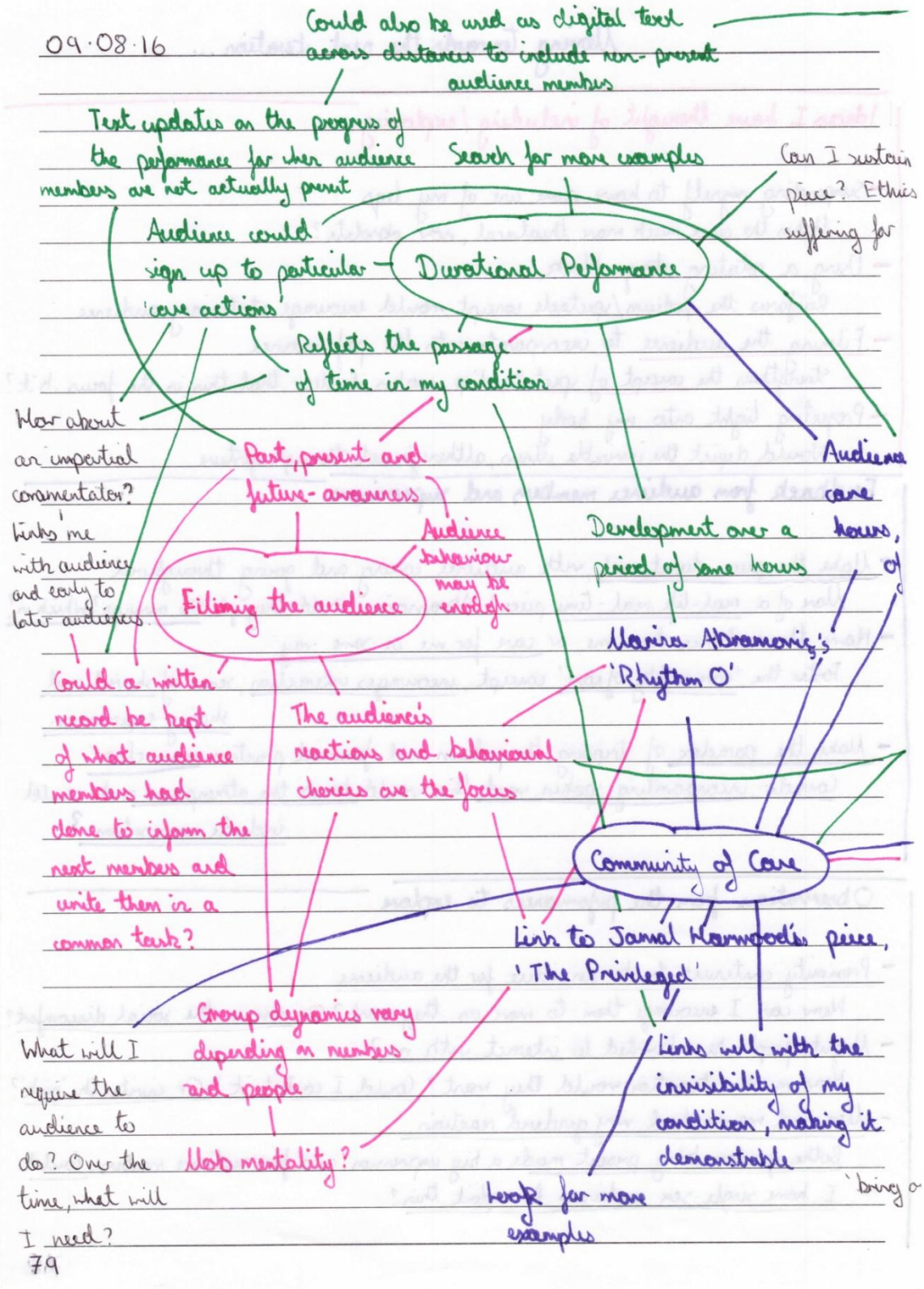
09·08·16


Could also be used as digital text across distances to include non-present audience members
Text updates on the progress of the performance for when audience members are not actually present
Search for more examples
Can I sustain piece? Ethics suffering for
Audience could sign up to particular 'care actions'
Durational Performance
Reflects the passage of time in my condition
How about an impartial commentator? Links me with audience and early to later audiences.
Past, present and future - awareness
Audience
care
hours,
Development over a period of some hours
Audience behaviour may be enough
Filming the audience
Marina Abramovic's 'Rhythm 0'
Could a written record be kept of what audience members had done to inform the next members and write them in a common text?
The audience's reactions and behavioural choices are the focus
Community of Care
Link to Jamal Harwood's piece, 'The Privileged'
Group dynamics vary depending on members and people
What will I require the audience to do? Over the time, what will I need?
Mob mentality?
Links will with the invisibility of my condition, making it demonstrable
'bring a
Look for more examples

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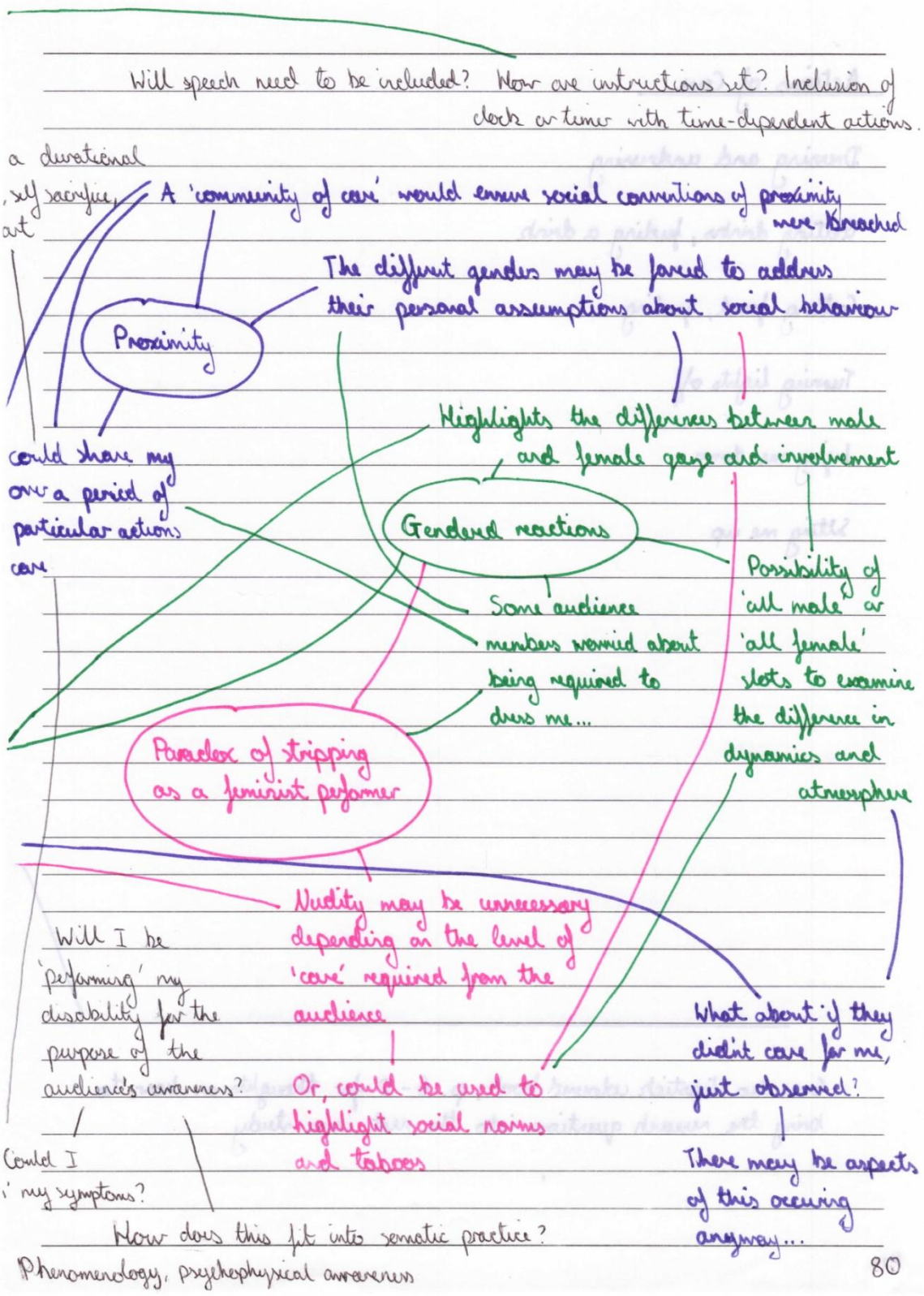
Will speech need to be included? How are instructions set? Inclusion of clock or timer with time-dependent actions.
a durational
self sacrifice,
art
A 'community of care' would ensure social conventions of proximity were breached
The different genders may be forced to address their personal assumptions about social behaviour
Proximity
could share my
one a period of
particular actions
care
Highlights the differences between male and female gaze and involvement
Gendered reactions
Some audience members worried about being required to dress me...
Possibility of 'all male' or 'all female' slots to examine the difference in dynamics and atmosphere
Paradox of stripping as a feminist performer
Nudity may be unnecessary depending on the level of 'care' required from the audience
Or, could be used to highlight social norms and taboos
Will I be 'performing' my disability for the purpose of the audience's awareness?
What about if they didn't care for me, just observed?
There may be aspects of this occuring anyway...
Could I
my symptoms?
How does this fit into somatic practice?
Phenomenology, psychophysical awareness
80

Actions of Care

Dressing and undressing

Getting drinks, feeding a drink

Getting food, feeding

Turning lights off

Lying me down

Sitting me up

See also lipstick coloured book, p. 6 - 8 for thoughts on how to bring the research questions into the next care study

28.09.16

Developing ideas for the next case study

Bearing in mind my thoughts from the previous entries, let's try and move some of them forward.

The community of care concept feels strong, as does the idea of some sort of durational performance. I'm very wary, though, of the concept of performing my disability and the potentially contentious issues surrounding the victim art debate.

I don't want to end up drooping around the studio, acting out a bad M.E. day, and having audience members 'help' me. Yuck.

Looking at 'the Privileged', Norewood manages to deal with some intense topics without it being immediately obvious that that's what being investigated.

Bearing in mind my ideas on signing audience members up for particular actions, as well as the possibility of digital interaction / updates / tweets about the performance, and considering that Norewood's instructions to the audience allowed for things to go wrong, it all got me thinking about Tamagotchis. Or the avatars that you control in computer games. And the online interaction in Boardgame, which I want to research.

What if I cast myself as a sort of real-life, performance-art Tamagotchi, that the audience had to look after?

There could be positive and negative outcomes from the audience's choice of actions, leading to the possibility of the game ending earlier than scheduled.

There could be real-time updates to those signing up to the performance, perhaps by twitter or text... All the audience members then would know what other actions had gone before and could take this into account, or choose not to. (Like the carer's log book that Robyn talked about)

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Some questions...

would the audience members interact with me physically, or just make me carry out my own actions?

how would digitally-engaged audience members influence actions?

could I do this without speaking to allow the communication to come through my gestures, or would there need to be verbal interaction from me?

would an assistant of some sort be a useful go-between to update live spectators and digital spectators?

what sort of setting would I have? Props, furniture, activities, food?

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10.10.16

Re-thinking the next performance

Having spoken to Rene about my ideas for an interactive avatar-style performance, I can see that I may be trying to include too many new and far-reaching concepts - liveness and mediatisation, digital and interactive performance etc.

He suggests I reign in my new ideas ("It sounds like a new PhD!"), returning to the gesture and set-up I had before but perhaps including:

- shorter performances of perhaps a few minutes across...
- a much longer time frame, say 6 or 8 hours
- a deterioration across the many short performances of the gesture
- a 'guest book' or similar for audience members to record their impressions, allowing others to see their thoughts and charting how they change across the day

We also talked about the emotional fallout after the two performances, upgrade etc and considered whether that was caused by stress or how much the nudity may have been a factor.

We talked about maybe including a screen or gauze that would remove an element of visual nudity but allow the movement of the body to be focused on.

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07.03.17

A return to thoughts of practice

I've taken a lot of time away from practice to focus on written work and research. The Introduction chapter of the thesis has taken around six months to re-draft, some of which was time spent unwell and having small windows in which I could work.

I now have a date set for my final practical workshop, 30th May, when the two examiners will be present. I'm feeling more comfortable with the idea of ongoing practice research, rather than viewing the workshop as a performance, which, as I spoke about with Rose, implies a finished product.

So, I thought it would be useful to set out the things that I'm confident of including in the practice viewing, to remind myself of my ideas.

Durational performance

Deterioration

The body

Gesture

Short time frames

Audience engagement

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Durational performance... - is going to reflect the chronic aspect of my illness
- will test the perception of gesture over an aspect of time
- is a good progression from feedback after the last workshop, when people showed an interest in a longer time
- will test my own capacity as a performer to
  - stay on task & be present in the moment, or not
  - channel the performer rather than the invisibly disabled aspects of me - victim, sacrifice
  - frame the gesture / performance over that period
- will mean I have to be more decisive about the reasons behind performing at certain times, for certain durations
- will make me more conscious of what I request / allow from the audience - when do they come in and out?
  - how do I give them information?
  - how much interaction can we have?
  - will I get enough audience?
  - do I want specific time slots?
- will mean that I need to get into the studio on a few occasions to test my ability to work for a durational period

Deterioration... - is going to be a continued aspect as it reflects elements of illness, time and duration
- may be reversed, so that I begin the performance at the most deteriorated stage and finish with the fullest gesture. This seems more optimistic for my chronic illness emotionally, but may be more taxing for me physically, adding another element
- will be less clear when separated by periods of time, so may yield different or unexpected results

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The body... - continues to be a central theme to my investigation, as it is the locus of perception, thought, agency and interaction
- may need to be reconsidered with regards nudity, as that had the unexpected ramification last time of me feeling very exposed emotionally afterwards, and made the feminist streak to my work prominent in some audience member's perceptions
- may need to be re-framed with clothing, screening, shrouding or some other element, although I would need to be clear within myself what the aim of this was. - Modesty?
- Focus on the gesture?
- Emotional barrier?
- Desexualing?
- Audience comfort?
- still needs to be the focus of the performance, although I may be able to frame it to foreground its movement in gesture, rather than the body as object. Remember that it is a locus of perception, agency and interaction most importantly, so you may now choose to move away from the body-as-object-for-visual-consumption idea

Gesture... - a factor that I will keep the same, although I may now want to think about asking different people to attend, so that they don't have pre-conceptions or ideas from the last performance, or maybe just questioning them differently to make the focus the new aspects
- will need to be revisited in rehearsal, to get myself back in touch with this enactment of my lived experience
- may be performed differently in durational performance, partly because of how I choose to segment the process of deterioration, but the time may cause real deterioration in my ability to perform the gesture, and so influence the results of the research

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Short time-frames... - will be the way that I achieve durational performance without risking my health unwillingly
- I will need to decide how short to make them - here suggested around 30 seconds, and how many of these I would fit in, and how frequently I'm going to perform them. Presumably I would work out the figure by taking the 15 minute performance and splitting it across the number of hours of the duration?
- will require me to be particular about how I get into and out of each performance, thinking about - where I stand
- what I wear
- what I say
- how I begin
- how I end
- will also make me think about the non-performance time, the times between time-frames, which will become performance in themselves. Will I sit and chat to people visiting, eat, pop out to the loo, get lunch if I need? And how do I include, exclude or justify these aspects if people can arrive at any time?
- will require me to make a new choice for soundtrack or accompaniment. Will I segment the old track into lots of short tracks? Could I keep the same track but pause and replay it as a reflection of having one's life governed by chronic time?

