FOR OF THESE ISLANDS, I AM MADE:

Dance and Environmental Sensibility in the United Kingdom

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I, Andrew Sanger, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract:

The current relationship between artistic and activist practice in the UK is a complicated field characterised by the navigation of arduous constraints and expectations of funding bodies, the political suppression of the social value of artistic practice, and the seemingly exponential frequency of contemporary crises. Despite these impediments, the UK is home to a robust community of artists, facilitators and researchers who argue that dance is not a frivolous response to the climate crisis but is instead an essential component of developing environmental sensibility. Following extensive fieldwork between 2020-2022, this thesis analyses the work of UK movement artists advocating for more environmentally conscious relationships with each other and the planet. First, 'experiences of enchantment' provide a framework for understanding the intentions and outcomes of sensual and perceptual movement practices. Second, elements of storytelling play an important role in alchemizing individual experiences of the environment into collective expression, thus integrating the solitary into the social. Furthermore, this thesis acknowledges the significance of the first two years of the coronavirus pandemic and traces some of its impacts on dance communities in the UK. Finally, despite their environmentally minded work, many of these artists are hesitant to claim any sort of activist identity. In response to this complicated tension, I offer soft activism, or an activism of attention, as a framework to understand the subtle power of artistic practice.

Impact Statement

This research demonstrates the potential for certain dance and movement practice to generate an environmental sensibility amongst practitioners, participants, and audience members. The findings of this research, drawn from fieldwork with expert movement practitioners across the UK, outline meaningful and concrete methods artists use to stimulate meaningful experiences of the environment which may have various benefits and impacts both inside and outside academia.

Regarding academic impact, these findings encourage future researchers to consider how human movement systems and dance forms may not only signify elements of social relationships or cultural values but also how a people relate to their environment and other non-humans. More broadly, I would also argue that these findings erode conceptions of human culture as separable and severable from the environments within which they emerge and are practiced. Additionally, the findings of this research provide meaningful evidence for considering the soft and subtle activistic power of artistic practice, not only within the performing arts, and could be expanded to other forms of artistic practice including music and fine art. The research demonstrates the meaningful experiences and deep thinking that occurs within dance practices and may encourage other social scientists to pay closer attention to how, why, and when people dance. Finally, this research would also suggest that environmental scientists may benefit from engaging with somatic and artistic methods in conveying their findings to the public.

Considering the impact of this research beyond the academy and further research potentially expands interested stakeholders to include artists, educators, activists, and policy makers. The research documents methods carefully developed by movement artists that could be replicated by other interested artists or practitioners. Similarly, reading this work may inspire individuals to reach out and contact the experts identified in this thesis to study and train under them, strengthening the networks of environmental dance practices in the UK. Educators may equally be interested in the methods outlined in this work, some of which are purposefully simple and replicable and could be applied in schools for children of various age groups. Analogously, this research suggests first-hand experiences of the environment may encourage the development of deep environmental care and responsibility amongst participants. This information could support both policy makers and educators to advocate for forest schools or similar programs for youth to combat the falling levels of access to green spaces in contemporary metropolitan societies. Finally, this research also provides evidence which may inspire activists to consider the importance of regenerative models in their campaigns as well as encourage the inclusion of artful and joyful approaches to activism.

Conclusively, it is my hope as an artist, academic, and activist that this research provides strong evidence to encourage further multidisciplinary collaborations. These collaborations can combine artistic, scholarly, and activistic practice to work towards the pursuit of a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.

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Introduction

Figure 1 Still from one of the author's choreographies titled Found. London, UK 2017

A Provocation

Please take a moment to read the following passage in its entirety and attend to the instructions therein before continuing. This is optional, but warmly recommended. First, put down any device you are reading this text on and leave it somewhere safe. Then, go outside. Where is not important. There is no need for an immaculate or 'wild' sense of nature; a local park, your back garden, your balcony, or simply outside your front door will more than suffice. When you arrive, find a place to stand still and gently deepen your breath, surrendering time and attention to each inhalation and exhalation. After a few extended breaths, close your eyes and begin to rotate, ever so slowly, on the spot. As you rotate notice any changing sensations on your skin, perhaps a shifting warmth from the sun, or the downy hairs of your arms rustled by a soft wind. As you rotate, what sounds come in and out of focus? What can you identify; are they coming from near or far? Do you catch any scents on the breeze, familiar or unfamiliar? Perhaps the scents trigger certain memories. Let them come and go. Still rotating, gently flicker the eyelids open, dismissing the kaleidoscopic back of your eyelids. Now that you can see your surroundings again, try to maintain a soft focus: as if the light reflected by the world is falling into your pupils, your vision drinking in its wholeness rather than grasping each object individually. Eventually, slowly bring the rotation to a close and find stillness. You might wish to return the focus to

your breath momentarily, noticing any changes. The exercise is now completed. The whole process should take no longer than five to ten minutes, but please take as long as feels necessary. When you are finished, find somewhere comfortable to pick up where you left off. Do you feel any different? Lighter, heavier, calmer, energized? Take note without judgement.

What does any of the above have to do with addressing the climate crisis? Consider the following. On a warm summer day in 1851, the American writer Henry David Thoreau recounts:

> You must walk so gently as to hear the finest sounds, the faculties being in repose. Your mind must not perspire. True, out of doors my thought is commonly drowned as it were & shrunken, pressed down by stupendous piles of light ethereal influence – for the pressure of the atmosphere is still pounds to a square inch – I can do little more than preserve the equilibrium & resist the pressure of the atmosphere – I can only nod like the ryeheads in the breeze (Thoreau 1905).[1]

In this passage, gravity itself becomes a near paralysing force of influence. Political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett writes how for the romanticist poets Thoreau and Walt Whitman, the outdoors was a place to store up this type of 'influence' which could then be transmuted into affections, moods, or sympathies; in short, the cultivation of an ethical praxis or sensibility (Bennett, 2020:95-96). Take a moment to return to and notice any lingering sensations from your brief foray outside and how they may be affecting your current thoughts or mood. Do you feel influenced by gravity, sunlight, or a gentle breeze? Is there lingering warmth or chill on your skin affecting your speed of movement, or even the speed of your thoughts? What if instead of being dazed by these 'stupendous piles of light ethereal', this influence could be harnessed into action and transformation? Over the course of this thesis, I will demonstrate how some British dancers, artists, and activists attempt to contribute an embodied and experiential approach to developing an environmental sensibility or ethics. These dancers employ somatic practice to cultivate an understanding of the body as a sensing, thinking agent, fully enmeshed in the world through facilitating practices of nature connection. In their pursuit, these artists offer movement practices which move beyond the trope of embodiment, integrating mind and body, into what anthropologist David Howes calls emplacement or, 'the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment' (2005: 7). To illustrate, British dance artists Katye Coe and Thomas Goodwin offer gravity, breath, and community as 'the three companions' which constantly support their practice. In their Kinship Workshops, the world, individual, and group are invited to consider how they support each other as part of the practice.

Alongside workshop facilitation and practice, this thesis also considers the role of performance in cultivating an environmental sensibility. Buddhist poet and environmentalist

[1] Extract from Henry David Thoreau's Journal, available from this 1905 issue of the Atlantic: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1905/04/thoreaus-journal-part-iv/542109/

Gary Snyder writes 'if we make such good use of animals… what do they get back from us? We sing to the fish or the game, speak words to them, say grace. Periodically, we dance for them. A song for your supper: performance is currency in the deep world's gift economy' (1990: 75). Anthropology has well demonstrated how indigenous communities across the world engage in a multitude of methods to reconcile the debts incurred from consumption, that intimate act of violence necessary for life (Descola, 2013; Ingold, 2000; Viveiros de Castro, 1998). As Snyder proposes above, ritual and performance via song and dance may be one such method vital for mediating more-than-human relationships. The caveat remains however, that ritual and performance is not inherently conducive to fostering an environmental sensibility; ritual studies scholar Ronald Grimes argues some performances may be more suitable than others, or even counter an environmental ethics (2003). To illustrate, he recounts a local Christian community's attempt to hold mass outside: clerical robes billowing up, chairs falling over, bulletins flying away, and children disrupting the sermon. In this vignette Grimes claims, 'everything about [this] performance… was a testimony to alienation from the environment and to the utter unsuitability of this liturgy to this place' (2002: 151) Grimes suggests that perhaps the first step to moving towards a more eco-conscious and post-Cartesian ontology is through performance, and through remembering that all things, sensible and sentient, visible and invisible are connected in the field of relations philosopher Edmund Husserl (1935) called the *lebenswelt*, or lifeworld: 'we have stumbled over the obvious: the ankle bone is connected to the shin bone is connected to the knee bone is connected to the thigh bone is connected to the planet Jupiter is connected to crawling things beneath the sod is connected to the price of Canadian lake water exported to Japan' (Grimes 2002: 155). What rituals or performances are suitable to a swiftly changing landscape faced with imminent ecological collapse? What can dancing with an onion, or gently rotating in a circle possibly contribute to minimising the impacts of climate change?

The following chapters examine dance and somatic practice in the UK as methods of ecological sympoiesis; embodied practices which may offer opportunities to transform the way individuals perceive, interact with, and advocate for the natural environment. Ethnography with movement artists and environmental activists articulate the development of practiced and performative approaches which attempt to negotiate human-nature relationships. Each of the artist-activists who participated in this research endeavour to circumnavigate and counter some form of experienced 'unsuitability' of contemporary structure and relationship; be it Western metropolitan patterns of unhindered economic growth, the distinctive precarity of modern employment, patterns of overconsumption, or an ethos of extractivism which prioritises the exploitation of nature. Any decisions guided by these characteristics will be incapable of adequately facing the crisis of climate change which are therefore unsuitable for the age we find ourselves in. This research is informed by performance theory, environmental anthropology, and phenomenology to construct an interdisciplinary analysis of the ecological potential of dance and performance to counter

these tendencies and instil an environmental sensibility within a contemporary metropolitan context.

The Urgency of Dancing with Onions: Why this topic, now?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), released in 2023 writes that human activity has 'unequivocally' resulted in a 1.1 degrees Celsius rise in global temperature since 1850 (IPCC, 2023). The report lists widespread and rapid changes in weather patterns and increasing related damages to people and nature. Chillingly, the report claims that 'some future changes are unavoidable and/or unreversible' yet, the report has not yet fully abandoned hope and states that some future changes 'may be limited by deep, rapid, and sustained global greenhouse gas emissions reduction' (ibid). According to the IPCC It is irrefutable that global climate is changing rapidly with devastating consequences and that dramatic climate action is urgently needed if we are to reduce the impact on human communities. The effects of climate change are unequally felt, and the report acknowledges that those most affected by climate change are often those who have contributed the least towards greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful behaviours.

With the effects of climate change accelerating, the many-hearted hydra of western imperialism and colonialism is no longer able to blatantly ignore climate change discourse with most governments officially recognising the urgency of a green transition, even if their actions are vastly inadequate. Environmental scientists Lisa Schipper, Navroz Dubash, and Yacub Mulugetta write that growing political pressure to find 'solutions' to the climate crisis are met with increasing calls for interdisciplinarity and the drawing in of disciplines not traditionally involved with climate science including the social sciences and humanities (2021). However, these interdisciplinary projects often face pressures which result in reductionist messaging whereby 'numbers get prioritized over stories'(ibid:18). Indeed, governments are reported requesting the IPCC to simplify their figures and concepts (Thoni and Livingston, 2019). The authors argue that reductionist quantitative research which produces "universal" solutions is an inadequate approach to the complexity of the crisis. Conversely, the authors propose that 'qualitative and locally informed assessment[s] of vulnerability in a specific location can help avoid… maladaptation' (Schipper *et al.,* 2021).

Further, the authors are critical of the IPCC reports themselves, saying that the disciplinary makeup of the report contributors and the format of the report itself marginalises certain epistemological frameworks that do not fit neatly into simple figures. This then affects what type of recommendations and data are included in the public and high-profile report, ultimately impacting what type of solutions are validated and consequentially funded for research and development. Contemporary sociologists have confirmed that research, data collection, and the form of its presentation is not a neutral process; sociological surveys can end up producing new categories of identity in the societies they study (Beck *et al.*, 1994) or anthropological research may end up 'authenticating' certain indigenous practices over

others (Povinelli, 2002). The IPCC, as a global advisory committee is particularly susceptible to this critique.

Although it may not be exactly the form of research Schipper *et al* call for in their critique of climate change research, I argue that this thesis provides evidence of an essential gap in the literature on how Western artists are attempting to resist and counter climate collapse through participatory projects and outward-facing works of performance. This thesis does not quantitatively measure the ecological effects of taking part in a dance workshop, attending a performance, or joining a protest march. What it does do, is capture some of the stories and intentions of artist-activists devoting themselves to cultivating an ecological sensibility in themselves and others. Perhaps, following the implications of sociologists Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash's research (1994), simply by documenting this particular research and disseminating its findings one might enhance the reach and efficacy of participants creative and advocacy work. One might then, as the opening photograph captures, hold a discarded onion with reverential focus and if not inspire ethical action, at the very least provoke the questioning of our relationship to the more-than-human world.

State of the Field: Dance, Ecology, and Activism in the UK

The UK is home to an extensive range of somatic practitioners, performers, and activists concerned with notions of ecology and the environment. It is important to note that many of the movement artists working in this field are also academics who document their practice, resulting in a rich community of artist-scholars producing site-specific or place-based performative and written works. Some key contributors to the field, in no specific order, include: Helen Poynor, Sandra Reeve, Rosemary Candelario, Natalie Garrett Brown, Gemma Collard-Stokes, Paula Kramer, Malaika Sarco-Thomas, Rosemary Lee, Miranda Tufnell, and Victoria Hunter. This list includes many of the more prolific writers contributing to the field however it is by no means exhaustive and there are doubtless many more site-specific or environmentally-focused dance practitioners working in the UK. Further, there has been a recent increase in the number of prominent choreographers producing work, directly or indirectly, about climate change and its effects. For example, the influential choreographer Akram Khan recently revised Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* into an evening length dance work about climate crisis migrants (Winship, 2021). However, the primary focus of this research is on practitioners who have been investigating ecological themes as a crucial element of their practice for an extended period.

Personally, I was first introduced to UK ecological performance artists in 2017 at Roehampton University when I attended a workshop with Rosemary Lee. While a more in-depth overview of the specific sites and actors is included later in this chapter, a brief introduction to some of these artists work will help contextualise their thinking. Lee has been making work for over 30 years and is known for creating inclusive intergenerational, multi-skilled, multi-species, site-specific collaborations. In *Calling Tree* (2016), a

collaboration between Lee and Simon Whitehead, performers interact and perform with a mature tree in a public space. *Calling Tree* was performed in Betws y Coed, Tottenham, and Bloomsbury, and each performance was 'a response to the trees themselves, their unique site and to the communities – human and otherwise – which share the trees' environments' (Lee, 2018: 186) Discussion and active engagement with the local community was essential to the work. Whitehead is currently based in rural Wales and his work explores themes of deep ecology, performer presence, and site. He curates annual movement workshops around the Lyn peninsula and Pembrokeshire in North Wales (Whitehead, 2021).

Devon based artist Helen Poyner has created a collection of performance works about the tides including *Time and Tide – Movers and Makers (2007), On an Incoming Tide (2010),* and *Coat – the Turning and Returning of the Tide (2014).* Sandra Reeve from the University of Exeter calls for and practices what she calls a turn from sustainable choreography to regenerative choreography, '[t]his means aspiring not simply to leave things in as good a condition as we find them, but to create the conditions in which they can begin to revive, regenerate and thrive' (2018: 78) Reeve suggests that somatic inquiry reveals how the physical position of our bodies affects and is affected by the world around us. She says that by 'tuning in' to this form of inquiry she is 'cultivating an awareness of atmosphere, of mood, of the tones of life around [her], of [her] own shifting tonality and moods, of patterns of time and of [her] own rhythm and feeling how they interrelate' (ibid:76). Her statement evokes what dance scholar Ann Cooper Albright describes as an 'ecological consciousness', or 'a dialogue between the self and world [where] one becomes aware of the intriguing possibilities of interdependence' (Albright and Gere, 2003: 262) While only a small sample, these artist-scholars represent a few facets of the complicated array of dance artists exploring ecological themes in the UK.

Supplementary to the explicitly artistic expressions of environmental movement practices, this research also considers the use of performance, choreography, and spectacle in British environmental activism. The UK has a rich history of art and activism, while a full introduction is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will include a few relevant movements that influenced or inspired some of the contemporary activism documented later. The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp protested the expansion of nuclear weapons programs whose decades long occupation included song, costume, the building of temporary communities, and miles long human chains among their protest tactics (Kokoli, 2023).[2] The 1990s were also marked by multiple protests to road expansion projects such as the Newbury Bypass, a few of which are documented by folklorist Andy Letcher who describes their tree-house style encampments and community rituals (2001 2002). The 2000s included multiple protests against the expansion of Heathrow airport (Potter 2008; Taylor, 2018). In *Roads, Runways and Resistance* (2021) Steve Melia details the direct connections between the Newbury Bypass protests, runway blockages, and contemporary UK environmental activist group Extinction Rebellion. We must also not forget the extensive

[2] Although more explicitly about promoting peace rather than environmental protection, the camp included eco-pagan and environmental groups as well (Feraro 2016).

protests and resistances to the High Speed 2 (HS2) rail project attempting to improve connection between London and the north of England (Taylor, 2021). This history is important to consider when situating the current wave of environmentally focused activism in the UK and its performative and spectacular inspirations. With ethnography as the primary element of data collection in this thesis, the remainder of the writing and research focuses on the performative elements present in the actions of Extinction Rebellion. As demonstrated above, the UK has deep and historical connections between performative and environmental action, artistic or political.

However, dance and performance as mediums for communicating and interfacing with the environment is far from a WEIRD concept; [3] examples can be found in societies interspersing the globe. For the Ju/'hoan Bushman, dance and performance act as a powerful progenitor of energy or *n/om*, which is channelled to cross, and maintain the connection, between First and Second Creation. In First Creation humans could change shapes into animals, and there was no sickness or death. Second Creation came from the practice of naming, which stabilised form but brought with it death and disease. During the ritual performances of puberty rites or healing dances communities enter First Creation and raise *n/om*. Re-entering Second Creation, results 'in a revitalization, healing, and rebirth of the entire community' (Keeney and Keeney, 2013: 74). Anthropologists Bradford and Hillary Keeney describe the entrance to First Creation as 'an entry into a sung, danced, or ecstatically voiced relationship with the other' where gender and species is transcended and relationality and connectivity between living forms is sacred (ibid:79). The Salmon Dance of the Northwest Coast Native Americans was originally an initiate-only performance facilitating human-fish relations, welcoming the salmon back home to the rivers. The dance has changed over time; it is now performed by whole communities and one of the first dances taught to children (Cullon 2017). The Hopi of what is now Arizona, are widely known to use ceremonial performance in the annual Snake Dance to pray for rain (Lawrence 1976). Lastly, the BaYaka of Western Central Africa use dance, song, and performance to communicate with forest spirits and welcome them into the village (Lewis 2013). These examples illustrate dance practices that prioritise relationality, discourse, and more-than-human collaboration in both a contemporary Western context and in indigenous communities. In each example, dance and performance attempt mediate and strengthen relationships between human persons and the diverse forms of life.

Dance and ecological thinking in the UK might initially appear to be disconnected when one considers the massive and energy-intensive modern productions on the West End in London, or the popular British competition television show *Strictly Come Dancing,* or a spotlight-drenched and alcohol-soaked nightclub. However, underneath this glitz and glam lies a community of artists and activists who believe deeply in the potential for the moving human body to be a medium for positive environmental change. Next, I would like to devote time to untangling two equally common and troublesome words that will appear frequently

[3] 'Western Educated Industrialized Rich and Democratic' from (Henrich *et al.*, 2010)

in this writing: dance, and nature. While doing so, I will also outline this thesis' contribution to the discourses of dance and environmental anthropology.

Anthropology of Dance

Dance is a slippery, nebulous concept, but Franziska Boas offers a useful starting point: 'Ordinary gestures and actions can become dance if a transformation takes place within the person; a transformation which takes him out of the ordinary world and places him in a world of heightened sensitivity' (Boaz in Spencer, 1986: 2.). The metamorphic potentiality and perceptual sensitivity that Boaz claims dance offers its disciples, is of particular interest to this research. A caveat here is made by Andrée Grau who argues that the dancing body, space, place, and the senses, are not universal concepts but culturally specific (Grau, 2012). As a dance researcher my definition of dance may be much broader than that of most individuals, and this project contains many forms of meaningful or transformative human movement systems (Kaeppler, 2000). Even in one of the most "traditional" artistic works studied as part of the fieldwork choreographer Charlotte Spencer's producer asked her why she calls her work "dance". Charlotte responded that dance is her history and the work 'Is so choreographic. It's such a choreographic process. It would be a shame not to share that, even though sometimes people [audiences] come away and say "that wasn't dance"'. For Charlotte, not only are the performers dancers but the discarded objects that audience members interact with as part of the performance are 'dancers brought to life'. Throughout this thesis the reader will encounter strict dance performances with music, a choreographer, and clear differences between performers and audience members; workshops that take place outdoors that rely considerably on the use of quotidian movements such as sitting, walking, and crawling; protests or marches that engage with the choreographic or the spectacular in their tactics; and even long-distance hiking in the form of pilgrimage. Each of these facets are relevant to different UK dance practitioners and environmental activists. Therefore, I use my understanding of dance and the body as a framework to explore the connections between these forms and the transformative possibility inherent in them.

Dance has often been overlooked by traditional anthropologists, rarely acknowledged as worthy of study in its own right, and traditionally studied as a function of ritual or religion (Kaeppler 2014). However, the work of African American pioneering artist-anthropologists Katherine Dunham in the 1930s, and Pearl Primus in the 1940s, helped to lay a contemporary foundation for the field of dance anthropology. The generation of anthropologist-dancers in the late 20th century advocated for dance as deserving more attention from scholars and researchers. In the U.S. this movement was led by figures including Anya Peterson Royce, Judith L. Hanna, and Susan Foster. In the U.K., ethnomusicologist John Blacking and his student, Andrée Grau paved the way for later

research. In 1985 Paul Spencer authored an edited anthology which presents dance as a chimeric cultural and social phenomenon. In this anthology, he and the contributors note seven key themes of anthropological dance research: 1) dance as catharsis, 2) dance as social control, 3) dance as the maintenance of sentiment, 4) dance as cumulation, 5) dance as competition, 6) dance as ritual, and 7) the undefined deep structure of dance (Spencer 1985). To grapple with such a diverse and tentacular concept as dance requires a certain malleability in definition and discourse. As Helene Neveu Kringelbach and Jonathan Skinner say in their edited volume, ''dance' and 'culture' share a lack of concreteness, they are – they become – in their doing' (Neveu Kringelbach and Skinner, 2012: 2). Ultimately, dance anthropology has acknowledged that the concept of 'dance' as we know it is a Eurocentric category, but Wulff (1998) suggests to loosely consider dance as 'patterned rhythmic movements' that require re-conception and contextualisation each time we study it. Alongside the performative and embodied aspects of dance this research also considers the importance relevance of somatic practices as both a physical and philosophical methodology.