Audience engagement... - will make me decide when they enter and leave, whether they attend for certain periods or at certain times
- will require me to come up with a way of communicating with them what I request in terms of movement, touch, feedback
- will mean I need to create a way of recording their thoughts and perceptions, probably in a non-mediatised way - a guestbook? Will I have time for conversation?

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03.04.17

Some changes to practice plans

After bouncing some of my recent ideas around with Rene a few days ago, it's become clear that some are incompatible with each other. For instance he suggested that veiling / gowning costume sort of ideas start the veil becoming another performer in and of itself, rather than drawing attention to my body. The body is the site of communication, and it is the body's physicality that is the focus.

Keeping the same gesture may not be the best option now. Although there is the benefit of not changing too many elements, I may will have really exhausted it (pun intended!) through two iterations of it in workshops.

This may also be the time to begin including concepts of me as performer more clearly, looking at that as the performance persona, and the invisibly disabled me as the real identity. This harks back to some of my earlier ideas that questioned the audience's expectations and what I chose to give them. It also reminds me of the audition I did for UCF, in which I performed a dancer preparing to go onstage, applying make-up and putting on her costume, talking on the phone to someone to narrate what she was about to do, then performing, before coming offstage exhausted and real again.

I'm not entirely sure what gesture or gestures I may come to use to express this idea of 'performer', or whether the way I frame the performance and break that frame to interact with the audience would be more important.

The screen concept feels the strongest of the veiling ideas, as it brings the focus to the audience's choices in how they watch me - where they stand, whether they walk around it to behind me to see me clearly - and their experience of their spectatorship. It also conjures up ideas of red light district windows, peep shows and mediatisation.

The durational element also needs reconsideration, as screening the performance in this way doesn't seem to fit with a stopping and starting performance. A shorter time of around an hour and a half with one longer stretch of 'performance' within it could offer more durational possibilities, together with the 'breaking the frame' to interact with the audience.

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Screening

Single plain Window Red light district Two-way mirror Loïe Fuller

Front and behind Audience movement Separation Protection Modesty/nudity

The body's outline Silhouettes Chinese puppet theatre Shadows Projection

Screen - dual meaning Something that hides, something that displays

Hidden Displayed Exhibit Museum Gallery 'Oriental' women at World's Fair.

Gesture / performance persona vs. real person

Communicating Body language Verbal/spoken language Direct interaction

Solo show Female performers Bobby Baker Peggy Shaw Vanity Bites Back
Helen Duff as

Dance Broadway Tap Smiles Sequins Body energy Jill Grainger

Self-care Comfy clothing Lack of make up Un-embodied movement

The duration

Realistic for myself Indicative of chronic time Set up expectations - break them

On and off Start and Stop Not ever really stopping Performativity of self

Signposting for audience 'I'm going to start' 'It's over now' Verbal & visual cues

Bookends Beginning and end Time markers - clocks, verbal cues Gift of self

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04.04.17

Carrying Ideas Forwards

From yesterday's writing, it sounds like I'll be performing something along the lines of:

↓ a one-woman show that uses the body as focus for analysis

a strong sense of being displayed / exhibited contrasted with being hidden / protected

↓ both visual / body based and verbal / spoken cues, signals and interaction with the audience about the situation and what I am doing

↓ a sense of giving myself to the audience as framework for discussion

some elements that set up the audience's expectations of what I should do and who I am - the performance

↓ some ways of breaking the frame that I have set up, commenting on the situation of watching and looking-ness

↓ the revelation of the real me, the un-performed invisibly disabled me, that nevertheless is a part of the performance for the audience

↓ some opportunities for interaction from the audience - in setting up my performance to begin with, and in the self-care that I will end up needing

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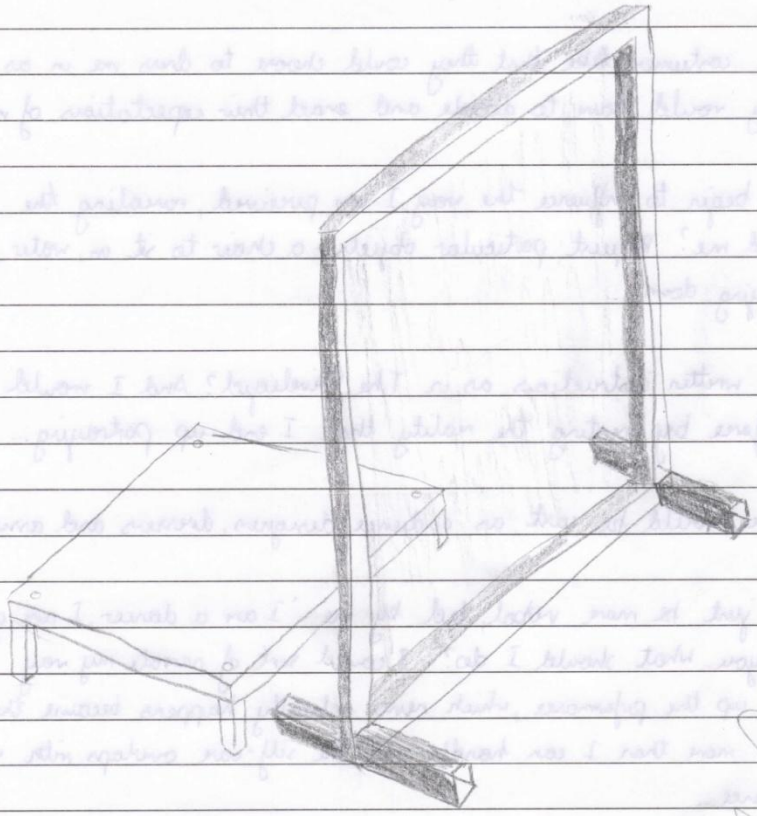

Screen

Screening

Performance Screening

Screened Performance

Screening a Performance

Screening myself

Self-screening

Screening my self

(Screened)

Naked, figuratively

Baring myself, figuratively

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So what about if I have the audience work together, with me, to create a set of performance 'still' framed by the screen?

There could be costumes like that they could choose to dress me in as a 'dancer', so they would have to decide and enact their expectations of me.

How would I begin to influence the way I am perceived, revealing the invisibly disabled me? Request particular objects - a chair to sit on, water, food, comfy clothes, lying down....

Could I give written instructions as in The Privileged? And I would be the resistant force by creating the reality that I end up portraying...

So the audience would be cast as audience, designers, dressers and assistants?

Or it could just be more verbal, led by me - 'I am a dancer, I am going to perform for you. What should I do?' I could sort of narrate my way through setting up the performance, which never actually happens because the process becomes more than I can handle and the self-care overlaps with setting up the performance...

And I could have a gesture that I try out with each new piece of costume or prop, 'So, like this. Does that look right?', and each time I perform the gesture I do it less so, so we see it deteriorate.

How would it change things if I used a pane of glass? More like a window or a television screen...

Or a two-way mirror? This would reflect Loie Fuller's use of the two-way mirror and would foreground my perception along with the audiences... It would also play into the displayed/hidden concepts...

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11.04.17

Considering Clowning Techniques

Openness - and sharing with the audience

Being 'in the flap' - getting it wrong publicly, and going with it

Finding your pleasure in the moment and the movement

Some thoughts reflecting on Vanity Bites Back

- Helen blended the performance character, Jill Grainger, with herself, the real Helen Duff, flawed and battling real issues
- She used the audience as a sounding board to move her own performance forwards, asking us questions and not being sure of our answers but using them to improvise with
- Baring herself, figuratively, to reveal the vulnerable parts by displaying the real Helen Duff along with the intention of performing Jill Grainger
- She used costuming, props, a minimal set and the concept of Jill Grainger's cooking show as a vehicle to show us the real show - the revelation of herself
- She made a mess and didn't apologise, she made noises and it was all included in her intention, she made a fool of herself and didn't mind, it was neither the perfect cooking show or the picture of a woman talking about her mental health, but both
- She was unsure of herself when she chose to allow improvisation or interaction, but sure of her intention, she was planned and unplanned, she was two people, Jill Grainger and Helen Duff

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These techniques feel relevant to the audience interaction that I want, making all of us, as witnesses to the performance, aware of our choices.
They also feel relevant to the concept of laying oneself bare - perhaps literally as well as metaphorically.

↓

How can I draw this back to the body and gesture?

Maybe I need to go back to the very beginning of my practice to see what ideas I had. I remember trying out 'dancer' poses - the bevelled leg, the fake smile, the engaged posture - to try and display something of a fake me. And I remember asking, 'Is this what you want?' Let's go back to the recordings (I am so glad I was diligent with recording my practice) and read through the corresponding journal entries (I'm glad I did that too).

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22.04.17

Reflections on old practice recordings

Core

I've been going through the recordings that I first started with, back in October of 2015, partly to pull together the first Case study chapter but also to remind myself of the train of thought that has got me to where I am currently.

It's an odd process, reflecting on the recordings of myself, and reflecting on the reflections of the recordings that I made as I went along. I find myself deeper into the layers of time and experience than I had considered, taking what I hoped and wanted and aimed for back then, with the knowledge of where it led and what it created, to the feeling of uncertainty I have now, preparing for another workshop.

I remind myself that it is, as Irene told me, as I tell my students on the devising module, and as I have experienced previously, getting into the studio and exploring these questions and ideas that create new material. Oh, but I do like to intellectualise and sit about considering things deeply!

This concept of palimpsest, of layering ideas through time, feels at once like I'm lost and finding my way. I'm bearing in mind how I questioned and struggled and discovered, how I carved out a path, and now how I can use my previous explorations, together with new work to find my way again. As an example, I found the bit where I talked about Irene telling me that the bits I'm not trying to perform may hold the greatest value (26.10.15). I've just watched a recording from 23.10.15 (video 10) in which I stop my explorations and do this sigh and sort of slump sideways (08.19). I wonder if this might be a good starting point for a performance of the real, fatigued me in the next workshop.

And watching myself move about I look so much like I'm dancing, holding my body in all the old ways, technique driven deep beneath my skin.

And having spoken with Irene the other day about the return to some of the ideas from the beginnings of my practice - the concept of 'dance' or 'perform' that looks a certain way, questioning the audience's expectation of that in a direct way, breaking the frame to show my real self, or at least performing in a

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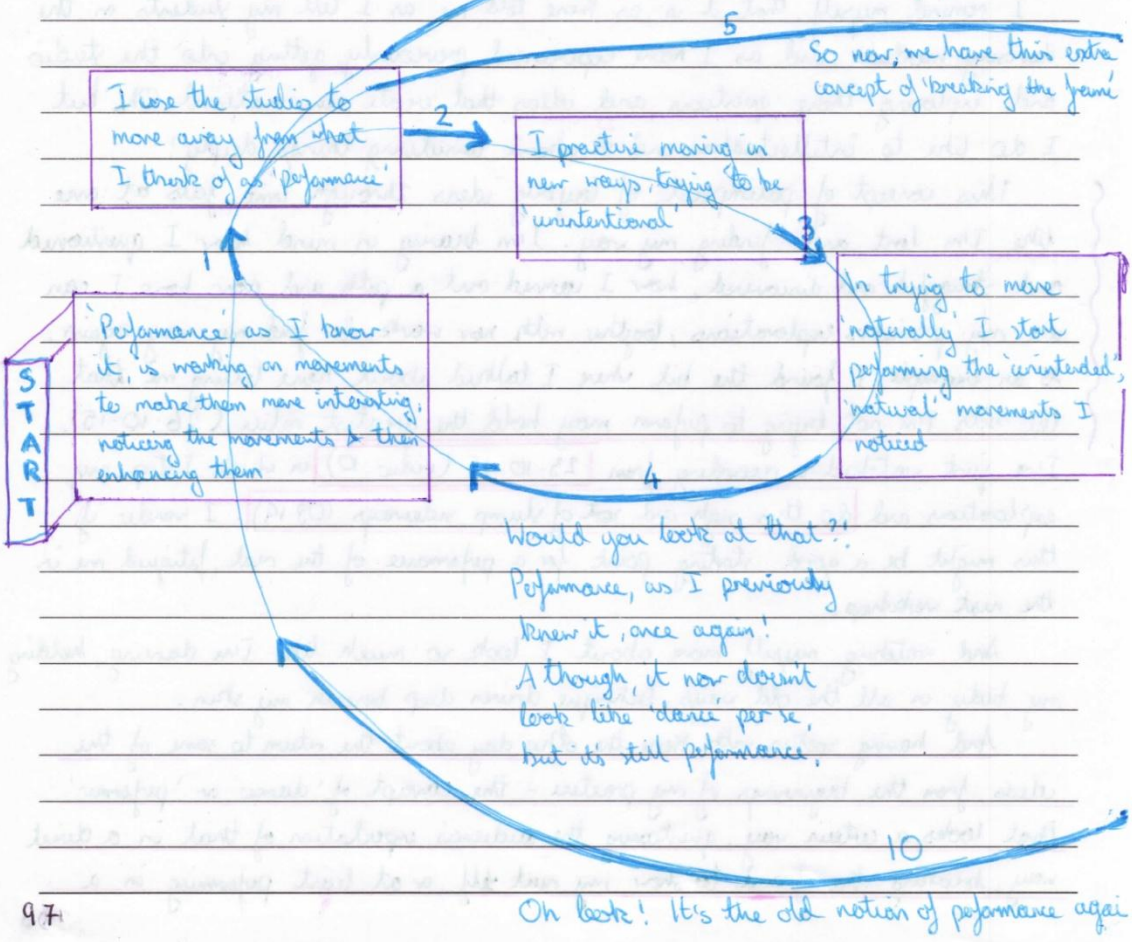
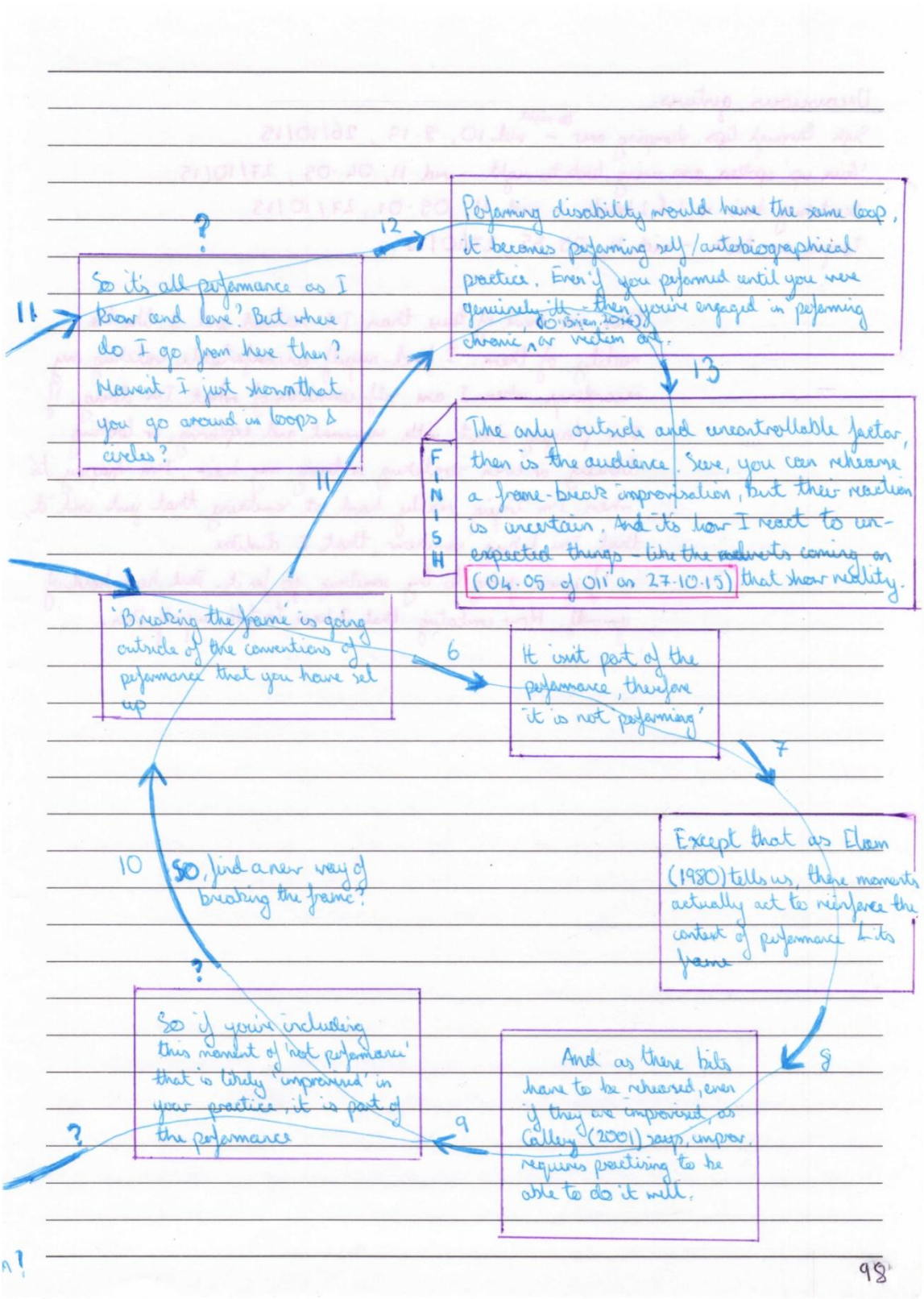
way that disrupts the image I have set up - well, I think I was onto something. Maybe I needed to come full-circle, going through the other workshop processes of revealing my invisible disability and my sex in a more basic way, to come back to these questions, which are perhaps more layered.

What if the ~~prior~~ no-workshop! reflected the pattern of me exploring ideas physically, and the drop in attention and intention that revealed me? Surely, even if I am trying to break the frame as part of the workshop, the very fact of it being planned includes it in the performance?

Surely, some of these concepts - like trying not to perform, or performing reality, hold you up in loops, taking you back to the starting point




So it's all performance as I know and love? But where do I go from here then? Haven't I just shown that you go around in loops & circles?
Performing disability would have the same loop, it becomes performing self/autobiographical practice. Even if you performed until you were genuinely ill - then you're engaged in performing chronic or victim art.
The only outside and uncontrollable factor, then is the audience. Sure, you can rehearse a frame-break improvisation, but their reaction is uncertain. And it's how I react to un-expected things - like the [redacted] coming on (04.05 of 011 on 27.10.15) that show reality.
FINISH
'Breaking the frame' is going outside of the conventions of performance that you have set up
It isn't part of the performance, therefore 'it is not performing'
Except that as Elam (1980) tells us, these moments actually act to reinforce the context of performance & its frame
And as these bits have to be rehearsed, even if they are improvised, as Calley (2001) says, improv requires practising to be able to do it well.
So if you're including this moment of 'not performance' that is likely 'improvised' in your practice, it is part of the performance
So, find a new way of breaking the frame?
11
12
13
6
7
8
9
10
?
98

Unconscious gestures

Sigh through lips, slumping over (to right) - vid 10, 8.19, 26/10/15

'Give up' spoken, arm swing, look to right - vid 11, 04.05, 27/10/15

Scratching hair w. 1 & 2 hands - vid 11, 05.01, 27/10/15

Tongue over teeth - vid 11, 05.35, 27/10/15

There are more of these than I'd realised and I like the reality of them. I find myself uncomfortable watching my recordings when I am self-conscious of what I'm doing. If I'm playing about with movement and exploring, or loosing dancey, or even scratching or tying my hair, I'm happy, it's when I'm trying really hard at something that just isn't it, that I'm faking somehow, that I dislike.

If you're going to try something, go for it. Don't keep hold of yourself. How irritating that I have to tell myself this.

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15·05·17

Doing nothing, conquering fears, new perspective

I've had two weeks of feeling extremely fatigued and wondering how I might deliver the practical workshop that is planned for the 30th. With aching, heavy limbs that are slow and clumsy, and a mind full of sensations, tiny awarenesses and fog that clouds my line of thought, I've very much been living moment-to-moment.

I've had flashes of insight or rather, questions, that have made me consider the workshop as an opportunity to take things back absolutely to basics, addressing some of the aspects of my illness that I have come to accept, but are phenomenologies unique to me, or things that scare me and I avoid.

I've noticed recently that my invisible disability isn't always invisible, as people notice my behaviour or body language is unusual and comment on it.

Recently, people have noticed...

- when I was sitting, leaning back on a bench in the park, with Anna. A dog walker said, 'Are you alright? Just having a rest?' What told him I was resting rather than just sitting? He doesn't normally see me sitting, and perhaps my symmetrical, leaning-back stance looked tired.

- when I yawned a lot at the cashier in Pets at Home. 'Keeping you up, are we?!' I was with Jo, who swooped in, all protective, telling him I wasn't well. He said he hoped I felt better soon as I left.

- last year in the chemist, waiting for prescriptions, I was sitting leaning back feeling awful, while Jo stood at the counter. Anna asked me if I was alright.

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when my face is pale. Paula notices this sometimes. My face also goes sort of slack as the muscles are weak.

Other outward signs...

clumsiness; dropping things, knocking into things, tottering sideways when I'm dizzy, crashing things together

my very slow walk, with slumped shoulders and floppy arms and legs

frowning. Everything is too bright, noisy, uncomfortable and confusing.

my clothes. Baggy, soft, comfortable. Not too bright.

my voice. Quieter, more effort, sometimes whispered.

101

Thinking about the workshop while I feel like this, I see myself as unequal to the task, although I think it's my ideas about how it 'should be' need addressing, not myself.

I don't want to be naked.

Ok, so don't. You've dealt with that, now look at something else, or do 'nakedness' in a new way.

I don't want to have to write a script.

This is a vestige of your old ideas of what constitutes performance. You don't have to have a script or plan to follow.

I'm worried there won't be enough audience.

You've done workshops with only four people before and you still got lots of feedback, answered questions and had plenty to write about.

I feel strange not being a pulled-together 'performer'.

That may be a question of taste, of what you like, or of old entrenched 'rules'. This research is about finding out something real.

I'm worried that people will think it's not enough.

No-one has said that when you have had reason for doing something in a certain way. The only person who thinks it isn't enough is me. Tackle your fear - do little and see what happens.

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Simple is good...

Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing left to be added, but when there is nothing left to be taken away.

Marina Abramovic's The Artist is Present. She just sat & looked over and over again, with lots of different people.

Ai Wei-wei's Dropping a Ming Dynasty Vase. Three photos reveal centuries of thought, value, artistic ideas, the passage of time, controversy.

The possibilities for analysis of the 'exotic' women behind their panes of glass. Living their replicated lives from Algeria or wherever, presented as a spectacle, but going about their ordinary activities.

Prostitutes in the Red Light District of Amsterdam. Just standing there, displaying their body. Just a body, like we all have. The simple idea of selling the physical.

The simplicity of Peggy Shaw's Ruff, describing her experiences with the effects of a stroke. Ultimately, that's what she does in the show.

The bareness of clowning's idea of 'being in the flop', not knowing what to do, so just keeping doing the same thing to see where it goes.

(Screening) myself
Screening my (Self)
Reflections
Reflecting on my (Self)
Screened self: reflections
Screening my (Self): reflections

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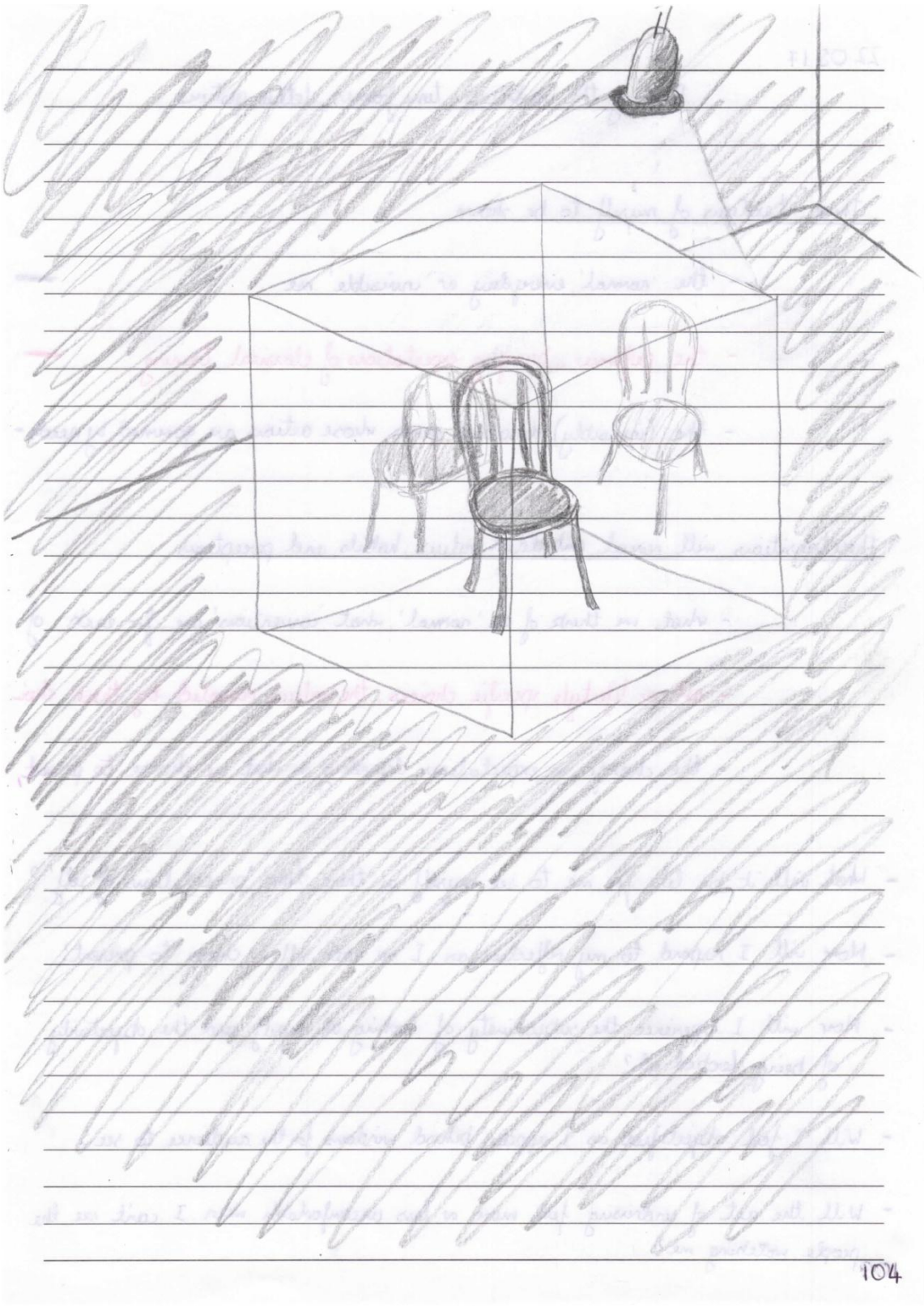
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22.05.17

Planning the workshop - time frames, clothes, gestures

Three iterations of myself to be shown

- the 'normal', everyday or 'invisible' me
- the performer, bringing expectations of classical training
- the (invisibly) disabled person, whose actions are governed by needs

These transitions will reveal embedded values, habits and perceptions

- what we think of as 'normal', what 'conventions' are for each of
- art or lifestyle specific choices, the values revealed by these choi
- the change in expectations depending on what we choose to present,

- What will it be like for me to see myself in these three 'presentations of self'?
- How will I respond to my reflection as I see each self I choose to present?
- How will I experience the subjectivity of looking at myself and the objectivity of being looked at?
- Will I feel objectified as I appear behind windows for the audience to see?
- Will the act of undressing feel more or less uncomfortable when I can't see the people watching me?

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→ Neutral street clothing - jeans, T-shirt, plain shoes, hair down or ponytail

→ Dance rehearsal or class clothes - leotard & tights, pointe shoes, bun or French roll

→ Comfy clothes - soft, baggy clothes in neutral colours, layers for warmth, hair loose

us, that is unremarkable

as, the patterns of behaviour that display habit or practice

how we reveal unseen needs through clothing as an extension of the body and behaviour

↗ How will I act in each iteration? What gestures might they influence?