By somatics, I mean the diverse and multifarious bodily practices that privilege subjective and internal experiences (Fortin, 2002: 128). Somatics is originally derived from the term *soma*; which phenomenologist and dance scholar Sondra Fraleigh defines as 'the personal body as regulated and sensed relationally' (2018: xx–xxiv). Somatic artists and researchers often find kinship with the discipline of phenomenology; particularly the works of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Albright, 2011; Fraleigh, 2018; Rothfield, 2019). Just as somatics privileges subjective experiences, so too does phenomenology. Indeed, Fraleigh even goes so far as to claim 'somatic movement practices may even be called phenomenology in action' (2015: 19). A further similarity can be drawn as both discourses promote an idea of an integrated land and body. In her edited collection, *Back to The Dance Itself* (2018) Fraleigh documents how various artists combine phenomenological investigations of movement, the body and environmental concerns. In this collection dancer Robert Bingham reflects on the ridges of a petrified sandstone desert in southwest Utah and similar mineral assemblages that support his body in its quest for verticality (Bingham, 2018). The phenomenological inquiry, he argues, allows him to find kinship with stone, relating the mineral quality of bone with that of the sandstone he dances with. In the fieldwork I encountered prompts which encouraged participants to consider the similarities between their bodies and elements in the landscape: comparing the bronchia in your lungs and the branches of trees; imagining the fascia as a mycelial network connecting and holding the body as forest; or tracing the veins in your arms as mighty rivers. In *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty writes: 'our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive; it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system' (1962: 235). These artists, some directly, and some indirectly, are often engaged in phenomenological inquiry of emplacement; their movement practices somatically reflect and investigate the relationships between body and land. In what ways are my bones akin to mineral deposits,

my lungs like leaves, and my gut a diverse community of flora and fauna? How can I learn more about the interdependence of life through exploring these metaphors? In this way the dance encountered in this thesis may not only be understood as a moving art form, but also as philosophical and ontological investigations (cf. Tversky, 2019).

Throughout this thesis I move between a fluid lexicon of terms when discussing the movement work within. While this is a thesis about 'dance', the forms of movement encountered and described might vary quite drastically and present themselves to an outsider as much simpler than the forms of movement one might encounter in western concert dance. Many of the artists are influenced by the postmodern contemporary dance tradition (cf. Burt, 2006) which emerged from The Judson Dance Theatre in New York. This performance group included artists such as Trisha Brown, Twyla Tharp, and Yvonne Rainer. These artists explored themes of minimalism, repetition, and the combination of speech and movement in their work. Sometimes referred to as conceptual dance, The Judson Church era artists revolutionised what dance as an art form might look like, and their choreographies commonly featured pedestrian movements such as walking, sitting, standing and somatic intention as part of their choreographic vocabulary. Despite their rejection of virtuosity, these comparably quotidian actions may still be enacted with the 'heightened sensitivity' described by Boaz when describing dance. The same is true of the practices encountered in the fieldwork. Therefore even though the surface appearances of some activities documented in this work may not appear to look like 'dance' they are embedded within a longstanding performance and choreographic tradition which rejected the virtuosic and the dramatic in favour of intention and curiosity through experimentation. Even so, some of the artists referenced in this thesis, conscious of the different cultural perceptions of what dance is 'supposed to look like', prefer to describe themselves as somatic practitioners or movement artists to differentiate themselves from more popular conceptions of dance. Therefore I move between referring to different activities in this thesis as dance, performance, somatic practice, or movement as would most likely be used by the artist to refer to their own work. When it appears, dance is more often used as an umbrella term to discuss these diverse practices together while also acknowledging the choreographic knowledge that informs and shapes each case despite their pedestrian form.

Before moving away from dance, I would like to briefly address two terms that frequent the writing when describing dancers and their work: practice and score. By practice I turn to Trevor Marchand, who frames practice as an essential element of the production of knowledge (Marchand, 2010). For Marchand, knowledge is 'an ongoing activity', not a finished object, and is 'inseparable from everyday life and practice' and is therefore produced from interdependences of mind, body and environment (ibid: S15). Marchand also follows anthropologist Tim Ingold in supporting that knowledge and its production are 'coterminous with our movement *through* the world' (ibid). The artists in this thesis use the term practice to describe their individual artistic training methodologies and philosophies. When the term appears in the text it might be describing the various exercises that an artist repeats and embeds in their classes or workshops; or it might include

specific ethos or pedagogical qualities they seek to emulate. One's practice encapsulates all of this. However, while a practice might be articulated by an artist, it is also cocreated; communally formed and transmitted between co-practitioners or between facilitators and participants (Bloch, 2005; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Oftentimes the lines between teacher and student may be fuzzy – even though there might be clearly defined roles of workshop organiser and workshop participant – in most of the cases in this thesis, everyone present takes part in the practice, experts and novices contributing to the production of knowledge. So, while the artists use the term practice to describe their particular artistic methodology or philosophy, I acknowledge and celebrate that these practices are inherently epistemological as well as groups practice collaboratively to learn collaboratively.

One of the primary tools through which this epistemology occurs is through the creation and execution of 'scores'. Scores are sets of instructions that guide workshop participants through a movement exercise. Scores may be devised on the spot by the artist, or carefully formulated beforehand. Some scores may be repeated consistently and identified as a pillar of that artist's practice. Some scores are passed on through generations of teachers embedding the score and those practices in a choreographic lineage. UK choreographer Jonathan Burrows book, *A Choreographer's Handbook* (2010) is often shared with dance students and contains advice on the form and ambiguity of scores in dance work which 'may or may not be useful'. For now, it is simply enough to understand that scores are a common tool utilised by UK movement artists as they explore and develop their practice with students or other practitioners. As becomes more evident later in the thesis, some movement scores demonstrate a form of embodied cognition and epistemology which may contribute to the development of environmental sensibility among participants.

This thesis furthers the argument demonstrated above that dance contains and develops not only artistic expression but also philosophical investigation and ethical sensibilities. While dance scholars have already well demonstrated this capability (cf. Bresnahan et al., 2020; Katan, 2016), this thesis' contribution expands upon and refines these claims through anthropological research. Anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler (2000) writes that dance anthropology historically includes a rich combination of studies from global perspectives which disrupt the dichotomy of 'Western' and 'non-Western' dance and should instead focus on who is studying the dancing and their point of view. Kaeppler calls for 21st century dance anthropology research to consider dance or human movement systems from the perspective of the society that is doing the dancing while also stressing the irreplaceability of fieldwork. Dance scholar Rosemary Candelario has argued for the environmental potential of dance practices originating in Japan, Butoh and Body Weather (2018, 2019). However, this thesis turns the anthropological gaze inwards and contributes a perspective of dance in the West that is, remarkably, not focused on entertainment, but instead on the cultivation of pro-environmental behaviour or an environmental sensibility through subtle influence. To articulate what I mean by environmental sensibility, a deeper review on the anthropology of the environment is necessary.

Anthropology of the Environment

Although traditionally the discipline of humanity and its myriad components, anthropology has also been concerned with human-environment relationships since the early 20th century. A sub-discipline of environmental anthropology has subsequently taken form and includes research with topics ranging from conservation, resource management and sustainability, to perception, cognition, and religion. As a discipline, environmental anthropology is vast and considers the numerous facets of human-environmental relationships, including interrogating the nature-culture divide itself. Anthropologist Kay Milton (1996) has argued that culture plays a significant role in how a society relates to its environment and corresponding ethos's of protection or domination. One variable to describe pro-environmental behaviour utilised by Rob Efird (2016) and other anthropologists is the term 'environmental sensitivity' defined by Nancy Peterson as 'a set of affective attributes which result in an individual viewing the environment from an empathetic perspective' (1982: 5). This thesis outlines embodied epistemologies that seek to affect how individuals perceive their relationship to the environment, aiding the development of environmental sensitivity. As part of this research, the word 'nature' became integral to conversation with participants and interlocutors expressing these feelings. The meaning and usage of this word needs attention. First this section begins with a brief overview of the anthropology of the environment including key theorists and concepts. Next, I outline a turn from environmental sensitivity towards environmental sensibility and this thesis' particular contribution to environmental anthropology. Finally I end with a note that returns to what I, and the research participants, mean when we talk about nature.

In their joint paper, Eduardo Brondizio, Ryan Adams, and Stefano Fiorini trace the history and development of environmental anthropology (2016). In their summary, they historicise disciplines that combine anthropological and environmental inquiry and contextualise them in relationship to each other. They argue the formative period of the discipline began in the early 20th century with Julian Steward's research in a field he called cultural ecology. Steward defined this field to be primarily concerned with how people adapt to their environment and manage resources (Steward, 1955). Steward's work then inspired the development of what is known as ecological anthropology in the 1960s. This work was characterised by a greater focus on systems analysis, populations, and the scientific model of the ecosystem. This new focus opened up the discipline to be in deeper conversation with biological and natural sciences. Anthropologists Clifford Geertz (1969) Roy Rappaport (1967), and Gregory Bateson (1972) all contributed to these developments.

In *Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (1969) Geertz uses cultivation practices in Indonesia as a case study for what he called agricultural involution. Geertz argued that the demands of colonialization plus rapid population growth and failing public institutions lead to an intensification and increase of agricultural productivity per area, but not per capita (McCullough, 2019). Geertz's multidisciplinary

seminal work utilized anthropology, ecology, history, and sociology to interrogate the relationships between politics, agriculture, and the environment, debating how land is exploited and at what cost. This research demonstrated how multidisciplinary inquiries could reveal novel and crucial knowledge regarding the complex relationships between what was considered, at the time, natural and cultural processes. Contemporary anthropological inquiry, and this research project in particular, would now argue that these categories are demonstrably not universal human experiences, and can even be completely disregarded in some cases (Descola, 2013).

Developing the literature on cultural processes enveloped within and altering ecosystems, Rappaport's *Pigs for The Ancestors* (1967) argues that the Tsembaga Maring people of New Guinea's ritual practices created a sort of homeostatic equilibrium between the local human and pig populations via ritual slaughter, consumption, and warfare. Rappaport's work was both widely popular and extensively criticised. Critics accused his nutritional claims as based on inadequate data, having an overly ecological reading of ritual, or oversimplifying macro ecological theory on homeostasis to a micro context (Dwyer, 1985). Although his original regulatory thesis of ritual has faced alterations, addendums, and criticisms, Rappaport remains insistent on the *potential* for ritual to have an ecological function. Ronald Grimes reviews Rappaport's more recent work published in 1999, and argues that Rappaport's writings, 'do not say that rites *in fact* exercise ecological functions, rather that they *should*' (Grimes, 2003: 39). Further, Rappaport suggests that notions of ecology are just as much religious as they are scientific and offers ritual as a mode for planetary survival (1999: 460). Rappaport argues that religious conceptions of a sacred relationship with the ecosystem are powerful communal stabilisers and tools against environmental collapse.

Supplementing Rappaport and Geertz' ecological approaches to anthropology Gregory Bateson provides a more experiential and philosophical discourse. In *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) Bateson argues that mind is 'not limited by the skin'. It is not 'in here' in the head but rather 'out there' in the world (429). Bateson distinguishes an ecology of ideas, or the mind, in contrast to an ecology of energy flows and material exchanges. In this text he argues that the boundary between inside and outside when faced with the conundrum of 'organism plus environment' is absurd. For Bateson, 'mind' is this very relationship. Mind is an emergent quality of perception and movement, through which relationships between organisms and environments are negotiated. In Bateson's work we see the beginnings of what Merleau-Ponty calls a 'relational ontology'; mind being a relational quality that permeates organisms and their environments. However, Tim Ingold argues that Bateson's work is limited in that it still restrained by a cartesian separation between an ecology of mind and an ecology of things (2000). Each of these anthropologists, although through radically different theoretical applications, approach anthropology and ecology as fundamentally in dialogue. Later work in environmental anthropology will continue to disrupt and radicalise these concepts.

The term environmental anthropology first appears in the 1990s (Brondizio & Adams & Fiorini 2016: 11). Environmental anthropology features rich specialisations and cross-disciplinary trends due to its interdisciplinary nature. There are uncanny similarities in the work of Gregory Bateson (1972), phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968), and psychologist James Gibson (1979). Although disparate in discipline, each arrived at a similar conclusion regarding the relationships between perception, the environment, and the body. These theorists greatly influenced the contemporary maverick of environmental anthropology, Tim Ingold. In his book *The Perception of the Environment* (2000) Ingold argues that trying to reconcile the human being as both organism (biophysical) and person (sociocultural) is problematic and limiting in its outlook. Instead, if we accept that persons *are* organisms 'then the principles of relational thinking, far from being restricted to the domain of human sociality, must be applicable right across the continuum of organic life' (2000:4). Instead of the neo-Darwinian model which supposes the characteristics of organisms as the expression of a blueprint achieved through evolution, Ingold proposes that such characteristics are emergent properties generated through social and environmental relationships. These characteristics are developed through a process he calls biosocial becoming, an attempt to integrate biological and social anthropology, claiming that it is a mistake to assume that the form of an organism precedes the process of its becoming.

Further, Ingold offers his 'dwelling perspective' in opposition to a 'building perspective' where man is separated from the landscape and must reconstruct the world through cultural meaning and signs. Dwelling, then is 'a perspective that treats the immersion of the organism-person in an environment or lifeworld as an inescapable condition of existence' (2000: 153). The landscape and organism are constantly unfolding and co-creating in order to build, construct, or transcribe onto the landscape. Thoughts and ideas can only be thought, and then acted upon, because they emerge as part of the landscape first. To illustrate from an indigenous perspective, Ingold writes that 'For the Ojibwa, knowledge is grounded in experience, understood as a coupling of the movement on one's awareness to the movement of aspects of the world. Experience, in this sense, does not mediate between mind and nature, since they are not separated in the first place' (2000:11). Movement and experience are central to epistemology. In this collection of essays, Ingold attempts to reconcile and radicalise concepts of landscape, organism, and person to privilege their porousness, akin to the philosophy of various somatic practices. The centrality of movement and experience as epistemological frameworks are integral to this thesis and will be expanded upon in later chapters.

In his later writing, Ingold revitalises the concept of animism, moving away from the primitivism inherent in Edward Tylor's original definition, to help clarify and consolidate his earlier concepts (2011: 68). Ingold defines the essence of animism not by a set of codified religious beliefs but as a fundamentally different way of experiencing life: 'In this animic ontology, beings do not propel themselves across a ready-made world but rather issue forth through a world-in-formation, along the lines of their relationships' (2011:64). He argues that this ontological difference, as being 'in a process of becoming' rather than being 'made

finished' is also reflected in how individuals perceive wonder and fascination. Rather than being surprised when hypotheses are proven wrong, or things go in unexpected ways, animists, whom Ingold identifies as diverse and heterogenous populations often found in Amazonia, Southeast Asia or the circumpolar North, live in a world of constant flux, constantly open to astonishment: '…[in] a world of becoming, however, even the ordinary, the mundane or the intuitive gives cause for astonishment – the kind of astonishment that comes from treasuring every moment, as if, in that moment, we were encountering the world for the first time, sensing its pulse, marvelling at its beauty, and wondering how such a world is possible' (2011:64). Ingold supports this statement with an example from Colin Scott's (1989) ethnography of the Wemindji Cree, where an informant describes the world as in a state of 'continuous birth'. The primacy of movement is also described as a feature of animist ontology, and here Ingold draws from the Koyukon of Alaska and the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic where life is described in terms of lines (trails) and the words for animals are verbs, rather than nouns.

The above review of the development of environmental anthropology demonstrates the myriad of approaches anthropologists have established to explore relationships between humans and their environments. These approaches range from more systems-based thinking and collaborations with the natural sciences to phenomenological investigations of the 'natural' itself. In the 2013 edition of *Future Directions in Environmental Anthropology* Helen Kopnina and Eleanor Shoreman-Ouimet argue that environmental anthropologists have encountered a reflexive turn towards considering both the environmental impacts of their research and the extent to which others consider the environmental impacts of their behaviour. In addition, research in environmental anthropology increasingly focuses on understanding the causes of, and considering alternatives to, environmental destruction and degradation. With the rising focus on solution-based methodologies and reflexive research, Kopnina notes that environmental anthropologists are also returning "home"; examining the impacts of their own daily lifeways while attempting to understand, and potentially influence, environmental behaviour through their research (2013: 8). Considering the future of the field, Kopnina calls on environmental anthropology to consider how pro-environmental behaviour might be understood and cultivated as a means to ensure planetary survival in the face of the climate crisis (ibid). Kay Milton is one anthropologist attempting to answer these questions.

Through decades of fieldwork in the UK and Ireland Milton researched what motivates care and compassion for the environment (2002). For Milton, pro-environmental behaviour and perception is primarily an emotional experience. She argues that emotion may lead to action through identifying what matters to us and motivating certain behavioural responses. Remarkably, and as will become clearer throughout this thesis, Milton includes attention and interest as emotions. Essentially, Milton suggests that positive, emotional experiences of nature may in turn inspire active environmental care and the development of environmental sensitivity. This primacy of hands-on experience over facts-based knowledge is problematic living in one of the most nature-depleted nations in

the world,[4] and may be linked to the UK also being ranked last in 14 European countries measured for their sense of 'nature connectedness'; a variable identified as essential for a sustainable future (Richardson *et al.*, 2022). This thesis provides ethnographic data of UK artists attempting to counter this narrative of desolation and disconnection and, through their dance practices, reconnect people living in Britain to the land they live within. Their practices attempt to directly generate positive experiences of nature to influence a sense of nature connectedness among participants. This data expands the discourse on how embodied and artistic practices contribute to studies of nature connectedness.

Additionally, this research argues for a move from discussing environmental *sensitivity* towards discussing environmental *sensibility*. According to Rob Efird (2016) environmental *sensitivity* emerged as a causal variable attempting to quantify a set of affective attributes which demonstrate an empathetic relationship to the natural world. This term is generally associated with quantitative research in nature connection despite practitioners' own admission it is difficult to measure and difficult to assess (cf. Bala et al., 2023; Marcinkowski, 1998). Instead of attempting to quantify sensitivity or empathy, this research instead proposes environmental sensibility as an alternative concept. For Jane Bennett, ethics requires both a code of morals and a 'cultivated sensibility'. The moral code is insufficient on its own, as it provides only specific rules of behaviour. Sensibility then supplements the moral codes providing,

> an aesthetic disposition hospitable to them, the perceptual refinement to apply them to particular cases, the energy or will to live them out, and the generous mood that enables one to reconsider them in the face of new and surprising developments. (2001: 48)

Sensibility according to Bennett is an active environmental stance, embodying a moral code into a lived ethics. Further, for philosopher Arnold Berleant, an environmental sensibility privileges an aesthetic and embodied appreciation (2014). Berleant's sensibility includes a heightened sensitivity of the environment, but also suggests a full-body experience that requires active participation. To illustrate, he describes 'the magnetic attraction of a curved path' as opposed to 'the intimidating prospect of a long, straight avenue' (22). These experiences of the environment are constant and often subtle or go unnoticed; they may only be remarkable when attended to, and this form of attention can be practiced. This research uses environmental sensibility to describe the attempts by artists to generate pro-environmental behavioural or perceptual change through aesthetic and embodied experience of the environment; not as a variable to be measured, but as a quality of attention to aspire towards. The UK movement artists in this thesis purposefully sculpt and articulate their facilitation, choreography, activism, and practice in ways that attempt to cultivate environmental sensibility. This research then provides additional context to the ways in which humans navigate their relationship to the environment via movement, even ensconced in an industrialised society.

[4] State of Nature Report (Hayhow *et al.*, 2019).

A note on nature

Before moving on I would like to briefly note this research's contribution to the byzantine terrain of one of anthropology most contested concepts, the nature and culture divide. Anthropology has long since moved from the structuralist approach that separated nature and society (Levi-Strauss, 1964). It is now understood as a given by many anthropologists that 'the classic distinction between Nature and Culture cannot be used to describe domains internal to non-Western cosmologies without first undergoing a rigorous ethnographic critique...' (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 469). Indeed, in *No Nature, No Culture* (1980) Marilyn Strathern argues that the concept of nature is in fact a cultural construction. In *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2013) Phillipe Descola provides four different ontological categories of nature/culture relationships: animism, totemism, naturalism, and analogism. As the unsuitability of these previously assumed universal categories is scrutinised by anthropologists, some have attempted their own chimeric terminology including Donna Haraway's 'natureculture' (2003) or Bruno Latour's 'natures-cultures' (1986). In contrast to these western perspectives, scholars have also been demonstrating relational, indigenous perspectives on people and their environment (cf. Bird-David, 1999; Hornborg, 2015; Reddekop, 2014; Salmon, 2015; Viveiros de Castro, 1998). In the fieldwork, nature was a common word in everyday conversation and workshop advertisements. One might assume that the western hegemonic dichotomy between man-made culture and non-man-made nature would be persistent. While it was true that some of the participants were adamant about this separation, it was not the dominant perspective. Others were passionate about seeing human beings as part of nature, but not necessarily the buildings they construct, counter to Ingold's perspective. Other artists, such as Carolyn Deby and Charlotte Spencer were challenging audiences to see human cities or disused spaces also as nature. In this way the term becomes muddy, and the way in which the term is used in everyday conversation might vary quite radically from the ways in which participants considered the term when questioned. Further, there would not necessarily be agreement among performers or participants in a workshop what the word meant. For some clarity I turn to an interview with Simon Whitehead.

When I first interviewed Simon and asked him what the word nature meant to him his initial response was an exclamation of 'Wow, what a complex term!'. This response was typical with the question often met by nervous chuckles, exasperated sighs, shaking of the head, or entertained groans. After a moment to consider the question, Simon said that part of him agrees with eco-philosopher Timothy Morton, who argues to do away with the term entirely (2007). However, Simon continued,

> But I think having said that, I think it's really important that the term is used, because it does offer up these important collisions and conversations about relationships with nature, what is nature, and are we nature?

So, I take Simon's lead in the rest of this thesis and use the term nature when it is used by participants and informants, even when its meaning isn't entirely clear. Most of the time, when used, nature will refer primarily to 'green spaces' and all the denizens within. How expansive the inclusivity of the term is, varies from case to case and interlocuter to interlocuter. It is essential to note that many of the artists in this thesis read and engage with thinkers who challenge dualist thinking around nature and culture, particularly Ingold, Latour, Bennett and Haraway. However, it cannot be assumed that all participants in their workshops will have the same literary references so the language used with me discussing their work, and the language used to advertise workshops publicly, or even during workshops, may differ. Similarly, I worked with a wide array of individuals who displayed a huge range and diversity of opinions on what the word 'nature' does or does not include and it was not uncommon for there to be disagreements between or even within case studies on the usage of this term. Therefore throughout the thesis I use the word nature as and when my interlocutors use the term, while also acknowledging there may be some discrepancies between the discussed and idealised theory and the lived, articulated practice to enable more widely accessible formats. Ultimately, the research confirms that the Latourian purification efforts of 'modernity' were destined to fail, that nature and culture have always been inseparable. Despite this complexity and murkiness, as Simon acknowledges, there remains some usefulness in employing the term when discussing and considering the ways in which humankind shapes, influences, and dwells within its environment.