→ Will I be more comfortable when I can only see my reflection, or will I dislike knowing I am being watched?

↘ Will the box that displays me make me feel inhibited? objectified? claustrophobic?

→ Will the audience find it more uncomfortable to watch me unseen, or will they feel uncomfortable cast as the privileged gazer?

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28.05.17

Workshop Timing

how-level studio lighting, spotlit box / Or mid-way lights to see both?
Audience members entering, given hand-outs, could I be sitting on the chair in the box?

1.00	Workshop begins	Can it be mirrored on the outside to begin?
	Neutral clothes	I am seen, standing in neutral clothes - I consider myself and begin to undress
	Ballet clothes	Should I be wearing these underneath my street clothes or change completely?
		Leotard, tights, pointe shoes, French plait
	Comfy clothes	Tired or gesturing so, I take off my shoes, leo & tights and take down my hair. I put on sweatpants, big socks, layers
1.15(ish)	The lights change	The audience see themselves watching me
	Workshop ends	I put on neutral clothes again and come out of the box

Questions

Chair? Bag? ✓ Clothes under clothes? X

Mirrors and lighting for performer / audience switch? Soundtrack?

What happens at the very end?

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29.05.17

At home practical session

Today I will record a run-through in my mirror box to get an idea of how I look in the clothes I have picked out and how long everything takes.

The lighting in the living room isn't ideal but I've closed all the curtains and lit the box as best I can. I might run through twice, once from outside the box and once from inside to see how it looks each way.

I hadn't planned to use a soundtrack but yesterday I thought that the ticking clock sound I used before might be a subtle way of portraying 'chronic time' - either using a very slow & steady ticking clock or beginning at a standard speed and getting slower.

Ok, so that time came to around 10 minutes, although I forgot my pointe shoes which will add time. I also tried it without a chair but a chair might be a useful addition to hold onto and sit on, but it will make it look more like a changing room. Perhaps I need to use the frames of the screen a little more to conjure up that window feel. The thing with windows as well is that one is looking out, rather than at the glass...

I found myself responding to the situation, considering the way I looked in each change of clothing and my gestures expressed some of that. I sighed, frowned, examined myself, yawned. Sometimes I was remembering gestures I had done in the midst of practice sessions, unconsciously at the time, but later scrutinised on the recordings and now logged into my mind and muscle memory as a telling gesture. Is this performing the self? Autobiographical performance?

I'll watch that run-through and then go again. No I won't, the camera needs charging.

If I use a chair but make sure to include it in my actions perhaps it won't look too changing roomy. Red light district girls sometimes have chairs...

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Canterbury Christ Church University

Tuesday Assessment

- ✓ Construct and clean box
- ✓ Test 3:1 lighting
- ✓ Try opposite way lighting
- ✓ Set up video camera
- ✓ Put up signage
- ✓ Test out chair & bag for space
- ✓ Try out soundtracks
- ✓ Run over lighting & sound with Alex
- ✓ Print posters and questionnaires
- ✓ Hand in expenses form

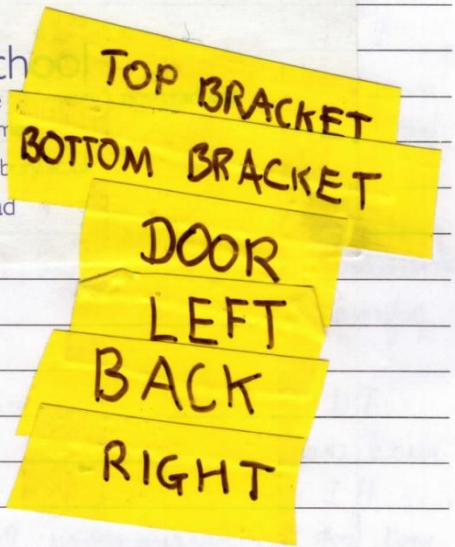
- ✓ Screwdriver
- ✓ Pens
- ✓ Handouts
- ✓ Glass cleaner
- ✓ Signage
- ✓ Clothes & bag Gift for Alex?
- ✓ Sketchbooks

Graduate Sch

Provides leadership and direction for the
research programm

graduateschool@canterb

@cccugrad



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Screening My(Self): Reflections

A performance workshop exploring subjectivity and objectivity, spectatorship and the performance of self.

Part of the research conducted by doctoral candidate Mo Pietroni-Spenst

Today - all welcome!

Tuesday 30th May

1.00 – 1.15 Anselm Studio 2 (Ag09)

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31.05.17

Reflections on yesterday's practical assessment

My intentions with this practical workshop were...

- To explore subjectivity and objectivity
  - The mirror box allowed me to experience the workshop subjectively - I experienced standing and undressing, feeling my own sense of self change with each change of clothes - but I was also aware that of being experienced (watched) objectively, by the audience who I had invited to watch me, and by myself as I scrutinised and judged my own reflection in the 360° mirrors

↓

  - The mirror box also referenced the subject/object divide of
    - Loie Fuller (ref. in Gaudlick 1995) who used a two-way mirror to allow the audience to watch her, watching herself. She confronted the convention of ↓
    - The 'exotic' or 'oriental' women displayed at the World's Fair (also ref. in Gaudlick 1995) who were exhibited behind glass, living out their ordinary lives but in public, recreating a supposedly 'natural' setting. How would it feel to do something ordinary while on display? Were these women uncomfortable? Were the spectators uncomfortable?

- To examine perceptions of the female body
  - The changing of clothes explored the shifting perceptions (both subjective and objective) of the woman in different iterations of herself. My subjective experience of my body changed with each change of clothing as my expectations were governed by them. The transitions / three iterations of self revealed embedded values, perceptions, expectations and habits.
  - The clothes acted as an extension of the body, revealing more about me and about the audience's expectations of me
  - The mirrors that displayed multiple versions of me reference the replication or duplication that was a theme in the photographic trends of the turn of the-

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and is a progression from my considerations of reality.

century 'exotic' women (ref. Haleh Afkhami, 1986). I use the mirrors & the clothes in place of veils, to recreate the concept of interchangeability or recreation of women - otherness.

- This created a concept of simulation - the female body (my body) was presented as a series of simulacra, of myself and of women in general. By using my own example of living in a female body other women can identify with me through my representation of the experiences of a woman.

- To explore the performance of self

- By using the workshop to display my body I am, as Gavelick describes Loie Fuller, 'both butterfly and taxidermist' (P.92), both subject of analysis by others and myself through my experience and object to experience, or as Conroy (2010) argues, both analytical strategy and subject for analysis.

- The mirror box meant that I could experience being-looked-at while experiencing the lived experience of undressing in front of the mirror.

- Would I be more comfortable revealing myself with a physical barrier between me and the audience?

- Would I find it easier to 'be' in the moment' and produce more naturalistic or authentic gestures with a reflection to work from (as this is a rehearsed strategy from my classical training)?

- Would the changes of clothes enable me to experience a deeper psycho-physical connection?

- Could I let go of my need to plan, choreograph and rehearse and let the process take me to a deeper somatic engagement, even though I knew I was being watched?

- To test the audiences experience of their spectatorship

- If they knew I couldn't see them would they be more comfortable to look at me? Moving around more, staring if they wanted, not feeling guilty because I had privacy, or worse because I couldn't see them looking?

- Would the physical barriers of the screens make them more willing to come close? How does the physical barrier make proximity easier to deal with?

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Some issues to address:

- I feel it was too quick / short...
  - I had originally planned a durational piece but this wasn't achievable for my state of health leading up to the workshop
  - Duration has a different meaning for people living in 'chronic time', basic and short tasks become very difficult - the workshop was physically exhausting for me, it was durational for me
  - The soundtrack didn't work as I expected so didn't portray the intensity of effort, struggling to get through time.

- Did I take risks?
  - As a continuation from the last workshop, it was necessary for me to test not the literal baring of my body through nudity, but the metaphorical baring of myself, by portraying the fears, doubts and judgements I make about myself.
  - I tested whether I could allow myself to not 'hold it together' but let the audience see me as I ~~felt~~ feel at my weak, vulnerable and ill moments - through my gestures, my breathing and the clothes.
  -

- Was the barrier between me and the audience 'cheating'?
  - The barrier was an intentional choice to test the audience's reaction to the changed notion of proximity from the last workshop
  - It also was a vehicle for me to experience the subject / object divide
  - It created a mediated or technologised body that offered another level of perception of the female body, through simulacra, ostension and references to the portrayal of the female body behind glass in red light districts, in the media and at the World's Fair

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01.06.17

Reflections before I watch the recordings

I want to think back over my experience of the workshop, trying to put aside thoughts of others or of the recording, to set down my perceptions in a sort of phenomenological account. I imagine that the recording will make me feel uncomfortable as I still struggle to reserve judgement of myself.

When I waited inside the box for the audience to enter, I was aware of people gathering outside and their voices. Snatches of conversation, wondering if their talk was about me. My name spoken and pride and pleasure in having created a performance event that people were attending. Wondering if it was 'enough'. Will I ever get away from that, or is it a natural part of being an artist?

I was aware of myself standing, my weight in my feet, how I chose to shift it, how I would later watch myself standing here, thinking of the future me. The comfort that gave me, that I could trust in future me not to be unkind but to understand because she had experienced it. Catching sight of my anxious expression and that moment of objectivity that helped me to choose to experience the 'now' differently, more calmly. Looking at myself in the screens knowing that soon I would be watched, watching myself, and considering trying to halt the process of looking at myself now, so I could be doing it new when the audience entered.

The doors opening and knowing that now they saw me, just as I was, standing in a normal iteration of myself. Beginning to look at myself, considering the way my clothes fitted my body, how I held myself when dressed like this. I was happy enough with what I saw, but I still carried judgements about how I wanted to be. I could have stood and considered myself, looked into my eyes, for longer, but perhaps I was scared of doing too little, of the thoughts in my head not coming across.

Undressing and feeling that surge of awareness that accompanies nudity, feeling exposed and wondering what they thought of me doing this, what they thought of my body. Distracted into the moment by a twisted bra strap, needing this to be put right because that's how things should be, somehow. Catching sight of my buttocks, their soft wobbly texture, feeling the passage of years, the deterioration of fitness

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from what I used to ask of my body but knowing that in this moment it did what I asked of it, balancing on one leg as I put on ballet tights.

Seeing the strange opaque pinkness of the tights as if for the first time, and wondering how this had come about as the ideal look for ballet dancers' legs, the absurdity of this simulated natural perfection from an outsider's eye, not accustomed to the habits and values that ballet has set out to be accepted by its followers. Fitting the waistband above my hips so my waist became even smaller, the feminine ideal portrayed through my body in that moment.

The familiarity of the ballet leotard and skirt, with all the memories of hoping and dreaming infused into their fabric, into the way I dressed myself in them. The familiarity of the garments and the expectation of their fit on me and again that speeding-up of time as I fast-forwarded through the many occasions of wearing them to now, seeing how my body has changed, has failed my expectations, and how I am coming to terms with the new version of my body and of myself, adjusting my expectations to the levels of an invisibly disabled body and learning to love and accept it.

Putting on my pointe shoes, the sweetness of their smell, the shiny satin, the firm box putting pressure on my feet as I went through the motions that stretched and warmed my feet in the shoes, testing my weight on pointe and feeling the thrill of magic, of other-worldliness that saw me balance on the tiny platform, knowing that others would be watching me in that moment with wonderment. The reality of my changed body, my lack of musculature that made this process, so habitual years before, unfamiliar. Experimenting with what looked nice for pointe work, disappointed with my body not being capable of executing what I wanted and realising my heart wasn't in it anymore.

Looking at myself dressed up in my ballet clothes and feeling for a moment that I was playing dress-up, trying to resurrect a part that was no longer mine and this making me uncomfortable, unhappy somehow. Wanting this part to be over, ashamed in a way of others seeing me as I saw myself then - a time-worn fading attempt to be the young, vital image of a ballerina. Realising the effort those momentary few steps had cost me and how breathing was suddenly harder, the energy to stand seeming more than I had. Feeling the tightness in

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my thighs and knees, the energy dissipating from my limbs. Telling myself that I was allowed to feel like this now, and the workshop was to allow me to show that feeling, but how hard it was to be honest, to let the internal sensations that came in waves, the symptoms that were almost imperceptible in a body that was somehow numb, to show on the outside. If I allowed my arms to shake, my hands to tremble, was I somehow harnessing it up, performing something that wasn't there if it didn't normally show on the outside?

Needing to sit but realising that this was a cue for my assistant, marking the end of the workshop. Trying to take a moment, hands on my thighs to focus on my breathing, when I felt suddenly unhappy, vulnerable in my weakness and in my choice to let others see me like this. That fleeting consideration of it not being enough to hold their interest, to be of value as performance art and the fear of their judgement as they saw me in a way that they might identify with, and so wonder why I was making such a point of it. The fear of judgements like from my peers as a teenager questioning my health, believing I was faking.

The effort of putting on so many layers, why had I chosen so many when it was hot in the box, but knowing that this was a true practice of my self-care at home, feeling the vulnerability again in letting them see me like this.

My thoughts sometimes drifted to the timing of the workshop, hoping it was going to plan and wondering why the soundtrack wasn't slowing down as I expected. My screened self bringing me back to the present, reminding me that what was happening, my experience in the 'now' was the reality and what I had come to test.

Briefly considering whether I could see anyone in the audience, thinking I had either not try in case it made me uncomfortable, giving in to curiosity because it was a part of my perception of the event if it did make me nervous, following my line of sight and seeing nothing anyway. Wondering if the audience felt able to approach the box and whether I would notice them then, but letting go of the thought, taking comfort in my screens as a barrier and my reflections as company pinning me to the present moment.

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Session recording notes
(30.05.17 The Workshop)

Watching myself wait, rubbing my nervous tummy, immediately makes me feel nervous now.

The short window of time between then and now (01.06.17) makes me consider the ageing process. this is the body that is shared by my past, present and future selves. How will it continue to change? What will I look like as an elderly body?

As the ticking clock soundtrack begins I seem to speed up, as though I am moving in time to it. Perhaps it would have been better in silence, with the occasional spoken thought from me. I remember becoming more comfortable with the sound as I progressed so perhaps that will show in my movement.

I could have stayed in the first outfit for much longer just considering myself, but as always, I was too worried about not doing enough. I was in those clothes for only about two minutes.

I can see people standing very close to the screens, looking right in at me from inches away and I'm pleased. The physical barrier and the knowledge of the two-way mirror have definitely altered the audience's sense of comfort with proximity. For a moment, one audience member (I can see that it is Helen Paris) looks at what I am looking at - my own reflection, and again this makes me feel that she is considering my thoughts and not just her thoughts of me.

I see Angela watching as I put on my pointe shoes and realise that having her as a supervisor, bearing in mind her ballet expertise, may well have made it harder for me to let go of my classical values as there has still been someone who knows those unwritten rules. Granted, she's never applied classical rules and standards to my practical research, she's been very focused on my journey away from them, but that means she knows where I'm coming from and leaves nowhere for me to hide.

Looking at myself playing with the ballet steps I remember (as I commented in the previous entry) that feeling of intense dissatisfaction with seeing myself in that old iteration of myself and how uncomfortable I felt. So I know to expect myself to begin the undressing soon because I was so eager to be out of it (and into more familiar territory? The familiar and comforting iteration of myself that reflected self-

cave), but from this objective perspective I again feel that I should have continued longer. Had I forgotten about the dawning concept of 'being in the flop', of getting it wrong publicly or not knowing what to do, but continuing anyway? Perhaps this shows how much the knowledge of being watched affected how I felt. How could it both affect me and allow me to be in the moment by looking at what they saw, my image, my screened self?

I can see myself slowing down as I undress again and ~~wants~~ remember the feeling of fatigue, heat, shortness of breath and wobblyness together with the nerves at requiring myself to display these sensations. I am frustrated, willing the past me to slow down more, let go, let it show. I can see subtle changes in my body, my shoulders a little hunched, my co-ordination, particularly with my hands, more carefully considered. I concentrate hard on making my fingers work as I fold my tights. My knees are loosened, my legs not so straight in supporting me.

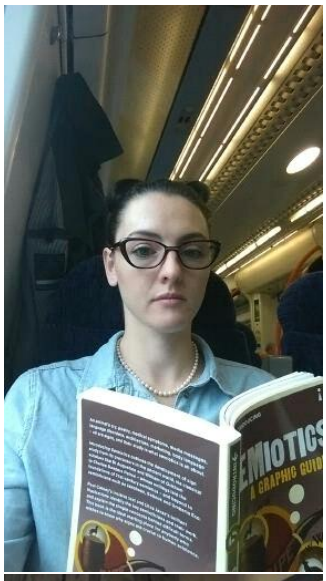
Perhaps I should have made it more clear in the handout that the : Reflections in the title meant that I considered the aftermath of the practical workshop part of the practice. I suppose I thought that was assumed as practice as research and then writing.

Nobody moves any differently when the lights change, I had hoped people's eyeline would shift to their own reflections but the end of the workshop is not made clear enough, partly because the soundtrack continues.

It lasted 15 minutes in the end.

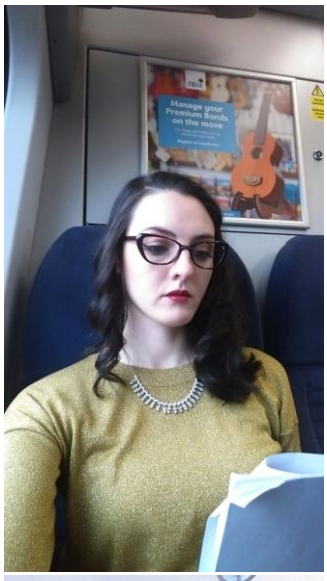
The end for me was uncertain too. Now that I could see the people looking at me and the performance had 'ended' was I still performing how I felt? I did feel knackered so where did that sit?

Appendix 2: Working selfies







Manage your
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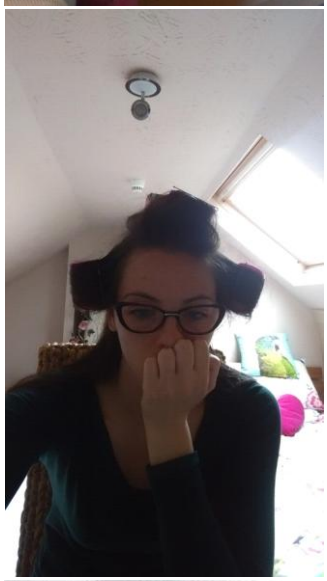
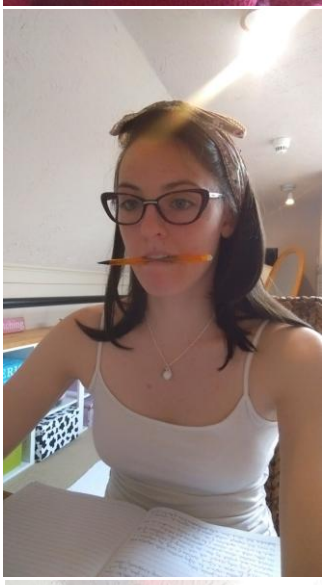
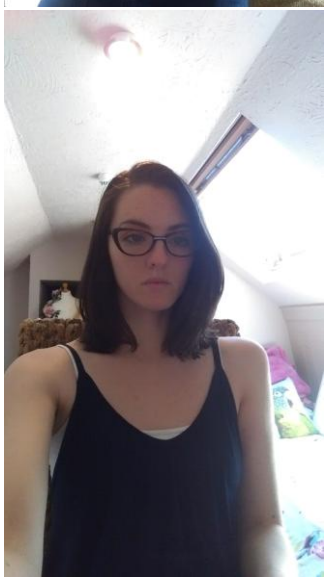
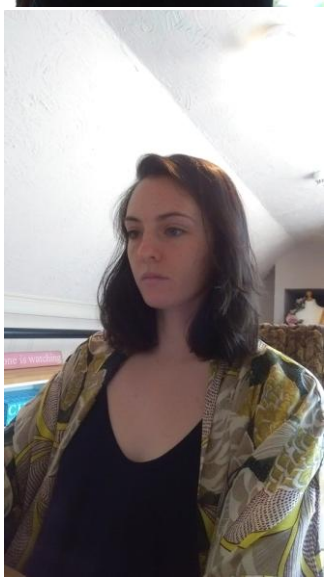
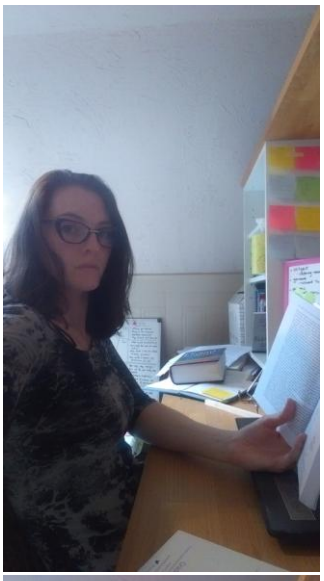
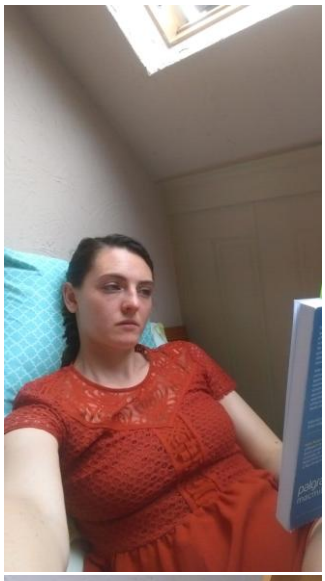
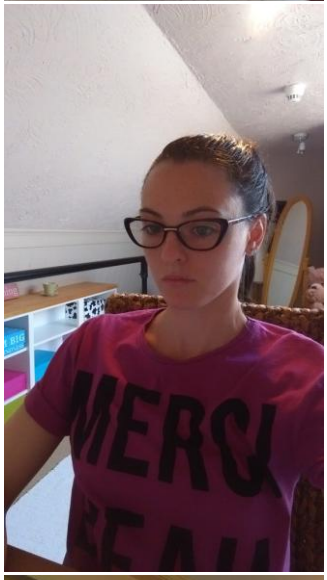
on the move



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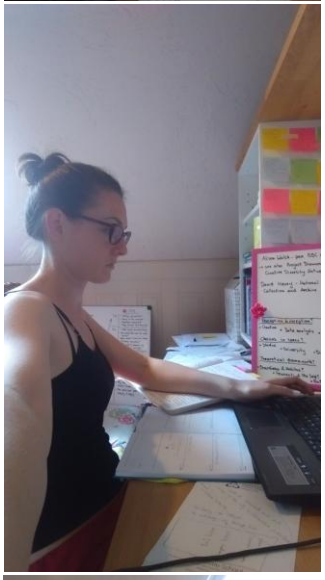
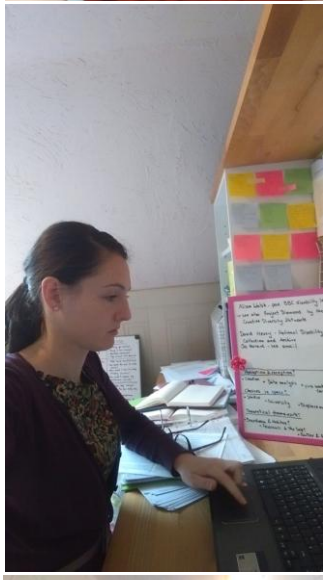
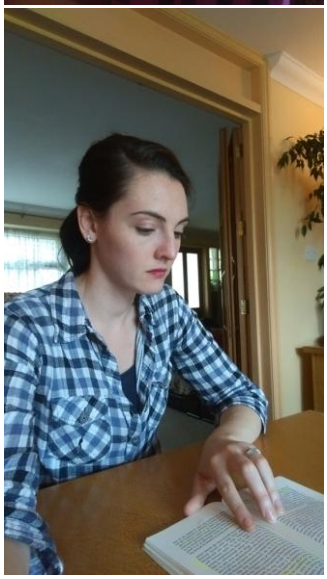
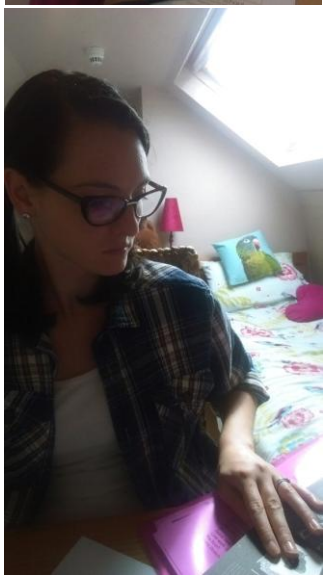




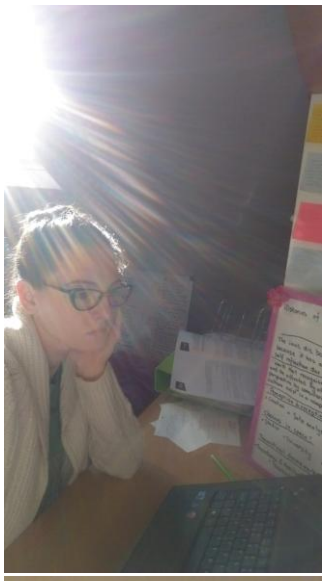
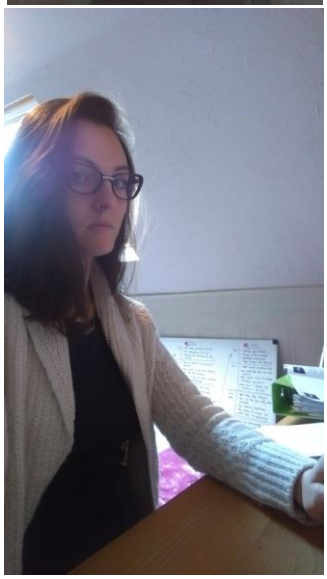
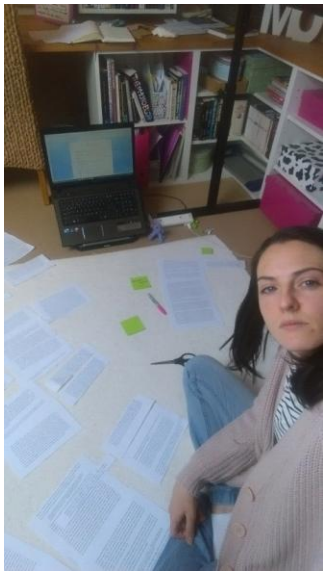

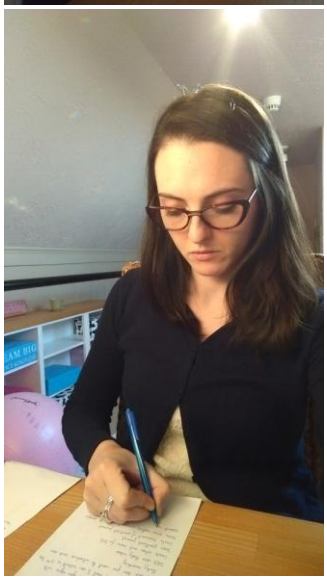
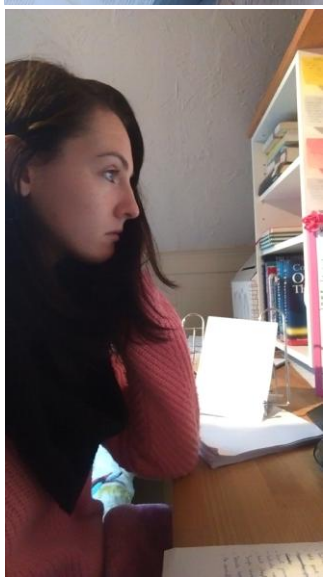



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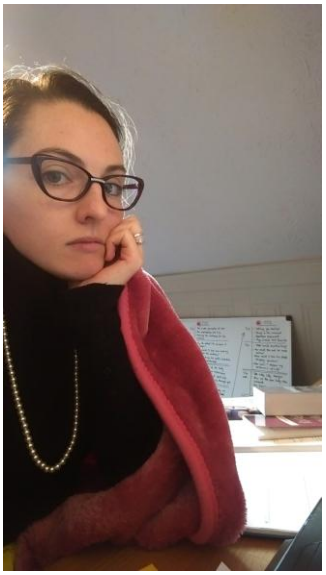