Anthropology of Activism

In their ethnography of activist identity formation in Germany and Uganda, Ziga Podgornik-Jakil and Jonas Bens describe activism as modes of action which actively seek to engender change in the world (2021: 299). Within this broad definition, activism itself may take many different forms, and therefore an understanding of anthropology's relationship to activism requires an equally spacious approach. Podgornik-Jakil and Bens argue that activism as a site of anthropological inquiry can be roughly approximated into the anthropology *of* activism or anthropology *and* activism. The authors include a variety of established prefixes under the category of 'anthropology *and* activism' such as public anthropology, applied anthropology, engaged anthropology, and action anthropology (ibid). Roughly speaking, these forms of anthropological thinking are concerned with the conflicts researchers face as they embody dual roles of anthropologist and activist. This category is set apart from research that focuses primarily on activists and their work as an object of research itself. Here Podgornik-Jakil and Bens include the anthropology of social movements and

humanitarianism.[5] In a recent edited volume on anthropology and activism, anthropologists Anna Willow and Kelly Yotebieng make similar classifications, separating the volume into three sections: anthropology *of* activism, anthropology *as* activism, and anthropology *and* activism (2020). These classifications are separated into scholarship on activist individuals or groups, scholarship on anthropologists considering the activist implications of their own research, or scholarship which considers anthropology and activism as interconnected modes of being and doing. The necessity and breadth of these classifications hint at the contentious relationship between fieldwork, academic scholarship, and change-oriented action.

As this thesis will describe further, the connection between activist identity and the desire to enact change is a complicated terrain full of contradictions for both researchers and their collaborators. Willow and Yotebieng acknowledge a discomfort identifying as either an anthropologist or an activist, arguing that for them, these are entwined identities. They argue that anthropology, as a discipline that seeks to understand how diverse peoples make sense of their world, is inherently empathetic. Further, they write that contemporary anthropology contains an intrinsic form of reflexivity as researchers critically consider the various roles, responsibilities, and positionalities they encounter to develop a nuanced understanding of the issues they research (2020: 2-3). This combination of empathy and reflexivity makes anthropologists well suited to engaging in activist work. Ian Wilkinson and Arthur Kleinman (2015) argue that anthropologists must move beyond documenting suffering under an ethical umbrella of 'do no harm' and instead ensure that the work they produce, knowledge they gain, and actions they take in the field, facilitate positive change. However, Willow and Yotebieng as well as Podgornik-Jakil and Bens admit that akin to debates around "good" or "bad" activism the actions taken by anthropologists requires careful consideration of ethics and consequences either for the researchers themselves or for the communities they work alongside. Indeed, Melissa Checker, D. Davis, and Mark Schuller (2014) write that public, engaged, or activist forms of anthropology have come to expect some form of intervention as part of the research, despite an accepted understanding of 'real world engagement' as a field beset with 'predicaments, uncertainties, and internal crises' (408). Balancing the needs and demands of various stakeholders in anthropological research demands cautious reflection, the consequences of interventive acts are hardly ever fully predictable and anthropologists may find themselves in extremely risky situations (Fredlund and Fiaveh, 2019). Despite these risks, the connection between anthropology and activism is one of growing concern in a globalised world inundated with polycrises flooding headlines and push notifications (Henig and Knight, 2023). However, even though present crises may feel novel and 'unprecedented' anthropology has historically engaged with activist causes with fluctuating approval.

[5] I would include scholarship on resistance when considering the anthropology of activism as including resistance in this category troubles an assumed correlation between activist identity and change-oriented action. Many of the participants in this thesis actively desire and work toward change, attempting to resist hegemonic structures, but resist identifying as activists.

Willow and Yotebieng argue that American anthropology has activist roots describing Franz Boas as a vocal critic of racism, antisemitism and European fascism. His student, Margaret Mead, was also an outspoken feminist and public figure devoted to anthropology's potential to support the development of public policy and engage with global issues (Willow and Yotebieng 2020: 4). Another of Boaz' students Zora Neale Hurston, was influential to the development of the anthropology of dance and the African diaspora (Kraut, 2008). However, it is important to note that despite these influential legacies, these anthropologists are not without their critiques. For example, Mead's research in New Guinea was made possible and funded by US naval expansion and imperialist desires (Lemmey and Miller, 2022). Additionally, Barbara Gullahorn-Holecek's 1983 documentary *Papua New Guinea: Anthropology on Trial* revisited Mead's research communities and contained testimony from villagers claiming Mead's descriptions of their customs were inaccurate; Mead's own politics perhaps influencing what she saw and recorded. Nevertheless, Mead, Boaz, Hurston remained radical and vocal proponents for racial justice; Mead herself was heavily investigated by the FBI for her radical politics during the McCarthy era. David Price (2004) argues that this cold war era of academic self-censorship and governmental surveillance stunted the development of activist anthropology in the United States.

However, following a troubled era for progressive academics and artists, anthropologist Dell Hymes renewed the call for anthropology to both confront the powerful and seek to transform structures of power themselves (1972: 52). Conversely, Hymes view was not uncontested; Kirsten Hastrup and Peter Elsass defended anthropology as an "objective" science claiming that advocacy was 'incompatible with anthropology as a distinct kind of scholarship' (1990: 301). As these debates continued the perspective of the anthropologist as an objective and detached observer has waned (Greenwood, 2008). Greenwood advocates for action research, or activities that combine the expertise of social scientists with local stakeholders in collaborative projects working towards shared goals with room for reflection and adaptation in those goals and research methods (ibid: 329-330). He also claims that these ideas are not new, but like described above, had been purged from institutions in the mid 20th century. Within contemporary anthropology, the current revival and surge of interest in action research is stunted yet again by an institutionalisation and professionalisation that leaves researchers struggling with unsustainable workloads combined with limited, if any, time for extended research. Nearly two decades after Greenwood's critique of US anthropology, the situation is mirrored in the UK and has only worsened with ballooning administrative demands on staff (UCU, 2022). As these researchers and their critiques demonstrate, anthropology has a tangled history with activism and has repeatedly been confronted by global xenophobic and neoliberal currents of repression.

Even though, or perhaps because of, the conditions researchers find themselves in today, Willow and Yotebieng believe that the gaps between academic and activist goals demand attention and anthropology may find itself well suited to the task via reflexive,

empathetic, and critical methodologies. They write that 'the time is ripe to actively and explicitly deconstruct disciplinary assumptions and standards that perpetuate the problematic separation and hierarchy of academic and engaged anthropologies' (2022: 15). Part of this task includes critically questioning what constitutes "good" anthropology and critiquing conceptions of academic "success" (Warren, 2006: 222). In support of this, they suggest the lengthening of research timeframes and revaluing research processes over research "outputs". Despite the misaligned structures, many anthropologists may find their academic and activist practices fundamentally inseparable, as Jeffrey Juris and Alex Khasnabish write that 'when we situate ourselves within a particular network or struggle anthropologists become a constitutive part of rather than an outside supporter of that struggle' (2013: 24). As part of conducting this research I have found myself intricately intertwined with the concerns of my participants and their practices. Their practices have become my practices via processes of knowledge exchange and collaborative performance-making.

Therefore then, this thesis is both an anthropology *of* activism and anthropology *as* activism that includes ethnography of dance artists' activistic intentions and concerns as well as my own activist participation. As described in the previous section, the reflective and change-based focus of 21st century activist anthropology mirrors the contemporary trends in environmental anthropology. With these discourses in mind, I attempt to balance a critical reflection of my participants practices while also advocating for the efficacy of an embodied and artistic approach to facing the climate crisis. I am personally involved in my participants' struggles and a contributor to the professional network of practitioners. While this bias may make distanced objectivity incredibly difficult, it does benefit an anthropology as activism that seeks to elevate the concerns and expand the reach of environmental artist-activists while retaining a critical reflection and engagement with their work. The chapters that follow and fieldsites described therein contain testimonies that attest to the intimate connections between somatic dance knowledge and ecological activism.

Methodology

This research was undertaken through fieldwork in the UK between Autumn 2020 and Spring 2022 in the UK. The fieldwork itself was a multi-sited and multi-modal ethnography that consisted of both digital and analogue methods. This flexible approach to methods was demanded due to working between and during COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. Due to these circumstances, conversations often took place over email, phone, or video when meeting in person was forbidden. George Marcus contends that 'multi-sited ethnographies inevitably are the product of knowledge bases of varying intensities and qualities' (1995: 100). Recognizing this underscores the need to turn 'what feels like illicit incompleteness into an actual methodological decision' for which ones takes responsibility (Candea, 2007:

174). As will be described below, the multi-modal and multi-sited methodology of this thesis has undoubtably produced 'varying intensities and qualities'. However, these assorted epistemologies and environments allowed diverse perspectives of dance and nature to proliferate through the lens of activist protest, somatic practice, and performance. Using a connectionist approach to analysing these models relationally provides an opportunity to examine dance and environmental activism from a more holistic perspective (Bloch, 2018). This thesis's depiction of various approaches to artistic and activistic practice is strengthened by its very incompleteness. Glimpses of some perspectives and deeper, lengthier descriptions of others combine to create not one single definition of these relationships, but rather a messy entanglement with room for improvisation, interpretation, and imagination. First, I will briefly introduce the range of field sites this research encompasses and then outline the methodological tools utilised to examine them.

Over the course of 18 months I interviewed over 50 different artists, activists, and workshop participants who engaged with themes of the environment or nature through the lens of dance, activism, and performance. As a professional dance performer and teacher myself, I was able to utilise my artistic occupational network to identify prominent individuals and contributors to the field. After reaching out to these individuals, I employed a 'snowball' sampling approach to generate additional contacts (Bernard, 2017). Following these original identification methods and over the course of the fieldwork, five primary fieldwork sites emerged each of which has their own chapter in the thesis. These sites include Kinship Workshops facilitated by dance artists Katye Coe and Thomas Goodwin across England, Scotland, and Wales; the global network of women-identifying dancers founded by London-based dance artist Hayley Matthews; the workshops and movement practice developed by psychotherapist, teacher, and performer Sandra Reeve in Dorset; various protest-performances by London chapters of the environmental activist group Extinction Rebellion; and finally a 500 mile and 8 week pilgrimage from London to Glasgow to attend the 26th iteration of the Conference of the Parties, or COP26. Each primary site has a dedicated chapter in this thesis that presents a strong example of the key themes of the research. Despite the unitary focus of each chapter and field site, each theme may be present and relevant to each site, but simply appeared more clearly or intensely in the associations presented heretofore.

Additionally, the primary sites were also supported by secondary sites which involved less intensive or shorter periods of engagement. While it would be tedious and not entirely beneficial to list each artist interviewed, performance attended, or workshop taken, I would like to acknowledge a few of the more substantial encounters that reappear later in the thesis. For instance, I shadowed choreographer Charlotte Spencer during the rehearsal and performance process of *Is This A Wasteland* (2021) in Stratford, London and choreographer Carolyn Deby during the performance of *Becoming Fungi, Becoming Forest* (2021) in Coventry, England. Further, conversations with the following artists and videos of their performance work were also highly influential to the development of this thesis: Helen Poynor, Rosemary Lee, Simon Whitehead, Sophie Arstall, Adam Benjamin, Vanessa Grasse,

Rachel Sweeney, Subathra Subramaniam, Paula Kramer, Simone Kenyon, and Ellen Jeffrey. Together, these secondary and primary sites cohere into a fractal and diverse, but most definitely not complete, picture of dance and environmental activism in the UK. Ethnographic data emerged through these sites primarily through a methodology which combined participant observation, interviews, and autoethnographic reflection.

To begin to anthropologically consider an activity rooted in the kinetic, the representational, and the emotive, requires direct, embodied experience. As such participant-observation acted as the key and irreplaceable research method. As outlined in the description of the fieldsites I was involved in as many rehearsal periods, workshops, performances, meetings, and protests as possible. In the majority of these experiences I was a paying workshop participant alongside other participants taking part in artistic, wellbeing, or educational experiences focused on movement and the environment. Supplementing this were more involved positions of collaboration as a protestor or performer. Lastly, on a few occasions I was quiet observer, audience member, and helper during specific artistic works. Michael Jackson (2002) writes that anthropology has historically shuttled uneasily between subjectivity and objectivity, and for him, a model of intersubjectivity 'overcomes the false dichotomy between these extremes' (263). For Jackson, the ethnographic method is less an 'arcane set of techniques' and more accurately a 'commonplace body of social skills we already possess' (ibid). Throughout this thesis I attempt to provide an intersubjective approach, melding autoethnographic reflection and somatic inquiry with ethnographic description and analysis.

I echo Ingold's (1996) rejection of the classical emic-etic binary which implies that ethnographic subjects are too engrossed in the mundane to be reflexive, and that ethnographers are blessed with a mythic capability to observe events with omniscient impartiality. Instead, a postmodern ethnography does not desire nor strive to create an impartial ethnography and in its place embeds the researcher directly into the co-creation of culture. This thesis embraces an ethos of co-creation whole-heartedly. As a trained dancer I am intimately familiar with the field and was able to easily blend into routine and discourse. However, this does also come with an acknowledgement that some idiosyncrasies or peculiarities may be harder for me to identify; familiarity may in some ways hinder criticality. Therefore I had to constantly renew my reflexive stance throughout the fieldwork and question if I am acting in my capacity as a participant, performer, anthropologist, audience member, or any combination of the four. Balancing these multiple roles and positionalities in the field was essential to dwelling in and exploring the gaps between the complacency of intimate familiarity and the inquisitiveness of new experience. The first strand of this approach is supported through somatic inquiry and autoethnography.

I fully embraced somatic inquiry as a form of knowledge generation (cf. Fraleigh, 2018; Katan, 2016; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Sanger, 2019). As a highly reflexive form of research, somatic inquiry supports multimodal forms of epistemology. Dance anthropologist Brenda Farnell (1999) argued that anthropologists were often unable to adequately analyse dance and human movement systems because they lacked the proper tools to study them.

Neveu Kringelbach and Skinner go further and claim that 'watching and writing about dance [is) best done by people who possess a form of 'skilled vision' attuned to rhythmic movement' (2012:5). This training has allowed privileged access to certain spaces, lexicons, and knowledges present in this thesis; sections of thick description and reflective prose attempt to animate some of these experiences.

While the artists and their work were the main focus of this fieldwork, autoethnography offered an insightful method to access, discuss, and critique my own phenomenological experiences of dance, the body, and the environment. As a method, it further blurs the distinctions between being and doing, practice and research (Mitra, 2010). David Butz and Kathryn Besio describe autoethnography as a 'practice of doing… identity work self-consciously, or deliberately, in order to understand or represent some worldly phenomenon that exceeds the self' (2009: 1660). Therefore autoethnography erodes the boundary between authors and their objects of representation, it elicits deep scrutiny and reflection on insider knowledge, and privileges self-understanding as situated in a social context. In order to ensure intersubjectivity, autoethnography of personal experience was integrated with the stories and impressions of the performers, choreographers, facilitators, and audiences. To animate these stories, interviews played a crucial role in expanding the number of voices present in the work as well as practically enabling the ethnography to continue during periods of forced isolation.

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge other privileges present in this fieldwork. As a white gay male American conducting fieldwork in the UK, certain cultural distinctions and differences contributed to communities and perspectives I had access to. My whiteness protected me during more risky protest actions and performances, while also possibly affecting which artistic communities I encountered and had access to. There are doubtless many movement and performance artists working in the UK around environmental themes, but my particular knowledge and expertise in somatics and contemporary dance, which are overwhelmingly white fields in the UK, contributed to who participated in the research. This is a limitation of the research I acknowledge which demands further attention in future projects. Unfortunately, the reduction of live events, performances, and classes that occurred from COVID-19 restrictions crippled opportunities to mingle with unfamiliar artists and approaches contributing to the limited reach of the research. I do not feel that these limitations devalue the findings, rather they highlight the specificity of the research to the communities who took part and turbulent period during which participation occurred.

Throughout the research I worked to maintain a praxis of presence in the methodology. I follow Paulo Freire's definition of praxis as 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it', evoking and mirroring the activistic quality of many of my research participants work (Freire, 1996: 51). For activist-artists Isabelle Fremeaux and Jay Jordan 'being present means working with what is at hand, rather than waiting for some moment of perfection' (2021: 74). Therefore a praxis of presence meant 'staying with the trouble' as environmental movement practices went temporarily digital, mixing long periods

of waiting with intensive rushes when physical practice was possible. Conventional ethnographic immersion itself was made fractal but kept vital through maintaining a sense of connection with participants across distance and time. Perhaps most fundamentally, how might I as an ethnographer maintain a commitment to presence not only in a lush meadow strewn hillside, but also psychically glued to a keyboard and computer screen? It is my intention that a consistent mode of presence might assist in intertwining the autoethnographic, phenomenological, and critical ethnographic lenses. I attempt to keep this sense of presence conscious not only in the methodology, but also in the writing process and digital product. If such presence can 'sense the weather changing on our skin' or feel 'the tidal pull of the full moon on our bloodstream' I can only aspire to transmit some of the artists intentions in my recounting of their practices to the readers of this work (ibid).

Outline of Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter One introduces a paradigm of enchantment understood as a sensuous experience of the environment which may then in turn inspire an environmental sensibility. This paradigm is explored and supported through ethnography from taking part in an annual program of Kinship Workshops facilitated by Thomas Goodwin and Katye Coe. Experiences of enchantment are present throughout the entirety of the thesis and fieldwork, and as such are introduced first to understand the essentialness of perception and sensation in somatic inquiry and experiences of the environment. Many dance practices introduced in this thesis offer repeated opportunities for enchanting experiences which may lead to the perception of personhood in nature; a characteristic identified by Kay Milton as essential to cultivating active environmental care.

Next, in Chapter Two, I outline the importance of story and storytelling as tools for transforming private, subjective, experiences of the environment into shared public expressions that might transform the way in which we relate to and perceive the world around us. Ethnography from a week-long workshop with Sandra Reeve called *STRATA: Autobiographical Movement* helps to demonstrate some of these principles. The elements of storytelling present in both performance and shared practice aid in expanding the perception of personhood in nature beyond the individual. In this way storytelling may both reinforce an individual's felt sense of environmental sensibility through positive reception of one's own stories, while also assist in the development of this sensibility in others through the sharing of experience. Storytelling contains the potential to weave meaningful subjective experiences into a collective, communal enchantment.

Chapter Three describes how aspects of liminality and communities of practice were essential to many of the communities and artists I studied with. A community of practice

provides a structure which may enable repeated opportunities for enchanting experiences and their transmutation from individual to collective through shared storytelling. This chapter also considers the particularities of this research having been undertaken during the global COVID-19 pandemic. This period of global liminality offered a unique opportunity to examine the emergence of a new community of practice and its ambitions. As will be demonstrated, utopian and liminal critiques of structure are often temporary but may have lasting consequences. The work of Hayley Matthews and her network of professional women dancers performing outdoors called *Sanctuary on the Faultline* provides a case study to explore these themes.

The final section of this thesis in chapters four and five focuses more explicitly on environmental activism. Chapter Four critically examines the conception of activist identity amongst research participants while also demonstrating how more overtly activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion employ some of the same principles as the artists who cautiously reject activistic labels. This chapter explores what facets of contemporary environmental activism in the UK might contribute to the development of an environmental sensibility. Chapter Four suggests that different forms of activism, with their own goals and methods, contribute complementary perspectives towards achieving the wider aims of the environmental movement. In order to further scrutinise and trouble these distinctions, Chapter Five introduces the idea of soft activism; or ways in which the subtle, indirect, and gentle might influence and transform the world around us. This alternative model of activism explicitly attempts to cultivate an environmental sensibility instead of directly confronting environmental degradation or resisting anti-environmental policy. Soft activism prioritises the development of particular types of attention, which British poet Mary Oliver describes as 'the beginning of devotion' (2016). Ethnography from a 500-mile pilgrimage to Glasgow from London helps to clarify what a soft form of activism, or an activism of attention, might look like through communal walking, talking, living, singing, and dancing.

The case studies described in each chapter provide examples which seek to answer the primary research question of this thesis: **how might dance and performance engender an environmental sensibility?** Or in other words, **what role can dance and performance play in establishing and transforming relationships between people and their environment?** The conclusions drawn from the case studies in this thesis do not provide a universal or even unanimous answer, but instead produce idiosyncratic, historically and geographically distinct examples of how movement practitioners in the UK attempt to navigate their swiftly changing and precarious world. As stated earlier, the specificity of these findings does not reduce their value. Instead, they reinforce the strengths of anthropological research as a discipline; in-depth explorations of lives as they are lived, experienced, interpretated, re-interpreted and shared. However, the writing of ethnography brings with it the crisis of representation, with the ethnographer choosing not only which quotes, stories, or voices of participants to highlight but also which theorists to recruit to explain and analyse those stories (Segall, 2001). Therefore I acknowledge that ethnography is not innocent, nor is it unambiguously accurate in its description (Miled, 2019). However,

through maintaining a praxis of presence I seek to elevate the rich tonal symphony of practices encountered throughout the fieldwork with authenticity of intention. Perhaps, after reading these encounters the reader might feel more present in their own bodies, allowing time for nuance and delicacy in their sensation of sound, colour, and texture. Might this sensitivity in turn inspire ethical sensibility, alchemising reflection into action?

Chapter One: Enchantment and Cultivating Nature Connection through Perceptual Movement Practices

Introduction: Kinship Workshops

It's late August 2020 and one of my first times using public transportation after the series of lockdowns that began earlier in March. Everyone is wearing masks and there are spaces between each rider taking the Central line eastbound on a Saturday. It's not usually a busy time of day for this direction of travel, early weekend morning outside of central London, but still I am startled by the sparseness of people and the unusually wide berth between passengers. I take my seat and finish the journey to Loughton from Stratford. Exiting Loughton station, I notice I'm about 20 minutes early from the meeting time outlined in the email with instructions for the workshop. This habit of arriving much earlier than necessary generates extra time to get lost, extra room to get to know a place before encountering strangers. What was once a mundane activity, now imbued with an uncanny and aberrant sense of risk.

I am waiting to meet Katye Coe and Thomas Goodwin, the facilitators of a series of annual summer workshops. The sessions are called 'Kinship Workshops' and are described on their website as an opportunity for participants to 'investigate [their] relationship to nature, landscape and other animals through the body, the senses, movement and reflection'.[6] Kinship here is meant to mean: 'relationship by nature, character, affinity, or common origin' and workshop: 'site or place where making or repairing happens'. In this context, the Kinship Workshops become a place for experiencing and mending one's relationship with nature through somatic exercises and movement. The workshops mirror Donna Haraway's suggestion to 'make kin' with the human and more-than-human as an act of sympoiesis, or 'making with' as an urgent and necessary response to the Anthropocene if we are to survive spiralling ecological destruction (Haraway, 2016). Supporting the claims of the facilitators, a participant from the Bristol Workshop in 2021 said that after attending a workshop she felt that this work 'strengthens or mends these really delicate threads of connection that we have to everything else. It feels like filaments have been fused together that were feeling a bit ragged'. This sense of rebuilding nature connection is essential to Kinship Workshop project and what initially drew me to the work.

Katye and Tom are professional dancers with decades of experience between them. Tom studied contemporary dance at Trinity Laban Conservatoire in London and at the Centre Chorégraphique National in Montpellier. He performs and teaches across the UK and France.[7] Katye has been performing and teaching in the UK for over twenty years and was course director for the BA in Dance at Coventry University for six years. She regularly

[6] Full information available at https://kinshipworkshop.info/about/. The website is also updated with the most recent series of workshops, as well as photographs and reflections from past workshops.
[7] Tom's personal website can be found at https://tomgoodwin.info

teaches at two central London locations, London Contemporary Dance School near Euston and Independent Dance near Elephant and Castle.[8] Tom started the Kinship Workshops after completing an internship at the Kerulos Center for Nonviolence.[9] He spent part of this internship at animal sanctuaries in Cameroon and India. While working with street animals and chimpanzees, he felt inspired by the 'subtle and complex lives' that these animals lived and felt the urgency to apply his skillsets to encourage individuals to 'reconsider [their] felt relationship to nature and catalyse personal responses in a time where crucial and loving action to global issues is much needed'(kinshipworkshop.info). This was to be my first experience of Tom and Katye's work held in Epping Forest, but I would later go on to attend four more of their workshops at Ashton Court in Bristol, Hebden Bridge, and Abercych in Pembrokeshire.

Loitering outside Loughton station, it's quite easy to identify the other people booked onto the workshop. Dancers often joke about how easily you can pick out another dancer in a crowd almost immediately. There is a way a trained body carries itself through the streets that someone from a similar training can easily identify. Although this group was different, a mixture of people who do and don't identify themselves as dancers, there were other tell-tale signs: individuals wearing multiple layers of waterproof jackets and trousers, large boots, durable backpacks, and lingering around the station entrance. Eventually the separate persons drifted together, and tentative conversation followed. Cautious greetings, testing the appropriate space between bodies in this new configuration of space. Nearness had become heavier than before. We were each trying to identify "a new normal". What is an appropriate way to greet a stranger now; a stranger you are about to spend two days out in the woods with? None of us quite knew how to approach the situation and were naively unaware of the further series of lockdowns and restrictions that would define the next year and a half.

As we progressed from Loughton to Epping Forest, normalcy and newness become topics of conversation. Some spoke about how they were enjoying this new, slower pace of living. They experienced a different sort of generosity in their approach to time, albeit one pregnant with hesitation and fear. One participant said as restrictions began to gradually ease, they could feel themselves start to slip back into 'old ways' of doing things. Old habits becoming noticeable and re-emerging as people started to try to re-enter a life paused. These habits felt positively frantic in comparison to the speed we had recently become accustomed too. What was ever 'normal' about the intense pace of life we had accepted? Should we accept this transition back into velocity; patterns of coming, going, consuming, producing? How did we ever feel that pace was normal? The deep time of trees welcomed us as we turned and followed the road up into the woods. Conversation naturally died down as the canopy sheltered the walkers, the shadows demanding a reverent silence.

We followed a wide dirt path into the forest. This was my first time in this part of Epping, and I maintained my distance near the back of the group. I walked slowly, taking in

[8] Katye's personal website can be found at https://katyecoe.org
[9] See https://kerulos.org.

the sights, smells, and sounds that I had missed spending most of the spring and summer in a one-bed, high-rise flat in Woolwich Arsenal. The facilitators Tom and Katye eventually led us off the main path and along a smaller one deeper into the woods until we came to a solitary oak tree near a small stream surrounded by a clearing filled with bracken. A large section off the tree had broken off in a storm recently and taken its place near the base of the oak. This discarded limb would become a resting place for us over the next two days. It would come to serve many purposes over the two days: seat, backrest, lunch table, drying rack, companion.

Before we officially begin the workshop Tom invites us to take five minutes or so to land and acquaint ourselves with the place. This language of "landing" and "arriving" in a location is common in somatic movement practices. It is used in indoor studio practice and outdoor practice alike by many practitioners and is meant to give participants time on their own to warm up their bodies and familiarise themselves with the space. It is time to focus internally, quieting busy thoughts and listening to bodily senses, preparing the body-mind for work. In this context, we were guided to take a quiet solitary walk around the vicinity of the tree and clearing before eventually returning to the group.

I realise then that for the first time in over six months, I am surrounded by a dozen people. We are outdoors, socially distanced, asking careful questions about each other's level of comfort and receding when asked. We acknowledge the necessity to be vocal about our needs more than ever, and to take up as much space we require; resisting the urge to tangle our limbs in awkward greeting. I wander on my own into a clearing full of dense bracken, last night's rain still lingering on the delicate fronds. I look around and see the dozen strangers each curiously exploring the place we will be sharing and inhabiting as part of a movement practice. I notice the wide expanse of foliage, sparsely dotted by human figures and somehow, through all the distance, I feel… held. Suddenly overwhelmed by an emotional response to this simple exercise I kneel down in the bracken and try to resist the wetness building at the corners of my eyes. I wipe my face, take a deep breath of the smell of wet earth and decaying things, pull myself back to my feet and walk back to the group gathered at the base of the tree.

In the discussion that follows multiple participants mention feeling a sort of ambiguous grief during the wander. The grief is described as low-level, communal, anticipatory. It's lingering, but hard to place. Grief for things lost, for things you're afraid of losing, for what might never return.

Enchantment

The above ethnographic reflection describes a personal experience of being 'struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday' in the words of political ecologist Jane Bennett (2001:13). Emerging from 5 months of intermittent COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions contributed to this embodied sense of being enamoured with

life and the short wander shared with strangers was a much-needed balm and opportunity for collective catharsis. Bennett describes this type of experience as a form of "enchantment" and argues that it may be 'valuable for ethical life' on this ravaged planet (ibid). Bennett and others argue experiences of enchantment matter because they may inspire an ethical, ecological sensibility, that 'one must be enamoured with existence in order to be capable of donating some of one's scarce mortal resources to the service of others' (ibid). If a simple stroll can radically alter communal mood and perception, how might successive somatic practices instil a sense of wonder in a modern world described as disenchanted, silent, and mechanised?

Enchantment, if considered as an interplay between perception, agency, and the environment as outlined in this chapter, has multiple possible iterations and interpretations.[10] Each of these theorists, in their own fields and subjects, suggest alternative methods for perceiving agency in the more-than-human world. However, according to some of the theorists included in this chapter, we find that enchantment is not always a liberating experience and can also perpetuate injustice and structural imbalances. Bennett argues that enchantment is not the exclusive domain of oppressive, capitalist forces, nor pre-modern society. She argues that enchantment never really left the world, it only changed forms. She finds enchantment in the writings of Thoreau and Latour, where the categories of 'nature' and 'culture' become anachronistic, our modern world populated with limitless crossings, cyborgs, assemblages, and hybrids. She also locates enchantment in matter itself, in chemical and molecular systems 'far-from-equilibrium': (basically any environment not strictly controlled in a laboratory). Supported by the work of Isabelle Stengers, she demonstrates how some chemical solutions can react to form two possible new stable solutions, but no mathematical equation can predict which one will emerge. There is an unpredictability no improvement in knowledge or measurement is likely to overcome. Much as some atomic particles behave differently when observed, the very makeup of the universe is astonishing, wonderful, enchanting. Matter itself is mysterious and vibrant. Bennett writes that to experience the mood of enchantment is: 'to participate in a momentarily immobilizing encounter, it is to be transfixed, spellbound…. a moment of pure presence', it is 'to be simultaneously transfixed in wonder and transported by sense, to be both caught up and carried away' (2001: 5). Enchantment can be a useful tool to trouble ideas of agency and relationality. For Bennett, while enchanted, 'we sense that 'we' are always mixed up with 'it', and 'it' shares in some of the agency we officially ascribe only to ourselves' (2001: 98-99). Where we locate agency, the ability to act with intention, and how we relate to each other and to the rest of the world is essential to understanding and confronting the multiple crises of the 21st century.

[10] Various theorists and scholars have described these relationships and accorded their own terms and idiosyncratic ontologies: Ingold (2000) and Bird-David's (1999) work in Circumpolar North and Indian animism, Viveiros De Castro (1998) and Amazonian perspectivism, Deborah Bird-Rose (2022) and Aboriginal 'shimmer', Chris Cuomo (1998) and ecofeminist 'flourishing'.

This chapter describes theories of enchantment beginning with the contentious characterisation of the modern world as inert and rational, followed by the use of enchantment in anthropology and philosophy to describe the capacity of art and the experience of beauty to affect participants and spectators. These theories will ultimately support the development of a framework through which we can understand how performance and movement practices may offer avenues for altering our perception of a disconnected modern world, generating a sense of kinship and belonging through enchantment. Katye and Tom's Kinship Workshops will be the primary case study for exploring this framework but will also be supported by examples from other field-sites. Through examining the concept of enchantment, the following discussion prompts us to consider the potential of these practices to encourage a sense of kinship with the animate world.

Disenchantment

In his 1918 lecture at Munich University, Max Weber described chief features of modernity, namely intellectualization, secularization, rationalization, and bureaucracy, as disenchanting the world. Weber's lecture continues to be a source of academic dispute and inspiration.[11] He used disenchantment to define the loss of magic, mystery, and the inability of science to answer the universal question of how to live well (1918). He laments the flight of sublime values from the public domain and the dispelling of the inherent mystery of natural processes, redefining them as conquerable and manipulatable by mankind. Twentieth century antimoderns such as Weber 'decry disenchantment as the aggressive secularization of a formerly intact teleological world view' (Bennett 2001:65). They argue that the expulsion of religion, the afterlife, and ritual performance from the public domain created a world devoid of purpose. This loss of purpose where subjective experience, magic, and wonder are explained away created the disenchanted, nihilistic modern man (Ibid). Analysing the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Alison Stone describes disenchantment as a process by which we stop seeing nature as inherently meaningful or sacred and have stripped it of mystery (Stone 2006). In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), Adorno and Horkheimer write of disenchantment as essential to mankind's domination of nature. These descriptions of disenchantment rely on an antagonistic depiction of 'progress' whereby the steam engine of civilisation drives a rift between premodern and modern societies. Some contemporary scholars identify the Enlightenment period and early capitalism as the fulcrum that produced a sharp ontological turn in European thought, laying the foundation for the eventual pillars that uphold a disenchanted view of the world.

Feminist scholar Silvia Federici argues that Weber's disenchantment describes the particular systems of value and utility hegemonic in capitalist ideology; the world left defined as a mechanistic system populated by various resources available for exploitation

[11] See Jenkins 2000, Bennett 2018, Federici 2004.

and accumulation (Federici 2004, 2018). Within this ontology of capitalist realism and protestant ethic, carefully calculated reason and profit act as both motivators and progenitors of knowledge (Fisher 2009; Weber 2012). Enlightenment thinkers Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, and René Descartes founded and advocated for pillars central to modern life including empiricism, the scientific method, social contract theory, private property, and the separation of mind and matter. Federici writes at length on the origin of these ideas, the subjugation of women, the body, and nature alongside the vilification of occult practices as essential to the foundation of early capitalism (2004). Although her work doesn't use the term disenchantment, Carolyn Merchant's meticulously researched *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1989) also interrogates the revolutionary period of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She argued that a Cartesian view of nature enabled the shift from communal modes of production to industrialised capitalism and relied on a form of dominating masculinity that worked to supress women, limiting her rights and trades. Merchant 'connected the feminization of nature to the justification of capitalism's over-exploitation of nature' (Sturgeon *et al.* 2005). Capitalism demanded that nature and the body be predictable, controllable… 'mechanized' for maximum efficiency and productivity. The body becomes reduced from a conduit of potent energies and powers, into an automaton of gears, levers, processes, systems. This reconfiguration of the body and nature left no room for magic, the capitalist future demanded a disenchanted world. Even notable public thinkers of the time railed against witchcraft as a contemporary crisis, not just the church. For example, Hobbes is quoted in Leviathan writing: 'As for witches, I think not that their witchcraft is any real power; but yet that they are justly punished, for the false belief they have that they can do such mischief, joined with their purpose to do it if they can… if such superstitions were eliminated men would be much more fitted than they are for civil obedience' (Hobbes in Federici 2004: 154). Eradication of these practices, and the ontology that predicated them, was a necessary condition for the capitalist rationalisation of work.

Re-enchantment?

Weberian disenchantment and the sociological inquiries that followed also inspired a discourse that examines the role of re-enchantment as a feature of, or counterculture to, modernity and rationalism. For Federici, re-enchantment is rooted in the commons;[12] through their ability to present the possibility of alternatives to capitalist societies (2018). Bennett writes at length on the sometimes opposing, sometimes complimentary, disenchanting and enchanting forces of modern life (2001). She writes that characterizing the world as disenchanted first 'ignores and then discourages affective attachment to the world' reproducing the exact conditions it decries (2001: 11). She believes that the stories of

[12] Additional information on the contemporary politics of the commons can be found in the UK based journal www.thecommoner.org.uk.

disenchantment popular in social theory, both the ones that decry the loss of pre-modern magic and 'cosmological coherency' and those that celebrate our new age of reason and freedom are exactly that, just stories. Therefore, in order to counter these ontological positions, Bennett presents her own 'alter-tale' of a modern-day world filled with enchanting experiences both "natural" and "cultural"; some of her examples drawing on the work of Latour, Prigogine, and Stengers to locate technological enchantments that charm us with material complexity and vibrancy.

Latour argues that modernity itself is a falsehood, that the belief that modernity has disenchanted the world and left it inanimate overstates the difference between modern and pre-modern life (Latour 1986). Sociologist Richard Jenkins further interrogates Weber's claim of a disenchanted modernity, offering both enchantment and re-enchantment as traits distinctively modern (Jenkins 2000). Jenkins work demonstrates that contemporary anthropological inquiry no longer supports the myth of a homogenous pre-modern society (cf. Kuper 1988). Jenkins also argues that modernity may in fact be leading to a more unified or homogenous world through the trends of nationalism and globalization. However, in the twenty years following the publication of Jenkins work, the 21st century has shown that although nationalism and globalization are strong forces, modernity has brought opposite movements increasing heterogeneity as much as homogeneity. Some theorists call this phenomenon glocalisation (Robertson 2018).

Despite the troubling of our concept of modernity, Jenkins agrees that disenchantment has indeed been a strong force of the recent millennium, but that it has also brought with it a multitude of possibilities for enchantment. He offers a purposefully broad definition of what enchantment could look like, stating that it conjures:

> understandings and experiences of the world in which there is more than the material, the visible, or the explainable; in which the philosophies and principles of Reason or rationality cannot by definition dream of the totality of life; in which the quotidian norms and routines of linear time and space are only part of the story; and in which the collective sum of sociability and belonging is elusively greater than its individual parts (2000: 29).

Jenkins claims that the decline of magic via the hegemony of science is not quite so severe as thought; quoting current interest in healing modalities that challenge Western views of medicine such as homeopathy and acupuncture. However, Federici would argue that the herbalist, the astrologist, and the medium, are ridiculed but not criminalized because the work of rationalisation is already done: 'even the most devout reader of horoscopes checks his watch before leaving the house to go to work' (2008:173). Each of us are already inculcated in a capitalist understanding of time and work. Enchantment offers opportunities to destabilise this hegemonic configuration and 'absorbs us into its uncanny particularity for a moment, suspending the usual temporal flow of capitalist work-time, putting our worldliness into question' (Seymour 2022: 60).

Ultimately then with the help of these theorists, we can come to see that "re-enchanting the world" relies on a linear understanding of modernity and progress that

demands an inert present that some argue never truly existed. How can you re-enchant something that was never dispelled? Instead of considering how movement practices might "re-enchant" our monotonous monochrome lives and experiences of nature, this thesis will argue that they provide opportunities to innervate our relationship with the parliament of things; bolstering a web of relations that never went away and does not necessarily exist in opposition to our expanding empirical scientific knowledge. Sociologically and historically, enchanting experiences are seen to unsettle conceptions of time and space, set reason aside and allow oneself to "not know": 'To be enchanted, you have to be ready to experience something without immediately trying to make something of it' (Seymour 2022:66). When we set the need to reason and grasp and understand a thing as secondary to the experience of the thing, we can easily see how art, both participating in and witnessing, can be a particularly potent avenue to access these experiences.

Enchantment and Art

Within anthropology, enchantment takes another form in the work of Alfred Gell (1992).Gell uses enchantment to define the ability of art objects, via the technical prowess of their creators, to fascinate, confuse, and compel spectators. The power of virtuosic art therein lies in its ability to enchant the world around it. Rejecting an aesthetic approach, Gell's 'technology of enchantment' is limited to objects that are 'beautifully made' or 'made beautiful' (1992: 43). In this category he includes painting, sculpture, poetry and music – any man-made object that 'demonstrates a certain technically achieved level of excellence' (ibid: 43). He explicitly excludes other aesthetically beautiful objects from the natural world in his argument. Further, in *Art and Agency* Gell acknowledges that art has power; that art does something to you (1998). However, the source of this power, or agency, is contested (Morphy 2009). Is it socially constructed, imposed by the spectator, inherent in the object, or a combination of these? While Gellian enchantment theory provides an anthropological basis for understanding how nonhuman objects might '[cast] a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form' (1992: 44), it's limitations: exclusion of non-man-made objects, refusal of nonhuman agency, and reliance on technical prowess require rethinking. Kantian thought on the experiences of charm and beauty, discussed in the next paragraph, provides one answer; however, an advocate of object-oriented ontology (OOO) such as ecologist and philosopher Timothy Morton would propose a vastly different approach. [13]

Morton very briefly engages with a theory of enchantment while describing the Kantian experience of beauty (2018). Morton summarises Kant's definition of beauty as a human universal that requires an experience bereft of concepts, emotions, or desires. This experience could be caused by human artefacts or natural entities. However, allowing these sensational experiences to contain emotion and desire would tarnish the beauty experience

[13] OOO is a philosophical movement that explores what agency objects: living, nonliving, micro, macro, natural and synthetic, might possess. For on overview see (Kerr 2016).

and endanger the viewer of becoming "charmed" (Kant 1790). Kant argues that charm can cloud taste and mislabel a pure experience of the beautiful. Referring to Kant's position that emotion and pleasure can sully the beautiful, Morton writes, 'It's OK to be wordlessly smitten with a thing, as long as you don't fall in love with it, or ask it out on a date, or even worse, allow it to ask you out' (2018: 80). For Kant, being charmed is in fact a reflection of an individual's personal imposition of reality upon the world; the source of the enchantment is therefore you, not the object. Both Gellian and Kantian theory assign art the ability to charm or enchant the viewer, though the source of the enchantment differs greatly, either via the virtuosity of the artist, or the desire and passion of the perceiver.

This is where Morton's OOO diverges from Kant's and Gell's position considerably, flipping the equation. Supported by both Gellian and Kantian philosophy, art presents opportunities to experience the sublime, to mesmerise, and be mesmerised. Attributing additional agency to art and objects, Morton develops a theory of enchantment that empowers objects and nonhumans with greater agency leaving us with an untapped web of interwoven threads potentially altering the way we perceive our surroundings. If we acknowledge this web, we open ourselves up to being acted upon, to forming deep relations, to being asked out by the moon (Morton 2018: 80). Expanding upon the ability of art to charm bestowed by Kant, he argues that experiencing beauty requires a bit of a "mind-meld" coexisting with at least one thing that isn't you; 'We coexist. We are in solidarity. I'm haunted, charmed, enchanted, under a spell, things could get out of control, but they won't, at least for now' (Morton 2018: 80). Morton, and OOO generally, postulate that the object itself possesses agency in this experience. Psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas describes an aesthetic moment as when: 'an individual feels a deep subjective rapport with an object (a painting, a poem, an aria or symphony, or a natural landscape) and experiences an uncanny fusion with the object, an event that revokes an ego state that prevailed during early psychic life' (Bollas 1987: 16-17). While there is an element of this in Gellian enchantment theory, the efficacy of the charm is derived from the virtuosity of the object's creator, less the object itself. Via Kant, Morton offers enchantment as the method by which destabilisation between subjects and objects occurs. The feeling of being charmed or enchanted is a consequence of the object enacting upon the perceiver and the aesthetic experience does not distinguish between art and environment.

The word enchant finds a similar etymology to the French word *chanter*: to sing. 'To "en-chant": to surround with song or incantation; hence, to cast a spell with sounds, to make fall under the sway of magical refrain, to carry away on a sonorous stream' (Bennett 2001:6). The enchanting potential of beautiful things contributes to a larger understanding of enchantment as engendering the perception of agency in non-human objects, both animate and inanimate. So far, enchanting experiences rely on wonder, awe, and unknowability both in the profound and in the mundane. But they also cocreate a world full of actors, both human and non-human, thwarting the modernist view of a passive, mechanistic world. However, despite its purported benefits towards contributing to an ethical way of living and making, enchantment, as demonstrated by the metaphors used by

anti-capitalist writers and theorists including Adorno and Bennett, is not without criticism and its own danger of entrapment.

Dark Enchantment

The ability of objects and experiences to cast spells and create charms that affect our perception of the world is manipulatable by power and hegemony, and we are susceptible to naively valorising an autonomous force. For example, in some interpretations enchantment suggests a hierarchy; someone or something is doing the enchanting, casting the spell, and someone or something is being enchanted. There is an inherent unequal power dynamic at play. These dynamics can cripple, contain, and collapse in the same way they can expand and liberate. Mark Fisher writes on capitalism as a realist, ontology-crushing paradigm, Nick Hayes describes private property and fences as a metaphor for occult structures of containment, Adorno warns of enchantment as potentially co-creating the same domination of nature as disenchantment, and Bennett offers both Kafkaesque bureaucratic labyrinths and commodity fetishism via advertising as enchanting features of modernity.

In *Capitalist Realism*, Fisher argues that 'Capitalism is what is left when beliefs have collapsed at the level of ritual or symbolic elaboration, and all that is left is the consumer-spectator, trudging through the ruins and the relics' (2009: 4). Yet at the same time, capitalism also requires an overvaluing of belief – he says:

> So long as we believe (in our hearts) that capitalism is bad, we are free to continue to participate in capitalist exchange. We believe that money is only a meaningless structure of no intrinsic worth, yet we ACT as if it has a holy value. We are able to fetishize money in our actions, only because we have already taken an ironic distance towards money in our heads (ibid: 18).

This double act signifies a capitalist realism that 'seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable.' That has 'colonized the dreaming life of the population' and is 'so taken for granted, that it is no longer worthy of comment' (ibid: 13-14). As Margaret Thatcher famously claimed – "there is no alternative." For Fisher, capitalist realism allows us to simultaneously dismiss and overvalue belief, it allows us to unironically pursue a regime of eternal growth in a limited world, and it allows us to brand mental health issues on individual shortcomings rather than structural and environmental inequalities. How can a worldview so pervasive, so inescapable, not be a sort of spell? What other than a hex, a veil, a glamour can so thoroughly scuttle our imaginations and bodies?

In the *Book of Trespass*, Nick Hayes argues that notions of private property coupled with the fences and forces that contain and refuse access to land also act as spells, 'spells of an old paternalistic order that tell us everything is just as it should be' (2020: 300). His book argues that the act of trespass is a form of 'jinx' that counters this spell, shining a light on the morbid inequalities Britons face when it comes to access to land and power. Trespassing

has become an act of resistance both collective and individual. Guy Shrubsole, author of *Who Owns England?: How We Lost Our Green and Pleasant Land, and How to Take It Back* (2019) is one of multiple activist-writers who inspired the creation of "underground" trespass groups who harmlessly walk and camp in private land as quiet rebellions.[14] I encountered some of these groups through WhatsApp invitations around Dartmoor during my fieldwork. Referencing a summer of protests in 2018, Hayes writes that 'When this spell is shattered the first response is often anger'; he describes cars on London roads as 'generating the spell of capitalism' and when Extinction Rebellion blocked these roads and bridges and reclaimed the city, they marched the stark truth of the climate crisis into the public space: 'they were derided: they were called middle-class narcissists and defined as radicals hell-bent on anarchy… Such hysteria is the sound of the spell breaking' (2020:300-301). What immense power do our bodies hold to fracture these world-subjugating spells merely by trespass and obstruction of borders and pathways?