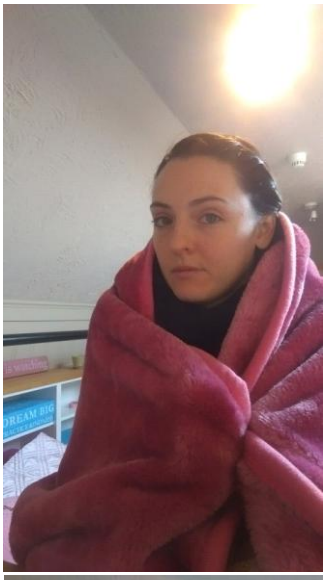
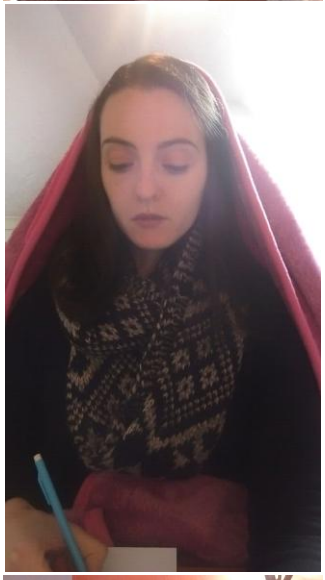
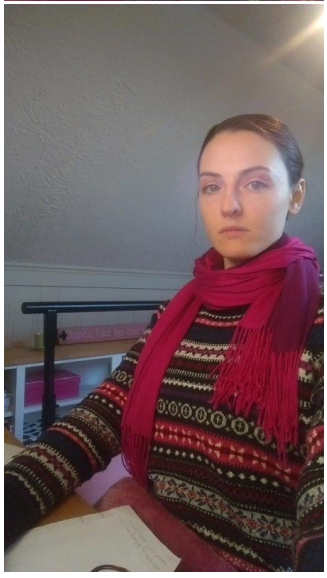

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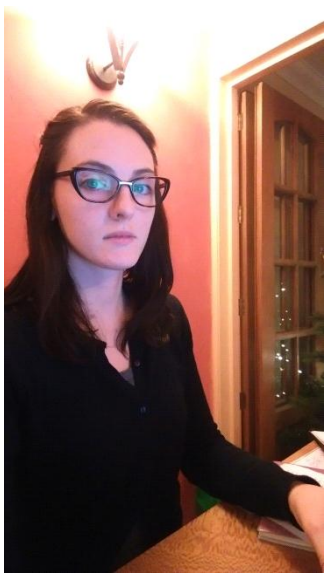

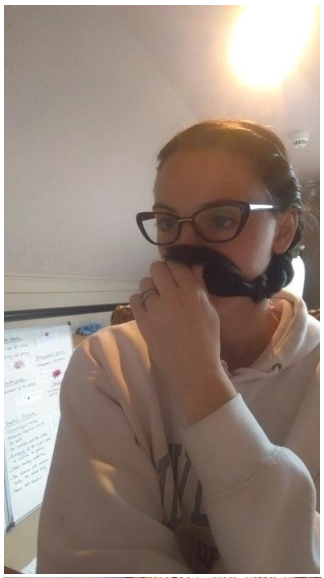
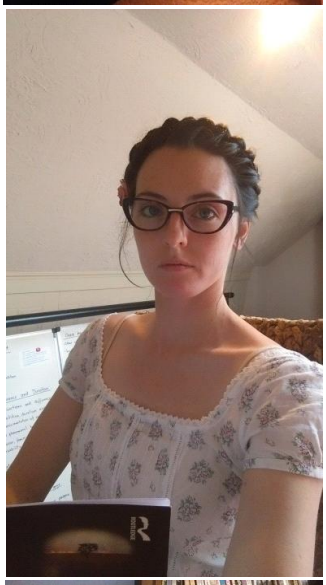
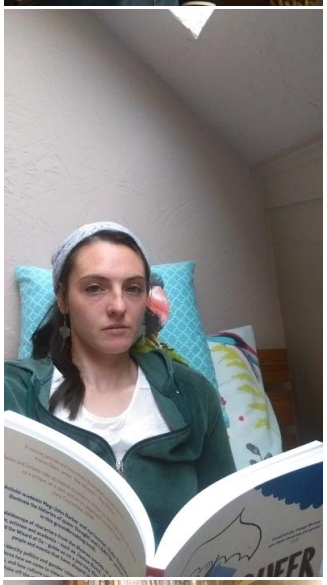









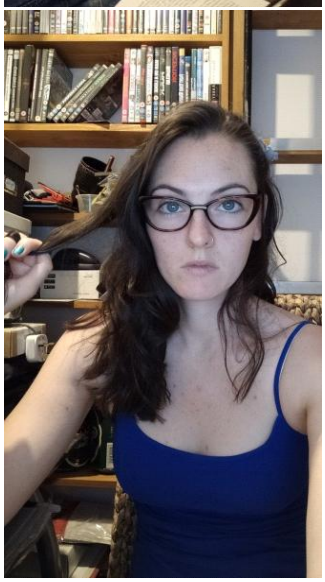
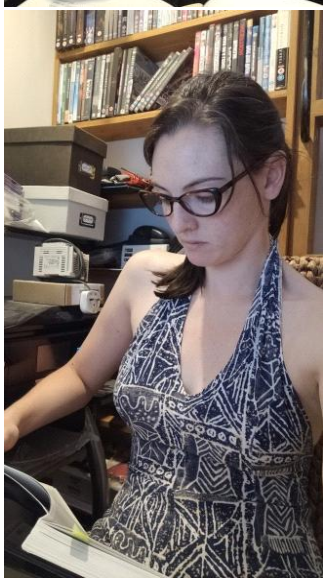


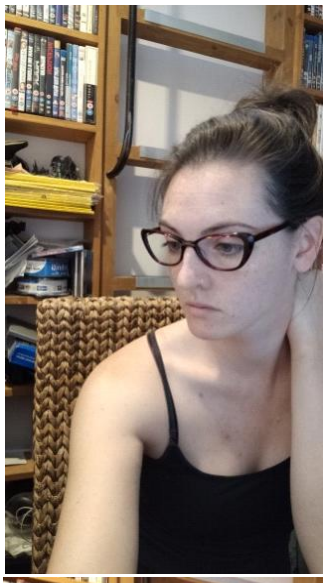
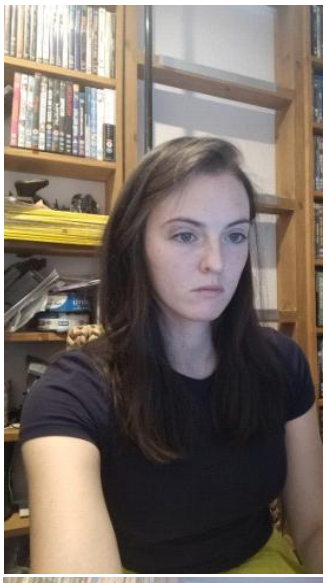


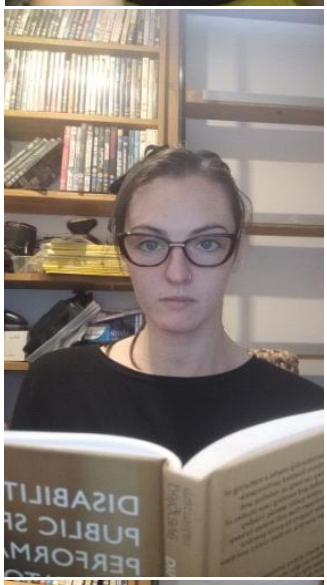
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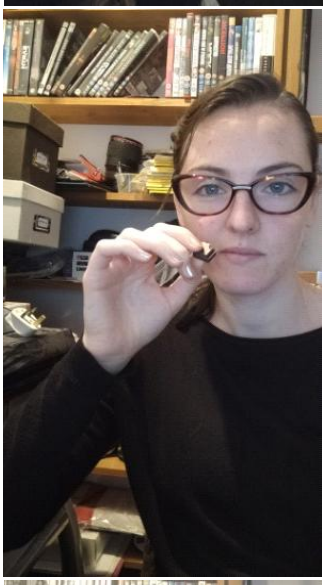
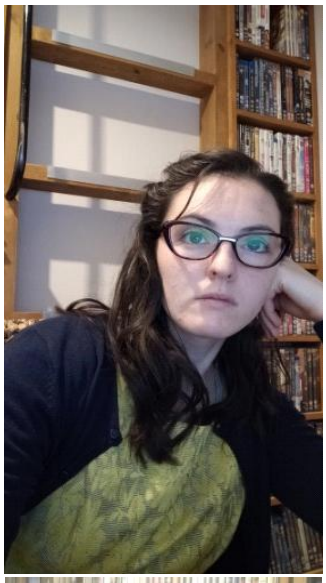
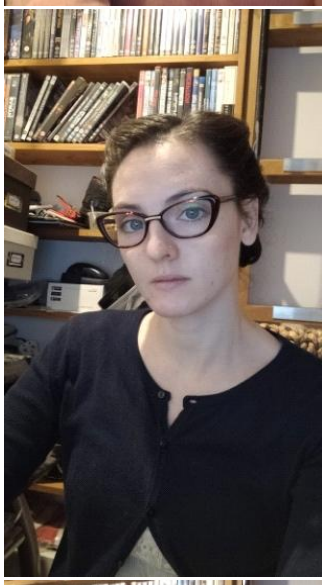
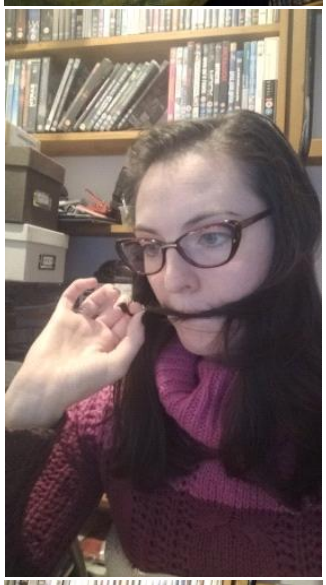




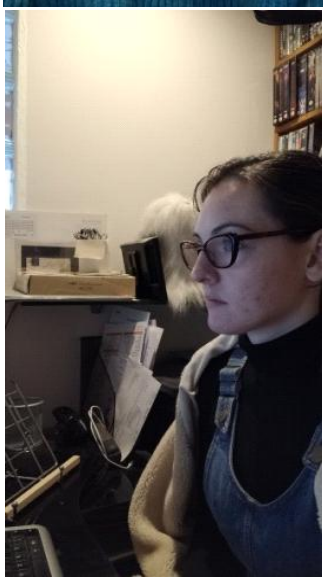








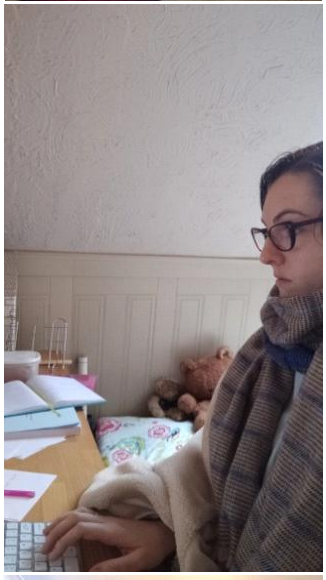













Appendix 3: *Untitled* programme

The Gestural Body: A Practice-Based Study of the Perceptions of Physicality and Meaning Through Space and Time

Abstract

My research explores the concept of the gestural body in performance and analyses the differing ways in which meaning can be perceived. Rudolf Laban (1980) asserts that by deconstructing body movement, different moods can be created. In this workshop performance, I examine how making changes in the space and time of performed gestures can affect perceptions of the body.

My research takes a phenomenological approach, assuming the theory held by Maurice Merleau-Ponty that the body is the lens through which we perceive the world (2002). This concept was taken up by dancer and philosopher Maxine Sheets who developed the notion of the 'lived experience' of dance, referring to the act of witnessing dance by both performers and audience (1966). I investigate how my body, influenced by my performance training, socio-cultural position as a woman and experience of living with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome has influenced my lived experience. Following methods of autobiographical practice (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007), I seek to challenge the assumption of the 'hypervisibility and instant categorisation' of disabled performers (Kuppers, 2001), by exploring ways of bringing my experience of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome as an invisible disability into visibility through performance.

Methodology

In my practical research I have worked somatically, to see how my internal experience of my body may inform my movement (Brodie and Lobel, 2012). Employing a phenomenological approach as set out by performance artist Susan Kozel (2007), and recording my somatic experiences through notes and video recordings has enabled me to develop a work-in-progress performance that describes an invisible aspect of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Ferdinand de Saussure's principles of semiotics come into play (Cobley and Jansz, 2012), as the gesture I have developed relies on simplicity of execution to generate meaning for the audience (Callery, 2001), eschewing Charles Sanders Peirce's notion of one 'correct' interpretation (Cobley and Jansz, 2012). The performance bears similarity to the work of performer Pina Bausch, with repetitive gestures generating impact through time (Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes, 2013), as well as exploring how the use of space can influence the gesture (Darley, 2009). I am also beginning to adopt a feminist perspective, considering how my sex and gender may influence the perception of my body and the gesture I perform (Butler, 1990).

In this workshop performance, I present myself for visual consumption, standing within a demarcated space and performing a gesture repeatedly for 15 minutes, allowing for that gesture to deteriorate through time. The workshop poses questions as to how the objective perspective of those looking at me may differ from my subjective experience. How might the presence of an audience influence my somatic experience? What are the audience's perceptions of me as a performer?

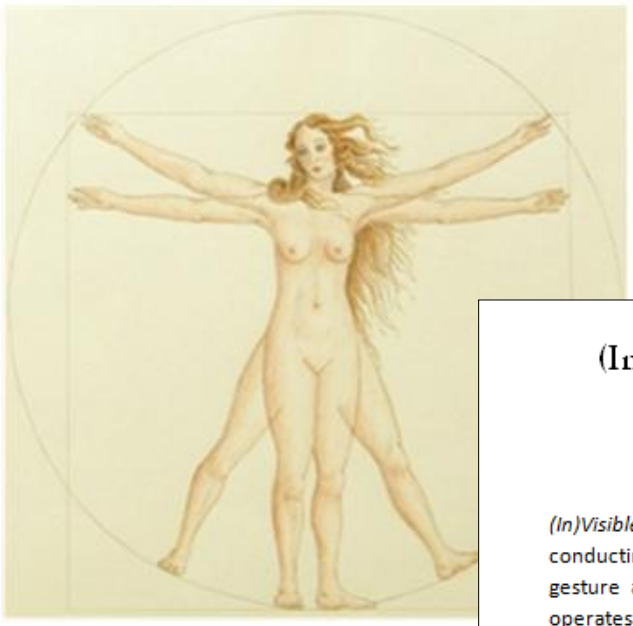
I invite you to move around the space and look at me.

- **What do you see?**
- **What does my body tell you about me?**
- **What does that lead you to expect?**
- **Does your perception of me shift as the gesture I perform changes in time?**

I would like to hear your thoughts on these or any other concepts that occur to you. Please write your ideas on the Post-it notes on the table and stick them on the wall above.

Appendix 4: *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* programme

(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See



10.00am Friday 20th May, Anselm S

(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See

Devised and performed by Mo Pietroni Spenst

(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See forms part of the research I am conducting for my PhD, investigating the perceptions of physicality, gesture and meaning in performance. I examine how the body operates as a site for communication and explore what factors might influence the meaning created. My practice-based research allows me to locate myself at the heart of the work, learning from my own perceptions as well as those of the audience.