While Fisher and Hayes do not explicitly discuss enchantment as such, they both warn of how ideas and artefacts can enshroud and charm individuals into seeing the world one way over another. Massive palaces, immense fences, and the inevitability of eternal economic growth and progress can evoke their own sort of awe-ful wonder and spellbinding paralysis. Their analyses of modern, late-capitalist systems are characterised by a use of metaphor that demands an equally vivid response. Both Fisher and Hayes write that we need new forms of resisting subjugation and inequality; the system can safely absorb marking boycotts, teaching strikes, marches, and petitions. Katye and Tom both consider their Kinship workshops as an urgent yet atypical form of activism, through encouraging experiences that might transform relationships to the natural world that, hopefully, echo beyond the short two-day workshops in the woods. Enchantment might be one way to understand how they attempt to achieve this, but it is essential to specify a specific kind. Adorno unambiguously warns against a particular form of enchantment.

Like Jenkins, Adorno and Horkheimer believe that the disenchanting forces of modernity also enable the dissemination of re-enchanting forces. However, Alison Stone interprets their writings to argue that, for them, re-enchanting forces may actually 'conceal the fact that disenchantment is the fundamentally dominant outlook, deeply embedded in the institutions of modern life. Experiences of enchanted nature are already rife, but they conceal and perpetuate human domination over nature' (Stone 2006: 237). This perpetuation of dominion is created by seeing nature as having intrinsic meaning and mystery, which they identify as elements of enchantment, but also seeing in those images the prefiguration of modern society. Stone uses the examples of viewing commodity exchange as a vast system of 'transformations and metabolism' or viewing women exclusively as sexual objects and caregivers as 'rising from their place in nature'(ibid). In this way, through experiencing an enchanted nature we conceal the dominating nature of a modernity which 'usurped the insignia of that which… consciousness regards as nature' and

[14] The public only has access to 8% of the land in England, with nearly 30% of land owned by the top 1% of individual earners (Evans 2019).

has 'led us to experience nature's perceptible features as 'insignia' of its institutions' (Adorno 1966). Richard Seymour also hints at this type of negative, or dark enchantment when critiquing the Attenborough-isation of nature documentaries and each successive rendition of *Blue Planet*, *Planet Earth* and their progeny: 'by producing nature as a sort of reliable 'experience', an eco-Disney which promises you the same thrill each time, we produce the screen of capital and the logic of disenchantment' (2022: 63).[15] By anthropomorphising the stories of plants and animals and creating emotional hooks that snare our affective states from stories of absent fathers, single mothers, pioneering adolescents and lost children the films become 'a tacit reassurance that, brutal as it may be, threatening and alluring at times, nothing in the world is really other, nothing points to a beyond, and everything that lives is just like us (2022: 65)'. Seymour argues this flattens our experience of nature, our own modern institutions mirrored by green and blue UHD TV.

Despite being critical of both disenchantment and enchantment as upholding domination, Stone argues that Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* illustrates an additional form of enchantment that is generated through viewing objects as 'constellations' and art.[16] By perceiving objects as constellations, 'we sense that natural things are mysteriously meaningful (imbued with a history that we cannot conceptualize) and, simultaneously, we sense that these things have been damaged, prevented from existing in their spontaneous forms (their history has been one of constriction)' (Stone 2006: 242). This form of re-enchantment 'is critical of modernity and its domination of nature… [it] finds natural beings to be mysteriously meaningful because they embody histories of immeasurable suffering. This experience engenders guilt and antipathy to human domination over nature' (2006: 231). Stone's analysis of Adorno presents a bleak interpretation of enchantment that relies on experiences of suffering and dominion. There is hope, but also deep cynicism. Bennett's writing also presents enchanting forces that can support or hinder an environmental ethics of care through examining the Kafkaesque complexity of institutional bureaucracy and the advertisements that preserve commodity culture.

Citing excerpts from *The Trial, The Castle*, and *The Great Wall of China*, Bennett argues that Kafka's writing presents examples of institutional complexity that 'reveal bureaucratic entanglement to be both maddening *and* attractive' (2001:117). The characters in these excerpts appear to be under the spell of 'the ambiguous charm of institutional complexity'. This complexity is both attractive and repellent and generates an affect of both pain and pleasure. For Bennett, enchantment contains both 'a pleasant, charming feeling and a slightly off-putting sense of having been disrupted' (ibid: 115). As Kafka's characters return repeatedly to the bureaucratic institutions, it appears to have them enchanted. However, she also acknowledges that these are satirical works of fiction, and that her own lived experiences of bureaucratic complexity tend to be limited to minor annoyances and inconvenience. She writes that bureaucracy is also responsible for great acts of violence and

[15] Granted more contemporary Attenborough documentaries and docuseries almost all mention the impact of humanity on climate and include episodes on 'nature' in cities or built environments.
[16] For more information on Adorno's constellations see (Adorno 1966).

injustice that generate its own brand of dark enchantment through the 'pleasure and fascination in participating in or observing violence or cruelty' (ibid:121).

The animation of inanimate objects in advertising can disturb or delight and are designed to evoke feelings in viewers. Bennett describes enchantment as a 'bodily state of joy and disturbance' that is 'intense enough… to move you from the actual world to virtual possibilities' and she experiences that type of enchantment in the 1998 GAP ad for khaki pants. This feeling is fabricated and harnessed in service to commercialisation in an attempt to manipulate a viewer to purchase something, 'There is no doubt that some kind of enchantment is the goal of advertising and that many people in rich societies are caught up with consuming' (ibid:125). This manipulation of affect directed towards consumer goods is also called "commodity fetishism" by Marxists which Bennett describes as a 'perceptual disorder'. In this section of her book, she acknowledges that advertisements have an uncanny ability to affect individuals in unpredictable ways and questions if the artistic representation of commercial objects can, indeed enchant. This inquiry is deepened to suggest that this is one of many potential avenues that could be harnessed to generate an ethical life and inspire sustainable economics as described by E.F. Schumacher (1973).

These authors suggest that enchantment is not neutral and can serve multiple purposes that can lean towards domination or emancipation. One way in which we might resist the subjugating effects of enchantment would be through the projects of demystification and rationalisation; dispelling all potential moods of enchantment for a more logical view of the world. Bennett and others argue that this is indeed one possible strategy, but not the strongest nor most desirable, that perhaps the way to resist the dark enchantments of capitalism, violence, and bureaucracy, is instead to feed 'the enchantment of the wondrous complexity of life' and to 'fight enchantment with enchantment, to weaken the appeal of violence by infusing oneself with the affective energy of a more life-affirming mood' (2001: 122). The mood of enchantment advocated for by Bennett is often described somatically and as a physical experience. This puts movement practices and those who work with them in a particularly advantageous position to advocate for these types of experiences.

Dance and Enchantment

In this thesis I will be describing a specific type of perceptual enchantment that is generated through sensual, somatic activities. This type of enchantment, supported by the work of the theorists above, has great potential to affect our perception of the world, its denizens and our relationships with them. The participants in this research attempt to generate this type of perceptual experience through somatic exercises which may or may not involve physical movement but are always delivered with sense-based (sensuous) instructions. These exercises are also facilitated to cultivate relationship with the more-than-human including plants, animals, fungi, and landscape to inspire a more ecological sensibility in the participants.

Despite none of the theorists previously discussed identifying as movement artists themselves, there is support for the efficacy of dance and movement in their writings. When describing the effect of the dancing body on her recent research, Federici writes that dance is essential to the 'reappropriation of our bodies' from the mechanizing force of capitalism:

> …dance mimics the process by which we relate to the world, connect with other bodies, transform ourselves and the space around us. From dance we learn that matter is not stupid, it is not blind, it is not mechanical but has its rhythms, its language, and it is self-activated and self-organising' (2020: 123-124).

Federici appoints a particular potency to dance and its ability to teach us about ourselves and the polyphonic world around us from a kinaesthetic sense of knowing. This kinaesthetic sense enables us to recognise agency in matter, an attribute Bennett might describe as vibrancy (2011). Bennett argues that some experiences 'enchant for the same reason that moving one's body in space can carry one away - think of dancing or the quick intake of breath and the rush after a hard push on the swing' (2001:15). For Bennett, enchantment can be an intensely somatic experience, and she likens it to the feelings that arise while dancing. Moving the body in space can be a radical, pleasurable act of communion between yourself and the world.

Near the start of each Kinship Workshop, Katye likes to share a well-known Audre Lorde quote: 'We recognize that all knowledge is mediated through the body and that feeling is a profound source of information about our lives' (in Alexandre 2015: 48). This quote exemplifies Tom and Katye's belief of a form of knowing experienced through bodies of the interconnectedness of all things. Katye says that this form of knowing isn't 'special', but that dancers and other body practitioners know it particularly well. Her understanding is that this form of knowing is just there 'under the skin' of everyone no matter their background or experience, but that as individuals trained in this form of knowing they might 'help to articulate it so that other people can get to it quicker or more easily than perhaps if they were trying to do it on their own' (Coe 2021). The Kinship Workshops attempt to democratise this "expertise" to prompt perceptual and epistemological change in participants: 'I always wanted the kinship work to be effective in kind of instigating change' (Goodwin 2021). Tom and Katye's work to access and ignite epistemological frameworks through physical sensory tasks is supported by contemporary work in psychology and cognitive science. Psychologist Barbara Tversky describes how abstract thought originates from movement and spatial cognition rather than words or language; movement is the primary instigator of thought (Tversky 2019). These workshops, held primarily outdoors and in motion, seem to tap into what Nietzsche warned against; 'do not believe any idea that was not born in the open air and of free movement'. What better way to rediscover the bodies capacity for resistance, celebrate and expand its powers, and dream new possibilities, than through dance?

Enchantment Summary

Moving from Weber's theory of the disenchanted modern through to Bennett's articulate descriptions of the enchantments of modern life; we are presented with a complex contemporary zeitgeist in which 'we were never truly modern' and magic was never really dispelled. Yet we would be remiss to ignore the disenchantment of living in a world ravaged by the neoliberal telos of eternal economic growth (Fisher 2009). It is hard to deny the loss of magic, the cementation of singular bounded entities, and the shift from organismic to mechanistic metaphor propagated during the enlightenment that has since dominated the 20th century (Federici 2004, Merchant 1983). Navigating this world is difficult. However, as Bennett demonstrates, current trends in the natural and social sciences have proven the concepts of organism, species, and individual just as mythic as the gods we banished (Barad 2011, Latour 1993).

The entangled interpretations of the enchantments laid by art and modernity support an understanding of modern life as deeply complex and rich, but in crisis. They demonstrate how somatic practices might deeply affect our experience of, and relationship to, the world around us. This thesis presents a variety of enchantment that acts as an epistemological framework to observe how performance and movement practices may transform relational modes of being between more-than-human actors and through which ecological awareness is second nature. Enchanting practices do not specifically seek to undo the achievements of the Enlightenment, namely the roots of modern scientific inquiry and rationalism; however, they do seek to reignite and acknowledge specific forms of knowledge dismissed by this hegemony. Enchanting practices refuse to be contained by boundaries of the skin, agency pours fourth from the perceiver; they blur the definitions of dancer and dance, of self and world. They suggest a process of sympoiesis made particularly urgent by the COVID-19 crisis; the weaknesses of contemporary systems more glaring and apparent than ever.[17] 'If, as Walter Benjamin put it, dreaming has a share in history, enchantment has a share in the future' (Seymour 2022:66).

The remainder of the chapter presents fieldwork case studies that contain potential for enchantment. Under this framework, each of these actions provide opportunities to enter into new covenants with the more-than-human world; covenants that privilege a dialogic relationship with life where we are invited to reimagine agency and kinship, celebrating our place in the polyphonic symphony of life.

Case Study Kinship: Tuning and Preparation

[17] For some perspectives on COVID-19 and failure of global systems see (Liu 2021, Boyd & Wilson 2021)

The first half of the day in Epping Forest included exercises and scores intended to prepare us for the day ahead.[18] The physical warm-up is accessible and designed to prepare the body for moving through and along uneven surfaces. As we are moving outdoors amongst trees, roots, and rocks; the terrain we will be moving in is cold, wet, unpredictable, and irregular. It is not the heated, level and often sprung floor of a dance studio and as such requires different preparations to move safely. The warm-up includes small bounces with the knees, gentle shaking of the arms and legs in different directions and circling the joints moving progressively through the body starting with the ankles up to the head. Standing in a circle, we shift our weight in and out of the ground, folding at the hips and the knees, walking out to a horizontal plank and then reversing the movement back to a standing position. We are guided into placing our hands in the wet earth, gradually pouring more and more of our weight into our hands. The sensation is familiar yet mildly uncomfortable, like breaking an unspoken taboo, something almost childlike. How often are we allowed to place the full force of our hands into wet, muddy earth? I try to resist the urge to wipe the grime and humus from my hands as I know they are just going to get dirty again. This experience and warm-up acts as a gentle introduction to breaking cultural expectations of the relationship between bodies and land. It foreshadows opportunities to continue to view the skin as porous, letting the dirt enter your body as your fingers spread in the soft earth.

[18] See the Introduction for an overview of scores.

Figure 2: Moving Along Forest Floor - Photo by Thomas Goodwin, Epping Forest

Following the warm-up, Tom points to a nearby tree and prompts us to travel from where we are now to the tree and back, staying on our hands and knees to explore low levels close to the earth. I realise then my choice of attire isn't as adequate as I previously thought it was, jealously noticing some of the others' waterproof trousers as I lower myself to the damp forest floor, quickly soaking through the knees of my jeans, (needless to say, after this event I now have two pairs of sturdy waterproofs). Before we begin this head, hands, earth journey, Katye reminds us 'No need to do anything interesting!'. Resisting the urge to be "interesting" I travel between the trees; shifting weight through the palms of the hands, toes digging into the earth, rolling forwards and backwards gently lowering shoulder blades onto rugged ground and unfurling limbs to explore the sensation of being intimately close to soil (Figure 4). I notice other bodies navigating the awkwardness of moving on a "dirty" surface without relying entirely on the protection of thick soles to deaden the experience. In this task, the radical act of touching earth with bare hands is translated to all the other surfaces of the body. The proximity of the body to the ground also invites a richer olfactory experience, preparing both skin and nostrils.

The third exercise of the morning is called 'orbiting' (Figure 5). The task has a loose structure that allows for various interpretations, but the basic idea is to 'hook' yourself metaphorically and from a distance to your partner and then attempt to rotate around each other as you travel around the space. A helpful metaphor may be to imagine the way the moon rotates around the earth, or the earth around the sun. You can vary speed, distance

and rotational direction, and levels. We did this exercise first in partners, then as one large group, hooking, unhooking, and re-hooking with other people. The structure of the score had us running, walking, and crawling in relationship with the other ten workshop participants. One participant decided to partner with the tree nearby, bringing it into the score as another stationary dancer. The score required your attention to constantly shift between your relationship to your partner or the group, avoiding running into trees or tripping on branches, and your own interests as a mover in the space. We resembled a galaxy of celestial bodies; the universe made miniature and comically erratic. In the discussion that unfolded afterwards, participants mentioned feeling cosmic; we felt like planets and moons, and moons of moons with rogue comets shooting through the spaces between us. Collisions always possible and narrowly avoided, laughter and asteroids mellifluously grazing the skin of others.

Each of these exercises were preparatory experiences that encouraged participants to broaden their awareness. First to their own bodily sensations and position through circling the joints and shaking the body to generate heat and elasticity. Then to the relationship between earth and body through inviting the hands to touch the ground and one step further as participants rolled and crawled along the forest floor. Lastly, expanding a sense of awareness to the bodies of others through orbiting in partners and groups. The series of warm-ups not only prepared the body for movement and general physical safety but also acted as a gradual expansion of perception and awareness. Each Kinship workshop includes these or similar exercises that act as a sort of 'tuning' to the location, priming participants to 'notice what they notice' and focusing their attention to bodily senses.[19] Philosopher Alfred North Whitehead describes nature as 'that which we observe in perception through the senses' (Whitehead, 2015: 13). Therefore, these exercises are designed to bring the body into closer relationship with nature and, if enchantment is primarily a bodily and sensuous experience, lay the groundwork for enchanting experiences.

The next exercise described, a staple of Kinship Workshops, utilises sensual deprivation to enhance less-relied-upon senses to transform a participant's experience of place. This exercise in particular offers a rich potentiality to experience enchantment and might be repeated more than once in a workshop.

Case Study Kinship: Blind Partner Scores

One of the principles of Tom and Katye's practice includes 'not making special'. In one of the workshops, Katye said that if you make special, you enter into a hierarchical relationship of experience, between special and nonspecial moments. Not making things special allows the mundane to be vital and pleasurable. It allows a sensation of feeling full in 'the now'. This

[19] Tuning is another common phrase used by movement artists akin to 'landing' or 'arriving' described in the beginning of this chapter.

idea of the richness of mundane experience was a poignant element of the Kinship Workshops I attended throughout the fieldwork and directly relates to Bennett's understanding of enchantment. This principle is applied in the exercise described below; one I would repeat many times during fieldwork and come to include in my own artistic and pedagogical practice.

The exercise takes place between two participants. One participant has their eyes closed, and the other partner with their eyes open watches over the partner with eyes closed, acting as both witness and protector. The first partner with eyes closed, or mover, is gently led from behind by partner two, the witness, one hand on their shoulder and another supporting the opposite forearm. The witness leads the mover to an area nearby that they are then invited to 'explore' with their eyes remaining closed. With sight removed, this means other senses like hearing, smell, and touch take precedence. After being guided to this location, the mover is given time to investigate the area with their body. The area might be a patch of soft moss, a fallen log, large rocks or anything that captures the leader's interest in the vicinity. The mover reaches out carefully and uses different bodily surfaces, not just the hands, to discover more about their surroundings. The witness watches over this exploration to ensure the movers safety but also to observe the practice. The exploration will vary dramatically from one participant to the other, but the goal is not to create an aesthetic performance or take particularly daring actions. The practice may be read as a sort of "performance", but the goal is for the mover to follow curiosity, impulse, and desire in a physical and tactile way. Aesthetic experiences might arise intentionally or otherwise, but it is not the objective. No words are spoken during this part of the score except by the leader may say 'open' if the explorer is approaching potential danger; perhaps the edge of a hill or steep decline, or about to grab a patch of stinging nettle or holly. The basic structure of this score, with an eyes-closed mover and eyes-open silent witness mimics the basic structure of Authentic Movement.[20] For this exercise, and for Authentic Movement, the observation of the practice by another is just as important as the practice itself.

This practice provides a playground for curiosity and generates a sense of appreciation for tactility. By keeping the eyes closed, you end up in contact with all kinds of surfaces you might have avoided if you could see them. Your face, hands, and limbs are much closer to cobwebs, dirt, and detritus than deemed socially acceptable. You learn to see with many senses other than the eyes, gradually building a three-dimensional mental image of your landscape through tactile exploration. You take deep breaths of loam and humus, earth at the edges of your nostrils. You find different ways of supporting and contorting your body in relationship to the unknown structure you explore. You enter into a deep sense of tuning with place. Time goes quickly, and the cue to stop always seems to come sooner than you want it to. On the first day of the Kinship Workshop in Ashton Court,

[20] Authentic movement is a practice utilised by dance movement psychotherapists that involves a mover who dances with eyes closed and a witness who observes the mover. The practice has been used by therapists since the 1990's and has recently been co-opted by practitioners of nature connection (Payne, 2023).

Bristol my partner with eyes closed started to hesitantly move her hands and body along the ground. The moment she became aware of changing temperature on her skin as her face entered the shivelight, she become fully enraptured by it (Figure 5). For a long time she moved carefully with a soft smile, feeling the light and warmth shift to different parts of her face. While focused on this sensation, she later stumbled upon an uneven texture on the ground and began to trace a rock with her fingers until it became a root, and traced the texture of a root until it became a tree. She rose, embraced the tree, and remained there, breathing deeply until the end of the exercise. She told me she felt she had suspended her thinking mind, that she should have known there was going to be a tree attached to the root but felt surprised when she encountered a massive tree at the end/beginning of the root:

> closing my eyes allowed me to be surprised. Just touching a blade of grass or bark felt so rich, there was so much more to explore in a tiny moment. When I opened my eyes again and saw a whole tree, it was very overwhelming, this sense of all of the detail that I could have but hadn't sensed before.

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, wonder and surprise are essential to experiences of enchantment. In this example, the universe of detail uncovered through sensory exploration by the participant allowed her to feel 'overwhelmed' simply by opening her eyes and seeing the tree; this time with fresh perspective.

Figure 3: Participant Moving in Light - Photo by Thomas Goodwin, Ashton Court

In another round of this exercise on the second day of the workshop in Ashton Court, by the brushing of textures on my thighs I could feel myself being led into some tall grasses. Unfortunately, as I discovered throughout the duration of the exercise, the tall grasses were hiding both brambles and stinging nettles closer to the ground. I experienced a

sense of being trapped in place and felt a rising sense of anxiety and frustration that I couldn't fully explore my location. The relative danger of physical touch in this location inspired me to investigate other methods through which my skin might provide information. This evolved primarily into an exploration of the shifting sensations of wind, heat, and smell through moving my body up and down by crouching, kneeling, laying or standing and rotating around on the spot. I was reminded of the many strategies plants might employ to avoid being touched by predators, active tactics to warn others to stay away and leave them be. It was a reminder not to be too romantic about wildness and that even in the tame landscape of England, there can be dangers. My partner watching me said she saw a great tenderness in my approach and movement. This experience of tenderness was replicated in her movement when we exchanged roles. I led her to flattened patch of grass where we had stopped to rest and eat earlier in the day underneath the shade of a large oak tree (Figure 6). As she moved her face made contact with the lower hanging branches. In our discussions afterward, she described the sensations of leaves on her face as 'delicate little kisses' coming from a place of mutual 'need and desire'. This sensation near the top of her body also generated a sense of 'release into the softer grasses by her feet' where she surrendered the totality of her weight enjoying the experience of imprinting her body on the soft ground.

Figure 4: Blind Moving Score Under Oak Tree - Photo by Thomas Goodwin, Ashton Court

As a participant this activity feels exceptionally intimate. Your sense of place is disoriented, and it feels as if your safety is almost entirely surrendered into the hands and eyes of another. Granted, the amount of risk you want to take is up to you, based on how quickly you move or how much weight you choose to put into your hands, but it still requires settling into vulnerability and trust in your partner. This play of vulnerability and risk is threefold. One, you must watch out for yourself by moving carefully and with intention. Two, your partner must care for your safety through watching what you are doing. Lastly, once comfortable with the practice, the mover also has to navigate taking care of the witness's ability to protect. I found at times I felt completely safe in my partner's metaphorical hands but had to temper my ambition in order not to frighten them. This knowledge of the multiplicities of care only arises through participating in both roles of the activity. One example of this triptych of care became particularly obvious to me during the workshop in Pembrokeshire, Wales.

We were practicing in Ffynone Woods along a fairly steep incline populated by coniferous trees. When it was my turn to move with eyes closed, I discovered how pleasurable it could be to explore the hard ridges and broken off branches of the tree with the soft skin of my cheeks and face. When we reversed roles, and my partner chose to take similar actions I was struck by an intense anxiety watching how close her eyes and other vulnerable parts of the body came to the sharp protrusions on the tree. My desire to keep her safe was overwhelming my somatic and empathetic understanding of the pleasure that could be derived from the sensation. It was clear from her expression that she was enjoying the experience. One participant later described this exercise as 'having a language of its own'. She said it 'bypasses the intellect, bypasses spoken language' and you begin to communicate with your partner with a 'sensory language' where you 'begin to understand something of them through the way they took [their] exploration.' This experience solidified the complex relationships of 'counter-care', risk, and vulnerability that emerge from the practice. This aspect of the exercise bleeds into individual interpretations of the act; not only is the mover experiencing a rich sensory exploration, but the witness is also receiving deep insight into another human through attentive observation and caretaking.