Today's performance uses autobiographical material developed through somatic practice to explore how gesture can portray previously unseen phenomena. It considers how my lived experience with an invisible disability might be made visible and how my sex and gender may influence the way I am perceived.

- I invite you to move around the space and look at me.
- Consider your reactions to what I do and how they change as time passes.
- Think about how your role as audience member contributes to the shared experience of the performance.

Contains nudity

Appendix 5: *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* questionnaire

(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See

Audience Questionnaire

At the beginning of the performance, did you have any assumptions about what I was going to do? What were they? Why did you think that?

I performed a gesture repeatedly for 15 minutes. What do you feel this gesture expressed? Did your feelings change as the gesture altered during that time?

Did you feel uncomfortable at any point during the performance? When was this? What was your experience?

I invited you to move around the space as you liked. Did you move around the space or stay in one spot? Why did you make that choice?

At the end of the performance, I looked the same as I did at the beginning. But did you view me any differently having seen the process I went through?

What words would you use to describe your experience of the performance overall?

Appendix 6: *(In)Visible: Tell Me What You See* data analysis tables and transcripts of group discussions

Performance 20th May - respondents A-I

Performance 27th June for Performing Risk Symposium - respondents J-V

22 respondents

Responses are categorised by column and colour coded according to the topics the responses shared, which are then grouped at the end of the responses for each question

At the beginning of the performance, did you have any assumptions about what I was going to do? What were they? Why did you think that?

	Yes, had assumptions	No assumptions or expectations	Other
A	'I thought you will be performing an expressive role/drama and engage us as audience. I also thought you might say something like a monologue. I honestly did not expect you to be naked and perform in such a way that could get me engaged, thinking and reflecting on my personal experiences.'		
B	'I assumed that you would give an oral performance like usual and you would speak about it. I thought that because I have only attended oral acting performances. This is the first time I see something like this.'		
C	'Yes. I believed it would involve how the body works and the different positions/gestures it can perform. (How it can be used to create different positions etc.) I thought this because of the programme and the picture'		
D	'I didn't know what to expect. But I have an idea from your handout that there will be some form of body movements. I did not expect for you to undress and go naked.'		
E	'I had assumptions about the use of gesture, as I was already aware that		

	this was something you were focusing on in your study. I had expected that you might have moved around, as we were in quite a large space.'		
F		'Not at all. It was a complete surprise.'	
G		'I had no idea all I knew is that you would be naked on stage'	
H			'Yes, as I had discussed the work with you before now and seen the earlier iteration of the performance.'
I			'Yes, because we had discussed your ideas. However, the way the performance was presented (spatially) was unknown.'
J			'Not fair to answer this as I have seen it before!'
K	'Clear sense that you would stay on the platform. It is to do with where it is in the space. I *[illegible]* where the audience would be'		
L	'Once the rhythm began I assumed you would be using it as a basis for moving'		
M		'No, not really just that you would be naked'	
N		'No'	
O	'Not specifically; maybe anticipated additional elements of interaction with the audience'		
P		'No – I suppose we had been 'warned' about nudity, but I thought it would be on a screen. I wasn't sure what you would do.'	
Q	'I assumed you were going to perform something with your body because you emphasized your body by putting it on a pedestal in the centre of the space.'		
R		'No, I don't think I was	

		expecting something in particular. Only that you would be standing on the platform (since it was there).'	
S	'Very few prior assumptions. Perhaps I assumed you would perform a more active dance, when I saw the block then assumed a spoken piece. The room and lack of seating/props indicated very little so I really had no idea!'		
T	'None until I saw the podium in the middle of the studio. Then some kind of sculpture or display suggested itself, I think'		
U	'Judging by the room layout, I assumed it would be a simple, conceptual contemporary performance, maybe also including spoken word. You were dressed in quite neutral clothing, and except from small stage, no theatrical elements.'		
V			'The space left a lot to the imagination as it was open and there were little clues. However the simplicity also gave a sense of openness that was fulfilled throughout.'

Assumptions of monologue/spoken drama X 4 (A,B, **S,U**)
Assumptions of body movements or gestures X 7 (C,D,E, **L,Q,S,U**)
No assumption X 6 (F,G, **M,N,P,R**)
Previous knowledge of work X 3 (H,I,**J**)
2 people expressed surprise at nudity (A, D)
8 respondents noted the room, space or stage block (E,**K,Q,R,S,T,U,V**)

I performed a gesture repeatedly for 15 minutes. What do you feel this gesture expressed? Did your feelings change as the gesture altered during that time?

	What the gesture expressed	Did the feelings change?	Other
A	Female oppression, trying to accomplish	Sense of ageing, loss of	Could see her

	something, reaching out, symbolic of life	hope, weakening	mother in me Felt like more than 15 minutes
B	Passing of time in life – birth, youth and inspiration, old age and death, embracing ourselves	Changed from hope to disappointment	Sense of sympathy for whole performance
C	The body at its best and in its deteriorated form		
D	Shocked, confused, expression of life	Noticed change to hands and body, began to feel more at ease	Thought about own experience of dancing
E	Circle of life	Youth and reaching, tired and robotic towards end	
F	Female aging, slow movement at end like end of life	Became sad towards end	
G	Outstretched, positive at the beginning, small, confined, vulnerable and exhausted at the end		
H	Reaching out for a higher figure then backing down, withdrawing in disappointment		
I	A continuing struggle, degrading gesture		
J		Becoming aware/or seeing a growing vulnerability through the deterioration of gesture and posture	
K	The gesture was reaching/pleading/stretching/saluting.	'Although the gesture/ and [illegible] was the same, it changed with the rhythm and duration. My feelings slightly shifted with the changing soundtrack.'	
L		'At the beginning I was struck at the counterpoint between your fluid movement and the [illegible] beat: then I was bored'	
M	Reaching and collapsing	'I stopped looking at your movement and became interested in the changing view behind you.'	
N	Don't know.	'My attitude changed – I got curious to discover the reason for repetition.'	
O	Openness and hope. Deflation and defeat.	Felt relaxing.	

	Repetition and temporal mindfulness.		
P	Growth, life. Like a life cycle condensed.	It seemed to be sadder, smaller as time went on.	
Q	Reaching out to something, needed strength.	After a while you lost some of the strength as you weren't able to reach out that far anymore.	
R	Reaching for the sky, but something was holding you down.	As the gesture grew smaller (or so I thought), I got a sense of resignation, as the rhythm accelerated.	
S	Time, the passing of time, aging. How time speeds up as you age. Transition from sleeping/resting body to alert/active. Old age limiting movement. Human evolution from early humans to now.	I felt sad as I thought about aging.	
T	Hope or yearning.	It changed.	When the reaching gesture was at its most extended, your face was very expressive too; the fading of that seemed sad.
U	Da Vinci references [notes having seen poster]. Stripped down body showing vulnerability. Clean lines, details of the spine.		
V	Longing, wanting, freedom of movement.	When the movement got smaller the feeling was of powerlessness – loss from the atmosphere at the beginning.	

Reaching out/embracing/ outstretched X 8 (A, E, G, H,**K,M,Q,R**)
Life/aging/ birth and death X 8 (A, B, C, D, E, F,**P,S**)
Tired/exhausted/struggle/disappointment/weakening/deterioration/degradation X 14 (A, B, C, E, F, G, H, I,**J,O,P,Q,R,V**)
Hope/yearning/longing X 5 (A,B,O,T,V)

Did you feel uncomfortable at any point during the performance? When was this? What was your experience?

	Uncomfortable	Not uncomfortable	Other
A	Expressed 'I have to be honest. I felt strange to see you stripping		

	wholly naked. At the beginning I felt I will invade your privacy by looking at your body'		
B	'I felt shy, especially when you were naked'		'I learnt to accept the others as they are. And learnt to embrace yourself, love it and appreciate it'
C		'No. The performance was not about nudity but how the body functions'	
D	'Yes. At the beginning when you undress. Because I didn't know this was going to happen and there were men in the room as well. I think I would feel less uncomfortable if there were only females'		
E	'I did not necessarily feel uncomfortable from the nudity, however, as the performance (to me) signalled some kind of struggle towards the end – there was some uneasiness as an audience member'		
F	'A little – how calmly and casually you were afterwards after having your body being exposed'		
G	'The beginning due to being the unexpected nature and towards the end. The music was very tense'		
H	'I sort of knew what to expect to an extent but that didn't take away the surprise of seeing you completely nude in the performance'		
I		'No. And I thought I might be.'	
J		'Not really'	
K		'No.'	'I was wondering for how long you would hold the precise *[illegible]*'
L		'No why should I have done? You were doing your own thing and that is your right in a democratic society'	
M		'No – however I did want to	

		come much closer to you but *[illegible]* as I thought you would be uncomfortable with that'	
N		No	
O	'Mildly, when I thought I would be asked to hold your clothing or dress you'		
P	'I think with the nudity right at the start. In relation particularly to me looking at you [exclamation mark crossed out]. Heteronormative I realise, but I felt pissed off at the idea of the male gaze! Always the male gaze.'		
Q		'Not really, although I was curious how long the repeated action was going to last.'	
R	'I did have a mild uncomfortable experience in the beginning of the piece – I always feel uncomfortable when many people are looking at a naked body. With time I started noticing the various shadows created by your movement on your body, which took my mind off the gaze of the others'		
S	'Nakedness is somewhat of a social taboo – getting naked and getting dressed felt voyeristic [sic]. But then I thought perhaps this was the point – we are voyers [sic] of passing time. Only slightly uncomfortable when dressing and undressing, this passed quickly.'		
T	'Yes, to start with when you undressed. I had to rise to the challenge of looking at you without feeling self-conscious, dealing with the feeling that my looking was on show too.'		
U		'Not really. I knew there'd be nudity. Thinking back to the first time I saw a performance containing nudity, where I didn't know what to do with myself, I felt quite at ease	

		watching you now.'	
V		No	

Uncomfortable about nudity X 10 (A, B, D, F, H, **O**, **P,R,S,T**)
Uncomfortable about the music/movement/tension X 2 (E, G) E notes nudity could have been a factor.
Not uncomfortable at all X 10 (C, I,**J,K,L,M,N,Q,U,V**) Although C and U note nudity as though it could have been a factor. M notes they thought I may have been uncomfortable with greater proximity, and Q wondered how long the repetition would last.

I invited you to move around the space as you liked. Did you move around the space or stay in one spot? Why did you make that choice?

	Moved around	**Stayed in one place**
A		'I really wanted to approach you to do something in solidarity. Maybe to see what you want to say by interacting. However, I thought this might spoil the performance'
B		'Because I focused my eyes and attention on your moves, your facial expression and every bit of your movement'
C		'No. Although afterwards I feel maybe I should have done. Probably got sucked into the performance.'
D		'I wanted to move. But I didn't because I was afraid I might disrupt the performance although you did say in the beginning we could. But I shifted a little and this gave a different angle and view of your movements. I felt more at ease and begin to relate to other things in life'
E		'Where I was stood I could see the front of your body and your face – however, reflecting on this perhaps should have moved about to see the way your back muscles contracted. I would move around next time – however this is generally not expected of an audience member in 'traditional performances '
F	'I moved around once – to see the physicality and facial expressions from the front and if that would make a difference to the emotion I felt'	
G		'Remained in one place'
H	'Only at one point – to see the performance from a different view/particularly facial	

	expressions or the absence of it'	
I		'I actually missed the instruction to move. I didn't as I felt it would disrupt the tangible atmosphere'
J	'I was moving around as I was carried away by the clock ticking which propelled me to move'	
K	**'**I made a full circle around you but didn't play a lot with distance from you. I wonder if it'd look different had I done that.'	
L		'No (I have an awkward back) and because others' movement breaks the spect [sic]'
M	'I moved, partly because you invited me to. I kept to the edges as that was what was expected of us/me – or so I felt'	
N	'I moved around to discover what the performance was about – also to stay 'entertained' by looking at movement from a different perspective.'	
O	'Variation. To see different perspectives on you. To do a 360 degrees of space'	
P	'I wanted to see the full gesture. Also the body in movement is amazing, especially when you had to use your strength to hold you up. I guess it was like sculpture in motion'	
Q	'I moved around to look at the gesture from different angles and distances, much like a visitor in a museum.'	
R	'At first because I was encouraged to do so, and then because it felt like a sensible thing to do. Also the soundscape made [me] want to move.'	
S	'I stayed in one spot to begin with as I enjoyed watching the muscles in your back move but I moved to your front when I was curious of your facial expression. I continued to move to view different angles.'	
T	'It seemed the best way to experience a 3 dimensional piece. I'm glad I did.'	
U	'I moved a bit, all way around you so I got a 360 degree view. But only after 5-10 minutes. I guess the impetus to move was a) because I know as a performer how it feels if it's encouraged and no one moves, b) because everyone else did, c) I wanted to see your face.'	

V		No, I didn't move.

Stayed still X 9 (A, B, C, D, E, G, I, **L, V**) one who reasoned that movement is disruptive
Stayed still but would have liked to move X 5 (A, C, D, E, I) 3 of whom were worried about disrupting the atmosphere or performance, 1 noting movement is not expected in traditional performances, another thinking keeping to the edges was expected of the audience,
See also previous question respondent **M**

Moved X 11 (F, H, **J,K,M,N,O,P,Q,R,S,T,U**) 4 (F, H, **S, U**) mentioned wanting to see facial expressions, 3 (**M, R, U**) because they were encouraged to do so, 2 (**J, R**) expressed that the soundtrack encouraged their movement

Descriptions of the performance in a museum-like way X 2 (P,Q)
See also question 1 responses regarding museum/gallery/scultpure

At the end of the performance, I looked the same as I did at the beginning. But did you view me any differently having seen the process I went through?

	Viewed me differently	**Viewed me the same**	**Other**
A	'I saw the same person only I felt more appreciation for you as a strong and confident lady'		
B	' I felt that you were moved by the act and the moment still inside you'		
C	'Because it felt like we'd been on a journey. Almost like you'd exposed your disability throughout the performance but prior to the performance you would have never known about it. Enhanced my awareness but didn't see it in a negative light'		
D		'Because you are the same person that I know before the performance and you look the same'	
E	'The performance signalled to me that maybe you have experienced some kind of struggle. The performance itself was this struggle and it could		

	have (metaphorically) reflected other aspects of your life'		
F	'I felt more of a connection as opposed to viewing you as a stranger'		
G			'Not sure'
H		'No – especially as the ritual of divesting and re-investing yourself with your personal effects before and after the performance meant that I could view your 'performance' self as distinct from the everyday'	
I		'I can't say I did, no'	'I suggest it is a brave performance to make'
J	'Probably being aware of the body's physical labour'		
K	'Perhaps. I guess I was more aware of your face because I looked quite intently on that during the piece.'		
L	'Yes - now as an artistic person and brave!'		
M		'No – although I was concerned you weren't wearing a bra and wondered if it were me if that you feel uncomfortable.'	
N	'I was more familiar with your body'		
O		'No. The movement became of less interest to me as the piece progressed but I didn't see or perceive you differently.'	
P			'I thought you were brave as hell! But I also really wanted to hear about your thoughts on the work and your creative process. It was kind of shocking in a small space and I was interested in that.'
Q	'I felt a little closer to you as the performer because I had seen a vulnerable part of you, so 'the performer' became less abstract.'		