If as Bennett argues, experiences of enchantment may contribute towards an ethical approach to life, the format of Kinship Workshop's perceptual exercises provide an ethnographic example of these theoretical implications in action. The above participant and auto-ethnographic reflections are simultaneous experiences of wonder and surprise alongside an expanding sense of care beyond the self. These concurrent experiences leave participants with an appreciation for the complexity of living organisms and the constellations of their bodies in relationship to the environment.

Case Study Kinship: Qualitative Analysis

Kinship Workshops originated from Thom's desire to connect the sense of 'meeting and enchantment' he experienced in his childhood chasing after frogs and exploring rock pools with his brother, and the 'action and embodiment' he discovered as an animal welfare volunteer and movement artist. After attending five in-person and one online Kinship Workshop during the fieldwork period, I also interviewed eight different workshop participants on their experiences. The following section examines the interviews and field notes to determine if participants did experience enchantment and if these experiences engendered any lingering changes in their thoughts, actions, or perceptions of the world outside of the workshop. This analysis is less an evaluation of the efficacy or "success" of Kinship, and more a documentation of participants' experiences understood through the framework of enchantment established earlier in this chapter. I acknowledge the potential positive bias and limitations of the analysis in these narratives and dialogues, as I was only able to interview participants who chose to respond to the interview request and attend an online session. It is possible that those participants who did not have meaningful experiences or negative experiences would choose to ignore email requests and not to engage further with the project. Regardless of these limitations, the data provides engaging evidence of how Kinship Workshops and the work of Katye and Tom can leave lasting impacts on *some* participants views of themselves and their place in the natural world.

First, I will provide testimonies of enchanting experiences which occurred during the workshop; some of which are also described as approximating psychedelic experiences. These testimonies will be followed by an examination of the contexts that helped generate these experiences including recurring themes of, child-like behaviour, being granted permission or 'given' time, and the importance of practice in a group or community. Finally, I will examine interviewee's individual perspectives on lasting changes in their perception beyond the context of the workshops. Some of these contexts introduced briefly will be explored in greater detail later in this thesis.

Testimonies

Rachel Aspinwall was a participant in the Bristol Kinship Workshop held in Ashton Court in June 2021. Rachel works in theatre and one of her colleagues attended a Kinship Workshop held in Epping in 2018. This colleague later helped to organise the Bristol workshop, mentioning it again to Rachel who then signed up to attend. Before attending the workshop, Rachel was already interested in nature-connection based work. She said the word 'kinship' felt 'like an important word for our times' and felt especially crucial to her after an extended period of isolation during lockdown from COVID-19 restrictions. Further, most of her work had gone online and she felt she really needed to spend time outdoors to 'rebalance'.

Kinship Workshops usually include an activity called 'Wayfaring' which occurs near the end of a workshop period after spending two to five days working in groups and

partners to cultivate perceptual sensitivity. In this exercise, participants are tasked to go out on their own for 30-60 minutes. The instructions are purposefully opaque to give participants the freedom to follow their desires and spend time relatively alone outdoors. They are given a time to return, and it is ensured that everyone has a time piece. This is one of, if not the only, moment in a kinship workshop where a time constraint is strictly stated. It is pedagogically and epistemologically essential that the activity occurs after the series of exercises, or a similar series of exercises, stated earlier in this chapter so that participants are not only more confident with the lay of the land but have also been gradually developing an attentive and sensuous relationship to the area. This format encourages, but also explicitly does not require, meaningful encounters with the more-than-human.

Rachel recounted one of her encounters during a Wayfaring exercise and how it was still a poignant experience, weeks later:

> I wasn't taking any notice of where I was going really. I was letting different sensory elements guide me… I found myself in this sort of dappled glade, and there was a lot of quite bare earth, and then all the shadows of the trees and the leaves on the floor, like a great big painting of light and dark and movement; and then my shadow was there too. And so I started just sort of playing with my own shadow with these other shadows. And then I found myself... I could disappear myself into that, so my shadow could disappear and become a tree shadow. So how much I could kind of merge with the natural world and not in my human form. And then I had the most extraordinary moment, I mean, it did start to feel a bit psychedelic. But I had this moment where I was just inside this tree shadow. So I couldn't see myself. And I just had this moment when I thought my shadow - the shadow I am casting on the earth, is this tree. And it was just kind of extraordinary moment of like, that's my shadow. That's my shadow.

She recounted this tale stating that the experience filled her with a sense of exuberance, strength, and excitement. She felt that she began to understand how it might feel to be free of 'the age of reason and scientific mindset'. Rachel was not the only one to experience a quasi-psychedelic experience during the Wayfaring exercise.

Alexina Miles a professional performer who attended multiple Kinship Workshops in Epping Forest, shared their own story that arose out of Wayfaring. They said they sat on a log surrounded by leaves:

> And I just closed my eyes and fell back into the leaves. And then covered my face with the leaves. And then like kind of entered into this energy state of just going further into the earth, a bit hallucinogenic-y, even though I'm not taking anything.

Alexina described the experience as 'entering different portals' and was only a truly profound moment of felt connection that made possible through the facilitation of the workshop. They also said that this type of experience only occurred once and hasn't occurred since during other workshops they attended or during their own personal practice, describing it as 'a [transformative] shift that maybe needed to happen once.'

Mary Eddowes, another participant from the Bristol workshop, described an encounter she had with a fly:

> I came out in this little glade and all these tiny, white delicate flowers with four petals. And I put my face close to them and looked and watched and saw this tiny fly kind of feeding from the centre of the flower. I've just got a really strong memory of its tiny, tiny delicate legs just really beautifully navigating this tiny flower. I was watching it for maybe about five, ten minutes… the way it rested on the flower with its legs was just like, it looked like there was no weight involved at all and it was kind of hovering but then a Velcro, of fly to flower.

Mary is also an experienced performer and practitioner and has trained in Bodyweather with Frank Van de Ven, where she met Tom at one workshop. She says that when describing experiences from Kinship Workshops or Bodyweather to friends they have said 'oh, it sounds like you're on a trip' or 'I've experienced that, but I was on mushrooms.' She says that during these practices 'you're changing your mental state and your physical to state to work with your environment on yourself and it's so opening.' I personally experienced this same sense of enchanting encounter, and 'opening up' that Mary describes here.

Figure 5 The Field Where We Encountered Swifts and Orchids - Photo by Thomas Goodwin, Bristol

During the Bristol workshop, after warming up in the shade of a large tree Tom and Katye gathered us together to walk towards the second location of the day. When we approached a gate, we were instructed to remain silent for the remainder of the walk, and that while we walked, we should attempt to experience different relationships in the 'pack' such as walking at the front and leading, walking slowly and being near the back of the group, staying clumped in the middle, and finding places on the periphery to notice the way others walked. During the walk there was a deliberate sense of curiosity in the group as individuals would stop to take in the view, stop to climb a tree and be joined by another,

stopping to wait for someone else. Eventually we exited the wooded part of the park and began to climb up the crest of a large hill that opened into a meadow. The meadow was full of wildflowers, and I noticed someone knelt nearby, wordlessly gesturing for me to come closer. They pointed out the spotted purple wild orchids hiding underneath the taller grasses and flowers. As I glanced up from the orchids, most everyone had entered the meadow. The contrasting shift in perception from the dark, enclosed woods to the expansive view from the hill seemed to cause the group to pause. In that suspension, I noticed a flock of swifts began to dive and swoop all around us, assumingly feasting upon a low-flying cloud of insects above our heads. The group was unanimously frozen in awe, still and silent, observing the agile bird's daring manoeuvres. There was a potency in the air, a fear that if we moved or spoke it would end, so like a collective holding of breath we hoped our reverence would extend the limits of that moment. It was a period of *Kairos*, when *Chronos* or chronological time loses meaning and seconds can feel like hours, or days like minutes. I often return to this memory and the unique sense of paralysis and joy.

These experiences of wonder or magic as some participants described them, were made possible through the context of the workshop and its facilitation. Although nothing occurred during these personal stories that was particularly special or miraculous, certain features of the workshops seemed to assist in experiencing these mundane moments as infinitely more meaningful generating a sense of enchantment. The interviews with workshop participants identified recurring themes that contributed making the workshop feel meaningful. These themes included feelings of child-like behaviour, a generous relationship to time and permission, and the importance of practicing in a group.

Recurring Themes

Chrys Papaioannou is a scholar and activist working in art history and cultural studies. They attended two Kinship Workshops in Epping Forest, one in 2020 and one in 2021. Chrys is also a practitioner of contact improvisation (CI).[21] She chose to attend the first workshop because she felt it was the closest she could get to CI given the restrictions on contact and practice at the time. She also mentioned that she most likely would not have attended a Kinship Workshop if it weren't for the historical moment created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Chrys first heard about Kinship from Katye, who was discussing it at a CI workshop. Upon learning about the practice, Chrys originally dismissed the workshop as too 'outdoorsy' or 'hippie' and simply, not for her. However, after a period of fighting mental illness the same practices she originally dismissed became very valuable to her, and it was this context, exacerbated by the pandemic, that brought her to Kinship.

[21] Contact Improvisation (CI) is an improvisational contemporary movement practice developed by Steve Paxton and collaborators in 1972. There is a wealth of writing on the topic. For more information see contact quarterly available here: https://contactquarterly.com/contact-improvisation/about/, or *Sharing The Dance* by Cynthia Novack (1990).

While attending the workshop Chrys noticed that they had ‘very strong memories of [their] childhood’ and that ‘somehow there was something tapping inside [of] me the kind of relationship I used to have with nature, something that I hadn't experienced since primary school.’ They described the experience as deeply beautiful and nourishing. For Chrys it was like revisiting that ‘child-like curiosity about what’s available to us’ while she was spending a long time looking at little things on the ground and being totally engrossed in the act. Alexina also mentioned that they felt reminded of ‘things they had forgotten since being a kid’ and had connected to their ‘sense of childhood’. During one exercise in Bristol we were put into groups of threes and tasked to move or walk with our partners. While we moved, we were told ‘to notice a sense of connection between each of us’ as we moved around an area under a large tree. Compared to the first time we completed this score the day prior in pairs, instead of tentative steps and careful concentration, groups were running and chasing, hiding and copying and fooling and laughing. After completing the score, Katye pointed out a nearby group of children playing on the other side of the field and mentioned that their play looked very similar to the activity we had just done together.

The themes of child-like behaviour that emerged in some of the discussions during the workshop and in the interviews that followed were often followed up by comments on permission being granted or held by the group and facilitators. Participants noticed that they felt that were given permission to follow their curiosity during the workshop practice. This might include climbing a tree, stopping to stare at a flower for a long time, stacking rocks and moving tree limbs, chasing, rolling and laying in tall grass. The workshop helped Maisie understand how important it was for her to ‘have permission to explore surfaces and travel across landscapes and play in the way that we [did].’ Alexina said that they were only able to have the experience described earlier because they ‘had someone that was giving them permission to do that’. Mary described that her sense of permission was fundamentally derived from herself, no-one was taking it away from her and she was the only one who could grant it to herself. However, she also said that the types of activities that occur in Kinship might appear ‘odd to most people’ and are ‘not expected of human behaviour’ by ‘societal norms’ which can discourage her from giving herself permission. Being in a community where these types of activities were not looked down upon was integral to her sense of permission. Mary later recounted a story where she tried to share some activities from Kinship and Bodyweather with a friend on a public beach. Her friend was completely unable to participate, saying ‘I can’t do it, there’s people over there.’

This sense of permission or relaxation of societal expectations helped grant participants the ability to lightly suspend their personal judgement either from themselves or projected onto others, and access what was described as ‘child-like’ behaviour. Factors that helped contribute to this sense of permission included how time was experienced and organised in the workshop, as well as being part of a community of practice. Chapter three provides a more detailed analysis and description of community and practice. However, it is helpful to mention here briefly for their impact on generating the opportunities for enchanting experiences found in Kinship Workshops.

Although many elements of a Kinship Workshop can happen in isolation such as the 'sit spot' practice pictured above and the Wayfaring practice described earlier, it was important to Rachel that the workshop was generating a sense of connection both 'with the place we we're in *and* with people.'[22] Rachel has professional experience of building ensemble or group awareness in theatre but had never done it outdoors. She felt that moving through landscape as a group 'added something really extra in terms of finding something that is quite animal, creature, together'. Maisie and Mary both commented on how important it was to be with mostly like-minded people. Maisie's intimate encounter with a young pony on Dartmoor was made more potent when she learned that someone else on the workshop had witnessed the horse falling asleep next to her. Mary said in an interview: 'The moment with the swifts was really special as a group and sharing that as the group for me was a really kind of magic, poignant moment of what it's all about'. Not only are these experiences of enchantment occurring on an individual, personal level, but experiencing them in a group reinforces and strengthens the experience.

Lastly, during the workshops Katye will deliberately use the phrase 'giving time' instead of 'taking time' to do an activity. Both Katye and Tom say that they will 'hold time for you' so that you don't need to worry about when an activity is going to end or how long you have. For most participants this allows them to relax further into the experiences, even if there is a bit of hesitation at first. Speaking about her experience of time during the workshop, Maisie said 'I'm mostly surprised by how long some of the scores can hold my attention. I think the first few times I did it, I was really unsure whether I'd be able to occupy myself for 45 minutes to an hour without falling asleep or disengaging or wandering off into my head.' The initial resistance generally softens over the course of the workshop with some participants later remarking that an hour did not feel long enough after being called back from an exercise.

Changes in Participants' Attitudes and Observation

The recounted stories and testimonies of participants demonstrate that Kinship Workshops have the potential to engender meaningful encounters with the more-than-human. However, what is less clear is if these encounters can affect meaningful change in the participants themselves. Most of the interviews occurred weeks or months after a participant attended a workshop. It would be worth revisiting these questions in one- or two-years' time to inquire if participants still felt lingering effects or changes in their thoughts, observations, and actions. Further, some participants also attend similar practices

[22] Sit Spots are a common practice of naturalists where you choose somewhere outdoors to visit regularly for 10 minutes to an hour. Ideally the sit spot is somewhere convenient for you to get to, it could be a local park, your balcony or front porch. When there you sit quietly and listen, observe and notice 'nature' with all your senses. Some naturalists also recommend journaling what you see to help notice changes in your local environment.

and stated it is hard to separate them. Mary participates in Bodyweather, Chrys practises CI and with Laura Doehler another London-based dance artist, and Maisie has her own research in human-animal relationships.

Despite the limitations and ambiguity of noticing personal change, all of the participants interviewed agreed that they felt small lingering changes in themselves following a workshop. Rachel said she felt more 'centred' and 'more conscious of her tendency to cram' leaving her more able to resist the 'trance of busy-ness' that seemed to take over in daily life. Helena Allen from London said she felt a greater sense of 'interconnectedness' and was able to 'bridge between the forest and daily life'. Chrys said that a few weeks after the workshop that they had a strong desire to 'roll around in the mud', that it had 'really unleashed and unlocked something that hadn't been unlocked before' and that they 'really liked how [their] body was reacting to climate differently.' Chrys had also recently learned how to ride a bike and kept a cycling diary of their trips. On one ride after a workshop, she got caught in a rainstorm and recalled her feelings at the time: 'This is brilliant, like what have I been doing all my life? It's just so amazing, to feel the wind, to feel the rain, to be exposed as you were to the elements. This is- this is great.' This change of attitude to being caught in the rain was easily attributed to one day in Epping Forest in 2021 where we were all caught in a downpour. Wet to the bone, the practice continued; adjusting to fluctuations in the weather to looking for shelter under trees and moving together to stay warm. For Maisie, reflecting on the workshop experience helped her realise that she really needed a regular practice. Arun said that it helped him notice the 'aliveness of matter'. After attending a workshop he tried 'to attune to buildings in the same way as I would do trees.' I asked him if it worked, and after a bit of laughter he said he believed although it's not very easy, in a way it did. It helped him remember the importance of nature not just being that which exists 'in remote wild spaces' but is also 'alive and living in London.'

Perceiving Personhood

Anthropologist Rob Efird (2016), citing the work of Kay Milton (1996) writes that culture plays a key role in environmental protection and that anthropologists are particularly well-suited to contribute to the discourse of environmentalism. Through ethnographic research, anthropologists are able to observe the transformations that occur in individuals whereby 'a nature lover has emerged from a process of learning reinforced by enjoyment' (Milton 2002: 72). The field of environmental education described by Efird as 'an international and interdisciplinary effort to address environmental degradation by fostering stewardship and ecological sustainability' is also keenly interested in these types of personal transformations (2016: 441). These transformations, be they subtle or dynamic, are an implicit ambition in Tom and Katye's Kinship Workshops.

Efird writes how much environmental education currently depends on the "Knowledge -> Attitude -> Behaviour" model. This model argues that the attainment of

knowledge about the environment leads to changes in individual attitude and perspective on environmental issues which then inspire changes in behaviour leading to greater environmental ethic. Despite this theory being refuted by contemporary scholars, it persists in contemporary approaches to environmental education (Marcinkowski 1998). Opposition to this pedagogical and epistemological approach was found amongst kinship participants. Chrys describes herself as 'resistant to taxonomic ways of understanding the world' and that there is 'an interesting tension between knowing through taxonomy… and knowing through sensing or doing this sort of somatic work.' Her experience supports environmental education researcher Arjen Wals statement that 'just providing information, raising awareness, and changing attitudes apparently is not enough to change people's behavior. People's environmental behaviors are far too complex and contextual to be captured by a simple causal model' (2012: 633). Alongside her performance work, Mary also teaches in forest schools and finds a similar tension in this aspect of her work. She says the schools she teaches in are normally concerned about 'how to make fires and dens' but she's 'interested in the body in the woods, not making a bird table.' She is curious about and insistent on the importance of bringing embodied work to younger kids. She's been able to bring some exercises she's gleaned from Kinship and Bodyweather to kids and had generally positive experiences. The application and efficacy of environmental somatic work in education for young people is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis. However, this does demonstrate the impact these practices have had on participants and their desire to implement them in other professional and pedagogical applications, alongside their wariness of purely factual environmental knowledge as the base for generating environmental sensibility. Timothy Morton writes in *Being Ecological* that we are often overwhelmed by 'eco-factoids' which in much ecological literature which acts like an 'information dump'. He says this method of data dumping is actually '*inhibiting* a more genuine way of handling ecological knowledge' (2018: xxi). If we follow Morton's argument, an overload of facts and data may impair or numb our sense of environmental sensibility, defined by Peterson as a 'set of affective attributes which result in an individual viewing the environment from an empathetic perspective' (1982: 5). Efird argues that this sensibility may be fostered more effectively through significant life experiences rather than the K-A-B model. Kinship's approach of prioritising sensorial experiences over practical skills-based training is supported by this theory. Efird's research focuses on child-hood experiences and environmental education, which could potentially limit its relevance when considering adult experience. Conversely, it may serendipitously elucidate Kinship's conjuring of child-like feelings and behaviour.

In an attempt to understand how experience might give rise to active environmental care, Milton argues that the perception of personhood in nature is an essential internal link. Expanding upon Milton's work Efird describes the 'experience of personhood' as when an individual perceives in nature 'qualities such as individuality, capacity for emotion, and volition' (2016: 441). Before analysing Efird's claims a brief review on the anthropological literature on personhood would be helpful. Personhood is a socially bestowed quality and

often reinforced through acts of ritual or performance. Anthropologists Beth Conklin and Lynn Morgan define personhood as 'a social status granted – in varying degrees – to those who meet (or perform) socially sanctioned criteria for membership' (1996: 662). In her comparative ethnography of the Euro-American and the Melanesian concepts of personhood, Marilyn Strathern (1988) identifies the irreducibility and totality of the bounded, singular individual as a particularly Western idea. She contrasts this with the idea of the Melanesian person as an amalgam of relationships she calls the dividual. However, the dichotomy of individualism and more relational personhoods is better described as a complex spectrum, and Conklin and Morgan note that these stark cross-cultural contrasts 'run the risk of overstating differences between societies while overemphasising consensus within a society' (1996: 662). Notwithstanding, dominant cultural models of constructing and contesting personhood retain their use as relative markers to discuss and compare different ontologies of establishing agency.

Personhood debates in North American societies are consistently construed around biological and medical markers relating to birth, and once granted, is fully realised, bestowing the mantle of societal rights to the new person. Conklin and Morgan contrast this idea with that of the Amazonian Wari' where personhood is achieved incrementally, predominantly through the exchange of bodily substances such as breast milk, blood and semen, and not granted automatically through birth. The child is formed from continued deposits of semen from the father, and personhood is not achieved until the mother first breastfeeds the child (1996:681). In another example of gradual personhood, John and Jean Comaroff describe personhood among the Tswana of Southern Africa as a constant process of becoming, of self-construction, where the accumulation of wealth and power through work or '*tiro'* is essential; 'stasis meant social death' (2001:271). In both of these examples, personhood is constructed, and potentially severed, through relationships of exchange. These persons are negotiating a constantly shifting relational ontology.

In Western societies personhood is often delegated solely to the realm of human affairs. However, in animist and totemic societies outlined by Descola (2013) this is not always true. Meyer Fortes remarks that for the Tallensi 'in some contexts and some situations a crocodile in a certain special place is a person' (1987: 241). Alfred Hallowell's ethnography of Ojibwa ontology denotes that 'person' is an overarching category which can include animal persons, human persons, and weather persons such as wind or thunder. Hallowell recounts asking an informant if 'all the stones we see about us here are alive' as in the Ojibwa language stones are grammatically animate, to which the Ojibwa man responds, 'No! but *some* are' (Hallowell 1960:24). Nurit Bird-David describes the devaru 'superpersons' of Nayaka society may be stones or elephants. The status of devaru is granted to beings and objects by the way the relate to human persons. Stone devaru may 'come towards' or 'jump on' Nayaka. Elephant devaru may make extended eye contact or pass harmlessly by in the night (Bird-David 1999). What is crucial about these examples in particular is that personhood is realised relationally and acknowledged with ritual significance; a Tallensi crocodile that has been granted personhood will be given funeral

rites; animate stones may follow Ojibwa shamans or open up to offer needed herbs during ceremonies; devaru are brought to life and interacted with during annual pandalu performances. Bird-David suggests that these performances are 'aids to perceiving' in the Gibsonian sense (cf. Gibson 1979) that grant the participants and performers the ability to recognise and "talk with" the devaru (Bird-David 1999: S77). Performative events provide opportunities for more-than-human relationships to be established, acknowledged, and reinforced.

Counter to the discourse of these contrasting notions of personhood, archaeologist Chris Fowler (2016) argues that *all* personhood is relational, that the simplified dichotomy of individual and dividual is only one fractal of a spectrum of tensions describing the *type of relations* from which personhood arises. The examples above demonstrate diverse manifestations of personhood, but all are constructed through relational experiences, just defined and expressed through different tensions: indivisible and divisible, individualist and collectivist, permeable and impermeable, independent and interdependent. Personhood is constructed through relationships, and as demonstrated earlier, Kinship Workshops offer a practice through which these relationships are perceived and recognized. Kinship workshops may act as 'aids to perceiving', nourishing the ability to recognize and relate to multiple forms of personhood; invoking Ann Cooper Albright's ecological consciousness defined as: 'a dialogue between the self and world [where] one becomes aware of the intriguing possibilities of interdependence' (Albright and Gere, 2003: 262)

For example, Maisie's experience of the pony 'investigating her' instead of her investigating the horse, Chrys' experience of 'hanging out with a stream' and Mary's wonder at the miraculous weightlessness of the fly all signify moments of perceiving nature's personhood. Recall that Milton describes the experience of personhood as a fundamentally emotional process. These significant experiences may elicit fear or revulsion in some people and admiration or wonder in others and the development of environmental sensibility is dependent on a pleasurable experience.