R			'Yes and no. Not sure how to phrase it.'
S		Not really. I knew more about your work.	
T	'Of course, I had (have) seen you naked. The re-assertion of your social self with your clothes was a very striking moment. Interesting that this was when you spoke to us too.'		
U			----
V	'At the end there was a sense of vulnerability more so than at the beginning.'		

Viewed me differently X 12 (A, B, C, E, F, **J,K,L,N,Q,T,V**)
3 because of physicality (J, N, T) 'body's physical labour', 'familiarity with body', 'seen you naked'
3 because they had seen a vulnerable side of me (C, E, Q, V) 'exposed your disability', 'some kind of struggle', 'seen a vulnerable part of you', 'more vulnerability at the end'

Viewed me the same X 6 (D, H,I,**M,O,S**)
Inconclusive X 4 (G,**P,R,U**)

What words would you use to describe your experience of the performance overall?

A	Curious, eager to know more about your experience
B	New, exciting, daring, overwhelming, sexual awakening
C	Thought provoking, emotional
D	Brave and beautiful. Different from any other performance I have seen
E	It was quite hypnotic – perhaps due to the repetitions
F	Mesmerising
G	Uncomfortable, thought provoking
H	Thought provoking
I	Intriguing, voyeuristic, sculpture, art, mesmerising, hypnotic
J	Curious, voyeur, consumer, community of care
K	Interesting. I wish it was a bit longer because then the audience would stretch themselves more.
L	Valid as an art form – but not one that captures my interest or enlarges my imagination.
M	Beautiful body, repeating movement. Time was still yet ticking by.
N	Meditative
O	Conscious of time. Conscious of female body. Thinking about proximity and safety (felt performer was safe and vulnerable at same time).
P	Discomfort; but also forcing my own *interrogation* of my *feminist values*. So I guess, also creative and *fascinating*. (Their italics)

Q	Exhibiting the body, vulnerability and strength at the same time. Liveness of the body being exposed.
R	Rhythm (time), and shadow (light).
S	Very interested – want to know more!
T	Not sure yet...
U	Simplistic, exposed, honest
V	Energy flow throughout, minimalism, effective and thought-provoking

Brave/daring X 3 (B, D, U)
Thought provoking/curious/intriguing X 9 (A, C, G, H, I,**K,P,S,V**)
Hypnotic/mesmerising X 4 (E, F, I, N)
Conscious of time X 3 (M,O,R)
Physicality of the body X 4 (M, O, Q, V)

Transcripts of group discussions

Performance 1

The audience members noted that the end section when I was doing least movement was most powerful

One person thought she had entirely imagined that the ticking was speeding up

One woman said that she felt uncomfortable that there were men in the room and I agreed that it influenced how I felt. I said it made me feel 'more like I'm making a political statement'

I identified that I didn't see my performance as sexual, that that was not my intention and another woman agreed, saying, 'I didn't see anything sexual about it, I just saw a body'

Another woman said that she didn't think that what she had understood from the performance would have been as clear if I hadn't been naked, 'I don't think you would have had the same experience if it was clothed'

I asked 'In terms of the soundtrack, how do you feel that that integrated with the movement?'

'The music was very tense, especially at the end, the echoing and the speed, it sort of adds to what obviously you're trying to achieve with the tiredness or the exhausted nature. I think it adds to that, it's definitely important.'

'It took a long time for me to realise that it was accelerating. Was it accelerating?!' He went on to say it took him five or six minutes to realise that it had sped up, and was probably going to continue to do so,

at which point he wondered ‘I wonder how fast this is going to get, I wonder if it’s going to get frantic, because it was dictating, you know, the speed of your movements’. He said it gave it a ‘sense of anticipation’ and that ‘it must be moving forward, it must be going somewhere’

I asked, ‘So did people find, I know we’re talking about tension, that it made you sort of uncomfortable?’

‘It made me focus a lot more on the muscle tension, because the music was getting more frantic and your moves were getting more frantic’ and noted that the movement of my toes in particular showed this tension. ‘I thought it was very interesting to watch and how the music impacted how we viewed it’

‘I thought I’d imagined it speeding up... because I felt that you had slowed down so much that to me the music was just the same metronome with some added effects’

The same person also said that although she hadn’t moved, he wished she had ‘For me it was very stressful towards the end, it felt very tense’

I asked her what stopped her moving. She noted audience members generally stand or sit and watch. ‘For me that was my most comfortable position to be in’ ‘If everybody had started moving around I would have felt more comfortable to do that’

A number of people said that the performance felt much longer than 15 minutes, with one person saying she felt it had a quality of being ‘everlasting’.

She expressed an urge to have approached me to do something in solidarity. I said that I didn’t think anyone would have interacted with me, partly because of the stage block marking out the performance space, which I felt set up an expectation that you wouldn’t. When I was asked what I would have done, I said that I had considered the possibility in advance and hoped that I would make eye contact at the very least, although I don’t think I had fully considered how I would react, wanting instead to leave the possibility open to the moment. I said that ‘ I got into the habit of it becoming a rehearsed process so I would have found it difficult to let go of that.’ I felt that an interruption would have been a challenge in terms of the rehearsed progression of the movement.

One audience member asked how I would have felt if I could sense someone’s solidarity with me, standing close but not interacting ‘If somebody had stood very close to me I think I would have relaxed, in a funny way’ I said that the positions that people chose to take far away from me, made me feel that, had they been closer, I would have ‘felt more companionship, and less like an exhibit, although that it was what I wanted to make myself’

I was asked how I would have felt if it was a man who came and stood close to me, and I said that I would have felt more ‘confrontational’ and ‘ready to defend my confidence.’ I said that I felt it was ‘impossible for gender not to be a facet when a woman performs in any guise, let alone unclothed.’

One woman said ‘There was second when I just skipped thinking about you as a female, I saw you as just a human being representing male and female’ and many people nodded and agreed. ‘It exceeded being

you, a female, it became just a human being.' Another woman, 'For me it felt like it was a body, rather than any kind of gender but maybe because that's me talking from a woman's perspective' [so it's easier for her to see past the shared sex?]

One man said he would be interested to know how the women, a group of whom were standing on the other side of the room, would have reacted to him if he came and stood very close to me. Note reactions to him, not to me. He said that he was worried about their judgements, 'one of the main reasons why I didn't do it! Because actually, my relationship with the other audience members in that piece was complex'

A woman said it would depend how he stood, and he said that was down to him, another choice that he was aware was fraught with implications and would make him hyper aware of how to stand or not stand. At this point everyone laughed having experienced the feeling of not knowing how to stand appropriately when we are being watched.

Another audience member noted the difference in standing to the side where there were fewer obvious reminders of gender. One man said that he also viewed me as a body but that 'something that helped me to do that was the way you framed the performance because I think the kind of divesting yourself of your personal belongings as I saw it, and reinvesting yourself in those things for me helped really frame it for me. And for some reason when I saw you do that... it wasn't 'Mo' anymore for me, it was just the body.' He went on to say that 'I don't have words for it'

At this point, a woman joined the conversation, saying, 'Could I just add to that I think what helped in framing yourself as a body was your choice of clothing as well, so you didn't wear a bra you just wore a t-shirt and just like, shorts'

I explained that my choice of clothing was very careful as I wanted to appear 'neutral' as much as possible, with my clothing not attracting comment, and explained that the only reason I didn't wear a bra was because I didn't want to had someone my knickers.

Another woman thought this was interesting, because I was 'very generous' with the audience in doing so. We talked about the manner I divested myself of my clothing, noting that it is not how we're used to seeing a woman undress, I could have been more provocative. 'That's why it just felt like a body,' said one woman.

I said I wanted to engage the audience by asking them to help me undress. 'It made it more personal. I think from an audience point of view, it made it feel like it was ok to watch you doing that because you were asking for our permission, for our help, so it made it more of a connection for me personally to watch you undress yourself, because you were engaging with us'

One man said that it was helpful for the audience to be with me through the process of undressing once I had said the performance would start, rather than seeing me standing naked already

Angela said that the audience appreciated my vulnerability and therefore 'sympathised' with me.

Performance 2

Discussing the interaction as I dressed and undressed, an elderly man said that it was lucky I hadn't called upon him to **he wouldn't have agreed to hold my clothes** as 'I only handle my wife's clothes'. I was asked what I would have done and I responded, 'I think I would just have asked another person'. But how would the man's reaction have affected other people's reactions? Would they have felt greater freedom to refuse my requests now that he had done?

Another man was uncomfortable at how the performance had made him **confront his feelings about the male gaze theory**. He said that he was uncomfortable with my nudity and had struggled to see past my sex, as he found me attractive, saying that 'if it was your intention for the audience to see past my sex, it hadn't worked with him'. His reflections on his own spectatorship made him uncomfortable because of his presumed position of upholding the male gaze theory, although he wasn't clear whether he put himself into the category of active male watcher, or whether I did by arranging the performance.

A number of audience members were interested in **the concept of duration and wanted to see what it might bring to the exploration of spectatorship for the audience**, requiring them to go further in their own exploration of watching. Many people suggested that be something that I pursue in the future.

They also noted how their movement affected the atmosphere and **they were consciously affected by the movement of others, prompting them to move as well**. This meant that the audience's movement came in waves that could be heard through the noise of their feet and clothes and provided a sense of cover if they wanted to move but had felt unable to in silent periods. One person asked if I was aware of their movement, and I answered that I was aware of periods when lots of people were moving at once as there was a change of energy in the room. At these times, I felt more like a 'performer' as I was aware of how their movement reflected the way they chose to view me, which in turn drew my attention to my performance as a spectacle for view.

Appendix 7: *Screening My(Self): Reflections* poster

Screening My(Self): Reflections

A performance workshop exploring subjectivity and objectivity, spectatorship and the performance of self.

Part of the research conducted by doctoral candidate Mo Pietroni-Spenst

Today - all welcome!

Tuesday 30th May

1.00 – 1.15 Anselm Studio 2 (Ag09)

Appendix 8: *Screening My(Self): Reflections* questionnaire

Screening My(Self): Reflections

In this workshop, I explore subjectivity and objectivity in performance, using my body and my experiences as both subject of the workshop and means of analysis. I appear behind screens that allow you to look at me but which are mirrored inside so I can see my reflection.

As you look at me, feel free to move around the space as you like. Consider your impressions of me and the choices you make in how you watch me.

When you first saw me behind the screens what were your thoughts? Did I remind you of anything you have seen before?

How did it feel to watch me, knowing that I couldn't see you? Did these feelings change at any point?

You saw me in three different changes of clothes. How did your impressions of me shift as you saw me in each different outfit?

Did my behaviour change at all as my clothing changed?

Do you have any other thoughts or observations to add?

Appendix 9: *Screening My(Self): Reflections* data analysis tables

Workshop 30th May 2017 *Screening My(Self): Reflections*

4 respondents A – D

Responses are colour coded according to the topics the responses shared, which are then grouped at the end

When you first saw me behind the screens what were your thoughts? Did I remind you of anything you have seen before?

A	My first thought was how uncomfortable most people would feel with four mirrors on them.
B	Me in the changing rooms at M&S.
C	A dancer in a film.
D	Like looking into a changing room at a shop – voyeuristic, seeing you in intimate moments as you examine your body. Reminded me also of a ballet dancer figure on top of a music box – there for us to view you – a role to play.

How did it feel to watch me, knowing that I couldn't see you? Did these feelings change at any point?

A	It felt weirdly invasive, I wanted to watch, yet knew almost shouldn't. After I stood close to the box I wanted to stay close.
B	It felt voyeuristic at first.
C	You're very brave.
D	I think at times I was aware of other people's movements and perceptions of other viewers – this affected how I responded. It was like looking into a green room – what is normally unseen by the audience. Privileged view of into readying for a performance. As you showed signs of fatigue, it became somewhat agonising to watch you suffer – to feel your pain.

You saw me in three different changes of clothes. How did your impressions of me shift as you saw me in each different outfit?

A	Ballerina definitely 'appeared' more confident. But many layers suggested comfort.
B	You were ----- (unknowable, unremarkable?) in your underwear, and hiding in your final outfit. The ballet outfit was more of a performance on display.
C	The shift of different types of beauty
D	Even in putting on your ballet outfit, you changed – your demeanour. Years of training and

	thousands of times preparing, made you assume a certain attitude of strength and assurance. You seemed very aware of your body, analysing it minutely. What did you see?

Did my behaviour change at all as my clothing changed?

A	Confidence was heightened, along with insecurity. Many layers it appeared as if you were glad to be covered.
B	Your confidence seemed lowest at the end.
C	I think so.
D	As mentioned in previous point. Putting on the yumfies, the signs of exhaustion became more apparent, like you could take off the mask.

Do you have any other thoughts or observations to add?

A	Interesting watching someone when they don't know you can see them.
B	It was unsettling with the two-way mirrors.
C	-
D	I feel your pain.

Voyeurism, privileged audience view	"how uncomfortable most people would feel with four mirrors on them" "voyeuristic" "intimate" "examine" "weirdly invasive" "what is normally unseen" "privileged view" "interesting watching someone when they don't know you can see them" "unsettling with the two-way mirrors"
Performance, confidence	"a dancer in a film" "a ballet dancer figure on top of a music box" "there for us to view you" "a role to play" "looking into a green room" "audience" "readying for a performance" "ballerina definitely 'appeared' more confident" "a performance" "on display" "demeanour" "attitude of strength and assurance"

	"confidence was heightened"
Signs of fatigue, self-care, comfort, low confidence	"signs of fatigue" "agonising to watch you suffer" "feel your pain" "many layers suggested comfort" "hiding in your final outfit" "appeared as if you were glad to be covered" "your confidence seemed lowest at the end" "signs of exhaustion became more apparent" "take off the mask"
Audience movement, proximity	"after I stood close to the box I wanted to stay close" "at times I was aware of other people's movements and perceptions of other viewers – this affected how I responded"