While describing her experience of hanging out with the stream during a Wayfaring exercise, Chrys shared a story of the first time she went to the stream. In the first visit she was barked at by a large dog while laying on the ground which rekindled old fears. The barking of the dog not only brought up fear and memories of trauma, but also brought back to the surface a self-consciousness of being afraid of the outdoors and being seen by other people. She left the stream immediately and went back to the old fallen tree which served as our meeting place to calm down. During the workshop when the exercise was repeated, she chose to return to the same spot and had a profound experience listening to and spending time with the stream. The experience of fear was able to be overridden by a pleasurable one. This example supports Efird's call for environmental educators 'to pay special attention to the sensory context of learning, in order to maximize the possibility that an experience of nature will be "felt" as pleasurable' (2016: 447). These testimonials from Kinship participants present fieldwork examples where personhood is perceived through an

enchanting experience with a non-human entity. However sometimes personhood fails to capture or articulate the experience of enchantment.

Perceiving personhood, while described above can act as an essential avenue to environmental sensibility. Milton even makes the effort to separate this perception from anthropomorphism, preferring the term 'egomorphism' (2005). She writes that: 'the quality of personhood, which we perceive in ourselves, in other human beings and in non-human entities, is the similarity which most effectively, in western cultures, induces identification with other things' (2002:79). Being able to identify and perceive non-human entities as "like me" can give rise to care and empathy. This "like-me-ness" is most obviously harnessed in the Attenborough-isation warned against by Seymour. However, in some eco-somatic experiences the experience of "so-not-like-me" and inconceivable complexity can also give rise to greater ecological consciousness. Rachel's melding with the tree shadow and sense of overwhelm that arose from this experience is one example. Arun recalls a specific grief around never truly being able to know what it would be like to be a tree. Through somatics he can imagine it, but his imagination will always be limited by his physiology. He recalled looking at a tree and acknowledging that it was moving and growing, but far slower than he could perceive; 'what it would be like to move slow enough in order to move with the tree or listen slowly enough to hear the fibres stretch?'. For Arun, his sense of wonder came from how much he *was not* a tree, not how much it was like him.

Conclusion

To summarise, enchantment is first and foremost a sensuous experience of the environment which may in turn inspire an environmental sensibility. Kinship Workshops are an attempt by organisers and UK-based movement artists Thomas Goodwin and Katye Coe to encourage nature connection through sensorial and somatic exercises. Enchantment gives us a framework to understand how these experiences might affect participants, altering the way they perceive and respond to their environments. These ethnographic testimonies can demonstrate the ability for pleasurable experiences of personhood, or non-personhood, in nature to encourage environmental sensibility. Although there are clear limitations in this study, in the demographics of the workshops themselves and in the adequacy of casual correlations, the analysis emphasises the potential of sensorial, emotional experiences in outdoor art and education to generate empathic relationships to more-than-human life. Artistic and educational practices that make possible experiences of enchantment may contribute towards 'learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying together on a damaged earth' (Haraway 2016). Kinship workshops also included opportunities to share the experiences of certain exercises in intimate one on one or larger group discussions. The following chapter, focusing on the work of Dorset-based somatic practitioner Sandra Reeve, explores storytelling as a medium through which private experiences, potentially enchanting experiences or other experiences of the environment that oscillate between the remarkable

and the mundane, might be transmuted into shared, public expression further expanding their reach.

Chapter Two: Storytelling and the Alchemy of Experience

Figure 6: An unsuspecting Nettle-Weevil before our duet during Sandra Reeve's workshop.

'Let's develop our power to tell yet another
narrative, another story, if we manage,
we will delay the end of the world.'

(Ailton Krenak in Fremeaux and Jordan 2021)

Introduction: Sandra Reeve and Simon Whitehead

This chapter's purpose is bipartite. One thread of argument describes the use of story and storytelling as a means by which environmental movement practitioners and artists in the UK interpret meaning from experience. The storytelling itself may be direct or indirect, narrative or nonnarrative, as it alchemises experiences intended to develop environmental sensibility. Simply put, the sharing of stories is an important and essential element of many of the practices encountered in the fieldwork. To support and expand upon this, a second thread presents long form, in-depth ethnography as descriptive illustrations of transformational experiences. The ethnography, through its writing and re-telling, then becomes an expressive mode which emboldens the transformational capacity of the experiences. The first and most in-depth ethnographic example is with Dorset-based movement artist and psychotherapist Sandra Reeve who uses autobiography and performance making as part of one of her annual cycle of workshops. In this anecdote, although story and narrative were included as part of the structural framing of the workshop and daily practice, a poignant experience emerged serendipitously through communal play and encounter with landscape. Expanding upon an a previously introduced fieldsite acts as a sort of interlude between the two longer ethnographies which provides additional contextualisation of the use and intent of collective storytelling in Kinship workshops.[23] This interlude supports the first thread and breaks up the longer reflective ethnographies. The second ethnography is recounted from participating in a score devised by Simon Whitehead, a North Pembrokeshire based movement artist. In this example, despite not being an explicit part of the practice or instructions that comprised the score, story and metaphor are utilised as a method to articulate witnessing a partner's improvised one-on-one performances in the dark of night. In this ethnography, the obscure and the uncanny which arrive with the gradual onset of nightfall queer and bewilder visual perception. Imagination thrives in this transformed state of awareness, animating shadows, objects, and silhouettes with volition, each becoming their own character in the narrative. Together, these complimentary accounts elucidate the type of storytelling and narrative present in environmental performance; it is often nonlinear and abstract yet contains the ability to be unexpectedly profound. The three case studies and two threads of the chapter combine to illustrate how storytelling and ethnography, as expressions of experience, alchemise those experiences into potent intersubjective meaning.

Moreover, these three ethnographic examples are not exhaustive of the encounters with story and narrative throughout the fieldwork. Hayley Matthews' performances as part of Sanctuary contain elements of narrative to elicit emotional responses in her audiences: particularly the solos of Isadora Duncan. For Jolie Booth of Kriya Arts and the pilgrims of the

[23] There are multiple examples of the stories shared during Kinship workshops in the previous chapter on Enchantment.

Pilgrimage for Nature project, the collecting of stories served as a creative research method which led to the development of an improvised narrative performance to be shared with the delegates of COP26. The group tasks audiences listen and respond to in *Is This a Wasteland* (2021) lead to the creation and destruction of small worlds, walls, and towers; the piles of rubbish enact cyclical stories of enclosure and liberation through the hands of the audience. With an assortment of experiences and approaches to analyse, the three expanded examples in this chapter were chosen to highlight how story emerges to generate meaning and connection in different contexts; in group practice and play, in recounting improvised individual performance, and in the discussions that occur after or in-between.

As made evident through the ethnographic reflections, the meanings produced through these movement practices are always in conversation with the environment in which they materialise. However, the effects and interpretations of these meanings differ greatly from practice to practice and from mover to witness. Further, although some may visibly pursue environmentally focused goals through storytelling, not all of them do. Others encountered in the fieldwork may be more interested in individual creative endeavour, healing and wellbeing, different social justice initiatives, or any combination of the aforementioned. What is clear however, is that each of the movement practitioners discussed in this chapter engage with environmental themes in their creative work and seek to communicate beyond themselves; be it through performance, facilitation, or writing, with human or more-than-human audiences. Viewing these disparate experiences and practices through the lens of storytelling as an expression of experience can provide valuable theoretical and anthropological context to understand the dialogical relationships between land, mover, and witness. To do so, this chapter first theorises how and why individuals translate an experience into an expression, storytelling being just one potential medium, and how *through* expression, these experiences may become transformative.

Experience and Expression

Experience is used by anthropologists to describe how events or reality is received via consciousness (Bruner, 1986: 4). For anthropologist Edward Bruner, experience is 'not only sense data… but also feelings and expectations' (ibid). Bruner's edited volume credits Victor Turner for popularising lived experience as a novel object of anthropological study. In the decades following its publication, subjectivity and lived experience have blossomed into rich fields of inquiry. The works of phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, and Husserl continue to inspire generations of contemporary artists and social scientists. It is of relevance that dance and performance in the UK is deeply informed by somatic practices, an artistic discipline in close kinship with phenomenology (Albright 2011; Fraleigh 2016; Fraleigh and Bingham 2018; Rothfield 2019). However, overcoming the solipsistic limitations of individual experience is a particular hurdle for both of these approaches as we may perhaps never fully understand another's experiences; limited as we are by our own consciousness.

Reality is perceived and mediated into experience which may then be negotiated and shared with others. However, those negotiations are always limited as 'everyone censors, or represses, or may not be fully aware of or able to articulate, certain aspects of what has been experienced (Bruner 1986: 5). To describe this process, Turner, via the work of German thinker Wilhelm Dilthey (1976), offers "expression" as 'the crystallized secretions of once human experience' (1982: 17). Expressions are interpretations of experience, and the way in which we share experience with others, in all its incompleteness. Expression may take the form of spoken narrative, text, performance, or objects (Bruner 1986). Bruner argues that 'Some experiences are inchoate, in that we simply do not understand what we are experiencing' or that 'As we ourselves are telling others about an experience, we sometimes realize, even as we speak, that our account does not fully encompass all that we thought and felt during that experience' (ibid: 7). As ethnographers and anthropologists, we are often faced with the failure of language to fully encapsulate the experiences we have in the field. With these limitations in mind, all expression, according to Bruner and Turner, are social and processual acts which occur in specific socio-historical contexts. What this chapter seeks to demonstrate is how expression of an experience, through its sharing with another, validates and emboldens the experience itself in spite of its imperfections:

> A ritual must be enacted, a myth recited, a narrative told, a novel read, a drama performed, for these enactments, recitals, tellings, readings, and performances are what make the text transformative and enable us to reexperience our culture's heritage. (ibid: 7)

As an ethnographer, my understanding of the somatic discoveries of my research participants and colleagues via witnessing them move was greatly enhanced via listening to them describe their own felt, lived experiences after the fact. Complimentary then, was my own heightened understanding of my subjective experiences through attempting to describe them to others. Turner writes that 'experience urges toward expression, or communication with others. We are social beings, and we want to tell what we have learned from experience… The hard-won meanings should be said, painted, danced, dramatized, put into circulation' (1986: 37). The emergent experiences that occurred during a movement workshop were made richer and more potent through their expression. According to Dilthey, it is in these social processes of experience and expression 'in which the subject discovers himself' and culture itself is created, transmitted, and recreated (1976: 203). It begins to become clear why from the artist's perspective, if the goal is to effect change in participants and society, it is crucial that individual experience is expressed via story and performance.

The following section describes the particularities of storytelling, understood now as an essential expression of experience and agent of cultural genesis, as a tool for supporting transformative experiences which foster environmental sensibility. This analysis of storytelling draws from theory in both anthropology and the environmental humanities to support its premise. If storytelling, as demonstrated above, participates in the shaping of

culture, what stories we tell and how we tell them demand attention. As Michael Jackson and Hannah Arendt argue below, this is always an inherently political act.

Storytelling

The artists and activists whose work is described in this thesis argue that it matters what stories and myths we tell. Writing on the urgency of the Anthropocene Donna Haraway states: 'We *must* change the story; the story *must* change' (2016: 60). Many agree our current stories are unsuitable for the magnitude of the crises we face: 'The myths of the age, of the sovereign free individual, the entrepreneur as rugged pioneer, are but death hymns' (Seymour 2022: 58). Artist-activists Isabelle Fremeaux and Jay Jordan write 'the myth of the selfish, competitive individual who is separate from worlds they inhabit is collapsing' (2021: 20). For Fremeaux and Jordan, the COVID-19 pandemic expediated this collapse, 'through the practices of masking, shielding, distancing, we saw each individual can only live if the collective, which she constitutes with all others, is able to flourish' (ibid: 20). While touted by neoliberal government agencies as the keys to unlocking eternal economic growth, individualism and enterprise are inadequate remedies for the cumulating climate effects of the Anthropocene. Contrariwise, artistic practices are 'essential to the reproduction of human societies' (Gell 1992: 43) and what art we make and what enchantments we weave play a vital role in generating new myths and stories which may present invaluable alter-tales to navigating a wounded earth.[24] When Clifford Geertz describes culture as 'the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves' (1973: 448) he places anthropologists and artists as particularly well-suited to examine these stories, interpret their implicit descriptions of relationship with ourselves and others, critique their role in the generation of cosmology, and determine what values they portray.

There is much functional overlap between themes in this writing, and storytelling is no different. It is no coincidence that storytelling, or enchantment, or almost any other key thematic chapter, interweave and support each other. To elucidate, stories fulfil multiple cultural functions. Storytelling is how we make sense of our being-in-the-world (Jackson 2006). Stories, particularly indigenous stories, often contain nonhuman actors, aiding in the perception of personhood beyond the human.[25] Stories connect past, present, and future, aiding in the imagining of alternative futures.[26] Stories are communal; they shift between private and public domains (Arendt 1958). Stories are transformative; they educate, imagine, restrict, and expand (Chan 2021). Stories are generative and aid in the reproduction of ourselves and society: 'We tell ourselves stories in order to live' (Dideon, 1979: 11). Stories commonly involve travel or journeying; indeed, Jackson argues that

[24] By alter-tale I follow Jane Bennett's (2001) term for alternative narratives used to counter a hegemonic story of disenchantment.
[25] See Chapter 1 on enchantment for an overview of personhood.
[26] See Chapter 3 on communities of practice and liminality for an overview of alternative futures.

'walking is one of the grounds of narrative itself' (2006).[27] Thus, stories contain and enact multiple roles within culture and in this thesis.

Storytelling is generally multimodal and may include multiple communicative modes including language, gesture, images and bodily expression and be portrayed via discourse, song, theatre, writing or art objects. In their overview of narrative as a means for making sense of experience and the self, Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps identify multiple modes of communication (1996). Distinct narrative modes may employ different tactics to tell their stories; family meals may include multi-participatory conversation, ritual and ceremony may include unidirectional sermons and readings or blend song and dance, British courtrooms might employ models, graphs and diagrams, and visual arts such as painting or sculpture might 'similarly detail a narrative through realistic representations or may minimalistically evoke a narrative through metaphor and juxtaposition of shape, texture, and color' (Ochs and Capps 1996:20). Just as we must broaden our understanding of story to include multifarious methods and forms of dissemination, we must similarly be wary of equating story and narrative, as attributing a linear chronology to story may be a limiting modernist perspective of progress.

John Allison Jr, when comparing structuralist and phenomenological approaches to narrative, demonstrates a classical Western understanding of narrative as an inherently linear and chronological 'process whereby humans configure experiences into temporal structures characterised by beginnings, middles, and ends' (1994: 108). While many stories do indeed contain these familiar nodes and characteristics, Jo-ann Archibald, indigenous scholar from the Stol:lo First Nation in British Columbia and editor of *Decolonising Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology* (2022) reminds readers that story does not always consist of tidy narrative and is not confined to linear understandings of time and space. Choreographer and scientist Subathra Subramaniam, artistic director of Sadhana dance, utilises visual metaphor, abstract cues, and relatable imagery in her choreography to evoke emotional responses in her audiences. Subramaniam argues that her choreographed abstract vignettes may be interpreted as coherent narratives by audience members or instead be received as a series of nonnarrative emotions, desires, and experiences that translate into abstract meaning, engendering the same effects as narrative. Subramaniam, illustrative of much contemporary dance performance, does not rely on a linear or explicit form of narrative to convey her intention, instead story may emerge, intentionally or unintentionally, from evocative choreographic choices. In turn, story may arrive through the interpretation of meaning even in abstract or nonnarrative forms of movement and choreography. The forms of storytelling observed in my fieldwork include nonnarrative improvised movement, verbally recounted stories of personal experience, and performative forms that combined the two. Ultimately, the form and function of storytelling is as diverse as the content of the stories themselves: commenting on aspects of human life, and connecting individuals to vast and complex social networks.

[27] See Chapter 5 on soft activism for more detail on the relationship between a walking pilgrimage and environmental activism.

Following Haraway's definition, storytelling is an inherently sympoietic act (2016). As an act of 'making-with' telling a story requires multiple actors; it requires the narrator, it requires a witness, and it requires the characters being narrated. The narrator and characters in the story may or may not be the same person. The act of narration may bring the narrator's past self into the present moment, or recall the acts and viewpoints of another person, eliciting multiple perspectives. The story itself is made possible through sharing and perceiving and is intrinsically social and communal. Psychotherapist Leah Salter argues that listening to stories is equally as agential as the telling, 'To bear witness to social stories is not a passive act. It is an act of solidarity and of validation and it is political' (2020: 48). As an oft imprecise form of artistic communication, audience members of contemporary dance performances may spin their own stories through their witnessing. The story of a choreographic work may exist simultaneously as multiple interpretations from choreographer to performer, to individual audience members, or even dramaturg and producer. In this way, viewed through the lens of storytelling, dance performance may straddles the narrative and the nonnarrative, the chronological and the abstract, while drawing in witness and mover into a sympoietic act of creation and interpretation.

Hannah Arendt (1958) also demonstrates the potent relational properties of storytelling when she describes storytelling as a political relationship which expands the private to the public realm, where experiences are transformed and extended through their sharing. In his analysis of Arendt and her writing on storytelling, Jackson expands her claims, arguing that '…in bridging the gap between private and public realms, storytelling enables the regeneration and celebration of social existence, without which we are nothing' (2006: 58-59). However we must also be wary of translation as the vantage point from which we share our stories is 'forever fringed by a *more'* (James 1976:35 in Jackson 2006). Jackson describes this *more* as a 'penumbral region' where language fails to fully encapsulate experience, mirroring Bruner's argument that expressions are always imperfect fractals. It becomes apparent that the act of sharing stories, in all their myriad forms, is inherently social and transformative. However, if stories are also political then they are just as likely to restrict and control as they are to liberate. As Kafka immortalised, not all transformations are voluntary or favourable. This thesis however purposely chooses to emphasise the emancipatory and collectively generative potential of storytelling, which is particularly crucial to the thesis of Jackson's book *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity'* (2006).

Through researching stories of refugees, Jackson examines the role storytelling plays in relating the individual and society and its political capacity. Jackson sees storytelling both as an Arendtian transformation of private into public meanings, but also as a method through which public discourse can shape private thought either through supporting and propagating political hegemony or by challenging dominant cultural narratives. Jackson describes a fundamental opposition between "scientific fact" and "science fiction" in many urban-industrial societies. He writes that 'The arts are critical of the sciences, folktales are satires on the myths of rulers, and both are barely tolerated, and – in our society –

underfunded. Factuality is friendly to administrative control while fiction threatens it. Storytelling is thus marginalised' (2006: 101). In this hegemonic view, storytelling becomes associated with lived experience and is belittled and according to this paradigm, experience is 'a refractory or raw material that only becomes intelligible and meaningful when subject to rational reprocessing' (ibid: 101). The Straussian binary of nature and culture is included in this analysis of diametrically opposed concepts that may be 'understood, managed, and mediated through the performance of rituals and the telling of stories' (ibid: 24). For Jackson, stories contain an inherent potentiality to either bolster or degrade these boundaries. 'Canonical' stories may reinforce dominant configurations of power and politics, but revolutionary stories may contain the ability to destabilise hegemonic concepts. For Jackson, these dichotomies are essential to each other 'ironically counterpointed rather than mutually contradictory' (ibid: 102) and may present collaborative opportunities to reimagine the binary of experience and scientific knowledge altogether. This thesis does not intend to replace knowledge with experience, or the mind with the body, or science with art. Instead, it examines how artists and activists approach the crisis of climate change through experience and its expression to support the development of environmental sensibility. Indeed, there are even occasions where scientists and artists collaborate to combine abstract expression with hard data to tell poignant and urgent tales.[28]

Haraway attempts to provide an example of how scientific fact and science fiction can be collaborative rather than combative. To do so, she employs the figure of SF, or how 'science fact and speculative fabulation need each other', as a tool to resist the lure of miraculous technofixes to the climate crisis without abandoning situated technologies all together (2016: 3). For her, SF may also counter the scientific cynicism of an ecological "game over" with the ability to generously cultivate different futurisms (ibid: 2-3). Similarly, Jackson views storytelling as 'a vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances' (2006: 15). In this way storytelling can enable groups and individuals to counter crippling narratives of eco-anxiety or mend perceived rifts of relationship between mankind and nonhuman life.

In the opening chapter of *Braiding Sweetgrass* indigenous scholar and biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer shares the Iroquois creation story of 'Skywoman Falling' and discusses how this creation story constructs an incredibly different relationship between humankind and nature compared to the morals in the Christian creation story of the Fall of Adam and Eve (2013). Kimmerer describes her book as 'an intertwining of science, spirit, and story – old stories and new ones that can be medicine for our broken relationship with earth' (ibid: x). The goal of these stories is to demonstrate that 'people and the land are good medicine for each other'. Kimmerer joins ethnobotanist Gary Nabhan in calls for 're-story-ation' in that we cannot meaningfully restore relationship to land without listening to its stories (2013: 9). This mirrors Latour's (2014) call for 'geostories' to replace histories, and the call to

[28] See the conclusion of this thesis for an example that the author participated in where climate scientists and dance artists in Norwich worked to create a performance about rising sea level and coastal erosion along the Norfolk coast.

“restory” is prevalent in the environmental humanities (cf. Salter, 2020; Smolander and Pyyry, 2022; van Dooren and Bird-Rose, 2016). This chapter attempts to demonstrate the types of “land-stories” or stories about encounters with land that are shared as part of environmental movement practices in the UK. It also more specifically demonstrates how the sharing of these stories by speech, movement, or writing, enhances the transformative quality of those stories.

In a recent article, Leah Salter describes a community model of storytelling she developed in South Wales to highlight this transformative potential (2020). Working as a therapist she developed this community practice to assist people adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant is quoted describing her frustration with the phrase “we are all in the same boat” when she, very strongly, felt that this was untrue. Sharing her personal story and having it listened to ‘made a significant difference to the story she had been telling herself that no-one listens to, or believes in, her’ (2020: 56). Salter argues this is evidence of the ‘transformative nature’ of having a story witnessed (ibid). Other researchers have also argued that storytelling can be transformative and have a positive impact on health and wellbeing (cf. Andrews and Beer, 2019; Dunn, 2017; Heinemeyer, 2019). As described by this chapter storytelling is a transformation of experience into expression, which may also transform both the teller and the witness.

Conclusively, story is an important process through which humankind makes sense of and communicates about experience. The process of storytelling has the potential to cement or disturb politics and power, connect individuals to society, and transform a sense of self. Storytelling as an experiential mode not only ‘takes us beyond ourselves’ connecting one to things other than oneself, but also ‘*transform[s] our experience* and bring[s] us back to ourselves, changed’ (Jackson 2008: 138). The remainder of this chapter presents three case studies of story and narrative in the form of ethnographic reflection. As will be demonstrated by further ethnographic examples in this chapter, storytelling plays a role in the improvised movement practices and experiential inquiry of artists in how they attempt to not only influence their own perception of being-in-the-world but also affect change in the world itself. More breadth and room are given to the ethnographic form and experience, with less attention on overanalysing and rationalising their content. This is purposeful. It is my intention that the ethnographies speak for themselves. This is also to allow the reader to draw their own interpretations of the collaborative performative acts described. I can attest that the writing of these ethnographic vignettes transformed my personal experiences and reimbued them with meaning; in addition, I hope that by reading and witnessing them the reader may also be invited to take part in the transformations. However, before sharing the first ethnographic encounter, some framing of the workshop during which it occurred provides important context.

Figure 7 Wootton-Fitzpaine Village Hall. A news clipping on the far wall states: 'Wootton-Fitzpaine A Village to Be Proud Of'

Sandra Reeve and 'STRATA: Autobiographical Movement'

In the summer of 2021, I attended Sandra Reeve's workshop entitled *STRATA: Autobiographical Movement.* Reeve is a movement artist and psychotherapist based in Dorset. This workshop is housed within Reeve's 'Move into Life' annual program of workshops, classes, mentoring, and trainings. During the week the workshop is based in Wootton-Fitzpaine and visits various locations along the Jurassic Coast near Charmouth. Attendees are invited throughout the duration of the workshop to explore a specific theme or narrative and 'through the art and practice of movement... get a new perspective on the stories you tell yourself about yourself'.[29] Although not an anthropologist herself, Sandra's words echo the sentiment of Geertz (1973: 448). After a week of investigating the chosen themes and different elements of Sandra's practice of 'non-stylised movement', each participant generates a solo performance to be shared with the group on the penultimate day of the workshop. Although not explicitly required, these performances often contain components of autobiography.

[29] See www.moveintolife.com for more information on Sandra Reeve's public facing workshops and classes.

This section will outline the structure of the week-long workshop to provide context for the story that follows. To compliment the autobiographic focus of the workshop, this chapter relies more comprehensively on autoethnography in its presentation. Descriptions of daily movement practices and locations are translated through autoethnographic reflection on individual experiences. My own personal practice as an improvisational movement artist is utilised as a lens to provide a deeper understanding of the highly subjective content of these workshops and scores. The reflections are further supplemented with comments and observations made by other participants of the workshop. One other participant, Maya, was also interviewed and her words appear as part of the ethnography.

STRATA, in its inception, was originally designed to investigate habits and the desire to change. Now, participants are invited to explore their chosen theme through a four-day process of moving from the top of Stonebarrow Hill down to the sea. The workshop format utilises the metaphor of progressing through layers, or strata, of landscape to dive deep into a personal narrative or topic through movement. Each of the first three days focuses on one or two locations with clear scores that invite participants to 'encounter' those locations. On the fourth day each participant chooses a location to spend the day in by themselves. On that day you work with your own material in that place to try and deepen how your story or theme meets the area, ultimately devising something to be shared with the group. On the fifth day the group walks the entire downward journey from the top of the hill, along a series of fields, through a wooded thicket, down the cliffs, and along the coastal beach ending in Charmouth for a shared supper. During this journey the group witnesses each participant's performances and sharings. Sandra describes this journey as a sort of pilgrimage, interspersed with opportunities to rest and witness each other. The entire sixth and final day is reserved for digestion; designated time for conversation and exchange after witnessing the performances. Sandra described the workshop as an opportunity to experience different applications of movement: in daily life, in the sacred, in performance, in healing, ritual, and education.

On the first day of the workshop, we gathered in the village hall in Wootton-Fitzpaine that would act has our base for the week. There were nine people in total including Sandra. It was a mixture of veterans who have worked with Sandra for years and newcomers like myself. Everyone there had experience with movement forms in some way and many in the group identified as theatre or performance artists or were also therapists. A few participants spoke about their experiences with other movement forms including Amerta movement founded by Javanese movement artist Suprapto Suryodarma, whom Sandra worked with extensively, 5Rhythms, and Movement Medicine. After a period of introductions, we started with an improvisational movement warm-up. Sandra led the improvisation, participating as she gave instructions. We were guided into using 'pushing' and 'pulling' to find gentle stretches, then using pauses to lead into each successive movement. Sandra invited us to consider the 'constellation of the body in relation to others' and 'the landscape of the space' as part of our movement choices. We were asked to

consider patterns that emerged and pause in unfamiliar places. After this warm-up we prepared to set out to our first location.

We were to spend the day in Stonebarrow Hill, a 148-metre hill along the Dorset Coast near Golden Cap. We drove up from Wootton-Fitzpaine in three vehicles, masks on and windows rolled down for circulation. From the carpark it was a twenty-minute walk to the meadow where we would practice. The hill itself was a large open space, covered with clover and other wildflowers and tall grasses. The buzzing of insects and intermittent calls of skylarks and other birds were a constant presence. The meadow was broken up in different isolated sections by patches of gorse and short trees which made it possible to find relative isolation from the group if desired.

As part of the daily warm-up Sandra described four movement dynamics that are central to her working practice: active and passive, proportion, transition/position, and point, line and angle. At Stonebarrow, alongside the broader theme of 'expanse', we were invited to explore the movement dynamic of transition/position. This theme encouraged us to think about 'staying' and 'going' as part of our movement choices. For our first exercise we were given 30 minutes to 'get to know' the area. In this context, that meant to find somewhere to stay, and be still. However, Sandra advised that we avoid the various nooks and small spaces that we might be drawn to and instead choose to stay in a more open and exposed part of the field to feel a sense of expanse. Once we found our spot, the task was to shift our ocular focus from looking at things up-close in detail, gradually shifting it to something in the middle-distance, and then finally focusing on something far-away. Then, repeating the pattern in reverse, far-away, middle-distance, up-close. Sandra stressed that we try not to skip any parts; it is a common habit to shift from far-away focus sharply back to an up-close focus. Once the exercise began, I immediately noticed this habit in myself and was surprised by the difficulty in shifting perception gradually from something far away to something up close. I instinctively wanted to 'jump the distance'. After this exercise, we were given another 30 minutes to choose attributes in the surrounding environment. Examples given included the movement of grass, the definition and angularity of a signpost, or the pathways and linearity of a nearby tree. We were then to respond to the two qualities we selected with movement, either moving between the two qualities or mixing them together. Sandra said, 'If I am working with a dynamic found in the environment then I am already there in relationship and dialogue with the environment… This is all to create a carpet of understanding with this element. We are not anthropomorphising, we are sending and feeling, relating.'

Following her advice, I walked over to the other side of the hill, shielded from most of the group by a row of hedges and small trees. Spending a moment in stillness I gradually landed on two qualities to follow with my improvisational practice. The first was the sound of the birds. Closing my eyes, I tried to listen to the different calls and respond in kind. Quick trills of songbirds were translated to fluttering of the fingertips, struggling to mimic the speed of the birdcalls. I converted the sharper, more sporadic calls of birds flying overhead into equally sharp and sudden lengthening and cutting of the arms through space; linear,

precise movement with a staccato rhythm. The arm movements were complimented with flexion and extension of the knees. Keeping my eyes closed, it was a challenge to simply respond to the different calls I heard with the rules I developed. However, once I felt this quality had thickened into a legible form, I tried to identify a second quality to respond to from the surroundings. I first started with the wind, allowing the breeze to shape my spine, pelvis and scapula, relating the effects of the wind on the grasses to my skeletal structure. However, after a short exploration I found myself close to the ground, face in the earth and the myriad insects crawling beneath me caught my attention, a metropolis of activity. I noticed a small beetle, a radiantly azure beetle that reflected the sunlight beautifully. I stuck out a finger and it crawled onto my hand. I let it crawl over my hands and arms and began to react to its skittering across my skin as a sort of duet between me and beetle. This practice quickly became engrossing, and I forgot about the wind and the grass; delicately creating pathways by rotating my forearms and placing and replacing the beetle on different parts of body, my hands and fingers becoming prehensile bridges.

This multispecies duet continued for a while until I attempted to split my attention between the careful crafting of dermal passageways and the erratic birdcalls overhead. Cautiously balancing a narrow focus with the miniature animal on my arms and an expansive focus on the birdcalls beyond the periphery of my vision; I continued to translate each into movement textures. In retrospect, I see how my own interpretation of the task could be seen to have favoured the up-close and the far-away and neglected the midground. Perhaps, through their transmutation my own body became the midground?

After this solitary practice finished, we were given an opportunity to witness a partner and their practice. Sandra then gathered us back together and spoke about affordance, which in the Gibsonian sense describes what the environment offers to an individual. To Gibson, affordance is a quality of the environment and how it relates to an organism, a chair might afford me a place to sit, a hill a place to rest, or a tree root might afford me an opportunity to trip head over heels (1979). For Sandra, affordance is a two-way process, I leave an imprint in the grass and the grass leaves something in and on me. She spoke about how we all spent a few hours together in the same place, but all saw it differently, we all have our own different stories. On the walk back to the car she asked us not to talk amongst ourselves. We were asked to notice detail and to ‘soften into being here both in terms of fact and in dream, or our internal life’. Before we reached the car, Sandra stepped off the path towards a small tree, the bottom of which was conspicuously covered in bracken. She removed some of the bracken and uncovered a carrot cake that she had hidden as a surprise for a fellow participant’s birthday. The uncovering of a cake underneath bracken was a delightful surprise after a long day in the sun.

Figure 8 The Second Location. Entrance to the woods hidden by a tombstone for a previous lord who had died falling from his horse.

The second day we gathered in the hall at 10:00am. The uneasiness of a new group of strangers had quickly transformed from the day prior, no doubt aided by the serendipitous carrot cake, and there was a friendly bustle of collaboratively brewing coffee and tea before we started practice. Before we settled into the hall, Sandra spoke a bit more about the practice of listening and moving in a particular space and how it might relate to our personal stories:

> How can I make less the sense that my identity is fixed and find some sort of malleability?
>
> Perhaps by noticing patterns you can accept and/or try to find something different, to open other possibilities.
>
> By lightly paying attention to rhythms and tones around us we can let things in.
> Work comes from body as receiver and then comes action, this is fundamental.
>
> Please relax, relax, receive, remember, release: senses become alive to textures until you begin to feel immersed. Then what happens? Is it even possible to move?

After the morning warm up we prepared to go out to the second site, a small, forested area surrounded by pastures and fields. The theme for this location was 'acceptance'. Our task from Sandra was to, through our movement, 'make the place more of what it is'. We were to do this not through overtly 'telling' your witness or audience, but through highlighting aspects already there. During the sharing portion of the practice, I witnessed Maya. Maya appeared to mimic the shapes of the tiny seedpods littered on the ground and used the ferns to cover her face emphasising a tactile relationship to the plants. Maya described my practice as if I appeared to be a great savannah cat climbing a tree to relax with my limbs merging into an aspect tangle of tree branches. Later, Sandra mentioned that she always

asks a place if it is ok to move there; sometimes they say no, like one place in Ireland. I made a note to ask her about this experience later when time allowed.[30]

On the third day I had a chat with Maya in the morning before our warm-up practice. I asked her why she continues to return to Sandra's workshops having come for years. She said, 'Sandra's work has the potential for deep change, but it is often uncomfortable.' For Maya this uncomfortability meant confronting troubling themes, emotions, or events in your life through performance and practice. One of these uncomfortable themes would later become apparent in Maya's shared performance. She also said that having another human being there to witness her outdoor practice was very important to her and thanked me for my presence the previous day. Later, Sandra mentioned that she noticed a strong sense of 'human community outdoors' with this group of practitioners. In previous years participants often preferred to practice alone, but this group and the other group she ran this year preferred to work close together. It feels safe to assume a large part of this change in group dynamic is related to the experiences of isolation during the pandemic.

As the week continued, elements of story and narrative began to be clearer and more developed both in our improvisational practices and in movement sharings in the locations. There was a moment in the morning warm up where I found myself surrounded on all sides by roaring, heaving 'human-monsters'. I grabbed a nearby stick and instinctively used it to mimic the movement of rowing a small boat between the other wild participants. Later another participant described me as 'Odysseus piloting a ship between Scylla and Charybdis'. In my practice by the cliff and seaside my partner described me as 'a sea creature going out to the ocean and transforming into a man'. In the closing circle, another participant commented on his experience of watching other movers in landscape and said, 'people's experiences and stories become portals to see other aspects of perspectives of a place.' The presence of people moving in landscape created narrative in the minds of the viewers even when the structure was improvised or without specific intentions, this was true for most of the participants, with or without formal theatre and performance training. The following section describes one such experience in greater detail and explores how improvisational play and creative endeavour erupted into a performance of adolescent revelry and ritual cleansing.

[30] On the sixth and final day I had a private moment with Sandra where she explained how during one weeklong residential workshop she led in Ireland she did some reconnaissance to find places to practice. There was one location she was particularly drawn to, but after spending some time there had a 'strong feeling' that it was not appropriate, or that group practice would not be welcome there.

Figure 9: The clay waterfall, Jurassic Coast 2021

I Think the Mud Liked That: Generating Story Through Group Practice

A majority of the fourth day was spent in a location of our choosing in order to develop our performances. Although this day was meant to be a day of solitary creation and rehearsal it, through no specific intention, instead became a day of deep collective and performative meaning. The day began with myself and eight other workshop participants carefully navigating a patch of slightly treacherous, hilly ground near the edge of a collapsed cliff along the Jurassic Coast between Charmouth and Stonebarrow hill. This unusual terrain was formed after a portion of the coastal cliff wall collapsed onto the beach and left behind uneven and irregular earth that has now overgrown with grasses and wildflowers. The disturbed soil created a series of ridges, platforms, deep crevasses, small nooks, and alcoves: a miniature labyrinthine topography replete with pitfalls, dead-ends, and vistas. The tall grasses hide potentially deep cracks in the ground to ensnare the unwary. The land, while vibrant and colourful, was untrustworthy.

Thankfully we were led by a knowledgeable guide and companion, onto whom we tied our trust like guy lines.[31] We had to move carefully, and followed Sandra's experienced footsteps, relying on her understanding of the place garnered through repeated treks and visitations.[32] As mentioned earlier, each location of the workshop was accompanied by a theme, and the chosen word for the ledges was "immersion". This word guided Sandra's tasks for the group. When we eventually arrived at the location where we would practice, each of us found somewhere to lay amongst the raised hillocks and sunken hammocks of soft earth, bodies disappearing into the viridian waves. Sandra's prompts guided a gentle movement exploration in this space:

> Work with 'in' and 'above' and 'on top of'
> In the cracks or on the hummocks
> Visible and invisible.
> Notice what you notice
> When is sound audible/inaudible?
> Body and sound. A body of sound.
> Work with hands, feet, and bottom

The insects and flowers covered, contained, and consumed the human forms encased within. One curious hovering insect captured my attention as it lazily drifted from bloom to blossom. Its wings seemed far too small to carry the tiny fuzzy body and its wisp-like legs hung limp from the abdomen, somehow despite their apparent delicacy still too heavy to shape. As it landed on the petals of a nearby pignut flower, I took a mental snapshot. Later I would research the insect to try and determine its unfamiliar name. The western bee fly seemed to not be perturbed by my ignorance nor presence and fluttered softly to its next meal. After I emerged from my languid exploration and re-joined the group, Sandra reminisced how in her ten years of living and working in this place she has noticed a steady decline and bird and insect species on these ledges. This losing and searching for names would later influence the performance I would share on the beach the next day.

After leaving the ledges, Sandra decided to adapt the plans for the day saying her intuition suggested a short detour. Along the way she pulled me aside and said she had a feeling this detour would provoke something for me. Earlier in the workshop I had been intending on doing my performative work in the village hall, to trouble the ideas of indoor and outdoor, of 'nature' and 'not nature'. However, the experiences that occurred that afternoon completely changed my concept and location, transporting me from hall to beach. Unbeknownst to me at the time, I haphazardly followed Sandra out of the grassy hummocks onto the ridge and towards a more recently collapsed part of the ridge allowing

[31] Guy lines, or simply a 'guy' is a tensioned cable designed to support a freestanding structure. A common example might be the long strings attached to camping tents or plastic gazebos that you stake into the ground to prevent them from blowing away.

[32] The term visitation is chosen here to reflect Sandra's repeated site visits with the intention of inspecting for group safety. She had previously informed the group that she goes to these locations early in the morning before the start of the day to make sure they are safe to practice in.

for a relatively safe descent. We carefully descended the decline of rock and earth onto the beach. The cliffs all around us were gradually, and sometimes dangerously fast, falling into the sea.

Our hesitant footsteps eventually carried us along the rocky beach and around a few outcroppings to a small waterfall emerging from the cliff face and ending in a shallow, but wide pool. The water was rich in clay from further up the cliffs and so formed a rather large swathe of deep clay on top of the typically rock covered beach. From here, each participant went to go work in their chosen locations to devise their solo performances. Maya, myself, and a few other participants decided to stay and work near the waterfall.

While the others went to go for a swim in the ocean, I took off my clothes and went to wade into the knee-deep pools of waterlogged clay. I began to use the clay to draw designs up my arms and legs. Two other participants later joined me, and we gradually covered more and more of ourselves with the clay. The final two swimmers emerged from the sea and their eyes glittered with mischief upon witnessing us stumbling amongst the clay. Maya was the first to scoop up a big glob of wet clay to toss at another participant. The previously gentle exploration of texture burst into mirthful revelry: crawling, trudging, sliding, slipping, throwing, falling, laughing. Three generations of near strangers who had only known each other for a few days now nearly naked covered head to toe in quickly drying clay: skin in various stages of slippery moisture and crackling immobility. Laughter and sloppy clay bounced off the walls of the cliff face. Time and choreographic responsibility forgotten by chasing, falling and general mess-making. Eventually the encrusted humans braved the ice-cold water of the waterfall to try and wash off the hardening second skin. Later, we lay on the large stones between the waterfall and the sea, basking in the sun to dry and warm up.

Radiating in the afterglow, Maya said that she felt that this, for her, had been the piece; the autobiographical performance we were supposed to develop individually and share the next day. The hour together in the clay had been the performance she needed, it was the work of mischief, ritual cleansing, and play. Maya felt she was connecting with actions and energies that she identified as youthful and masculine, like a 'leery teenager'. Through her experience, Maya took on attributes of different archetypal figures, bringing an element of story to our creative play. As we were leaving the waterfall, another participant, Allison, turned towards the pool of clay and said 'I think the waterfall enjoyed that. I think the mud enjoyed that.' It was a surprising and unexpected reminder that humans interacting with what many call nature can be a pleasurable thing for all involved. Allison, in her retelling also drew in the waterfall and the clay as active participants, and recipients, in the narrative. The next day it was clear how each of our performances were influenced by the collective effervescence engendered from our caper with the clay. As evidenced by Chapter 2 on Liminality and Communities of Practice, there was something particular about doing this together that made it potent.

STRATA, and other experiences during the fieldwork with movement artists working with environment themes unexpectedly highlighted how the human act of storytelling

facilitates and mediates our performative and creative relationship to the environment. The dominant language of conservation argues that human presence contaminates nature, that it ruins and despoils, that we need to protect it from human interference and manipulation (Büscher and Fletcher 2020). Storytelling and mythmaking through performance is one way in which artists counter a narrative of exclusion and separation, and according to Robin Kimmerer an essential aspect for restoring a relationship with landscape. For Maya and Sandra, narrative and storytelling assist in reconciling self and environment, supporting Jackson's stance that 'storytelling mediates our relation with worlds that extend beyond us' (2006: 23) thus lending towards the development of personal healing, increased self-knowledge, and creative practice. This mediation extends beyond the individual and subjective transformation as stories come into being within 'already existing web[s] of existing human relationships' (Arendt 1958: 84). As the above example demonstrates, it was through collaborative mischief and collaboration that Maya was able to achieve what she desired. For Katye and Tom in Kinship, storytelling is a tool that assists in constructing a community of shared perspective and experience, a further demonstration of the ability for story to 'fuse Then and Now, Here and There, the One and the Many' (Jackson 2006: 251).

Sharing Stories in Kinship Workshops

In Kinship Workshops, described in depth in Chapter 1 on Enchantment, many of the exercises are followed by one-on-one conversations where one partner may describe their experience of an exercise or describe their experience of witnessing their partner. Katye is an advocate of Gendlin Focusing and occasionally uses this methodology to frame discussion.[33] Inspired by the work of naturalist Jon Young, Tom would mention the importance of sharing experiences with others to develop a sense of nature connection.[34] For Young and Tom, not only is it important to share stories of experiences with the natural world, but also that these stories are received positively by mentors or peers. For example, if as a child you would talk about encountering an animal while out playing and a parent dismissed or ignored the retelling or framed the experience from a perspective of fear or disgust, the child is unlikely to seek similar experiences (Efird 2016). This echoes Arendt's sentiment that it is 'the presence of others who see and hear what we hear' which 'assures of the reality of the world and ourselves' (1958: 50). As an interpersonal format, storytelling involves the transformation of personal into shared experience, however 'there is no automatic or magical efficacy in speaking one's mind unless the institutional framework of a community, a profession, or religion, contextualises and recognises the act' (Jackson 2006: 40). Kinship Workshops attempt to fulfil this exact role through the relational, physical, sensorial, and dialogic exercises facilitated in group formats. I attempted to replicate and honour this aspect of the practice through including storytelling as part of the methodology

[33] Information on Eugene Gendling and Focusing can be found on the organisation's website here: https://focusing.org

[34] Information on Jon Young's practice can be found on his website here: https://www.jonyoung.online

of the research. In each of the interviews with Kinship participants they were asked to recount a story from one of the workshops they attended. Some of these stories appear in the chapter on Enchantment.

Although Jackson specifically writes about experiences of violence, his research demonstrates that through 'constructing, relating and sharing stories people contrive to restore viability to their relationship with the other, redressing a bias toward autonomy when it has been lost, and affirming collective ideals in the face of disparate experiences' (2006: 18). This same sense of restored viability with relationship can be applied to the more-than-human. Tom argues that through sharing the stories of experiences that occur during exercises such as 'Wayfaring' or 'Blind Sensing' with other participants, we can foster a greater sense of belonging, kinship even, with the environment. This approach is directly counter to the dominant patriarchal myth whereby mankind sets out as an individual to conquer a passive, feminine Nature, gaining mastery and dominance. Storytelling in this form supports Jackson's statement that 'stories, like memories and dreams, are *nowhere* articulated as purely personal revelations, but authored and authorised dialogically and collaboratively in the course of sharing one's recollections with others' (ibid:22).

Tom writes that in a Kinship Workshop, 'The landscape, the environment and the weather provide and hold a framework for meetings and encounters to happen, and reflective dialogue amongst the group of participants, helps to process experiences.' The sharing of stories of encounters that occur during solo practice serves as a primary facet of processing experience and helps guide participants towards the ultimate goal of the workshop which is that '[t]hrough experiencing or remembering our human physicality, senses, desires and close connection to others' we find a greater connection to human and more-than-human life and 'find our place in the "family of things"'.[35] The workshops are Tom's attempt to generate a sense of belonging and kinship. Jackson describes belonging as a process whereby 'one's own life merges with and touches the lives of others – predecessors, successors, contemporaries and consociates, as well as the overlapping worlds of nature, the cosmos, and the divine' (2006: 12). What is crucial for Tom and Katye is that this sense of belonging extends beyond human communities to include landscape and non-human others, which is why most of the stories that occur include these essential characters. The reader might remember the tiny fly present in Mary's story, the trees and their shadows in Rachel's story, or the horse in Maisie's story. Sharing the story with another helps to reinforce the experience as a positive encounter, enriching each individual's greater sense of belonging.

The first ethnography shared of Sandra Reeve's STRATA: Autobiographical Movement described an accidental performance by unlikely collaborators, ignoring previously established rules and structures. Kinship Workshops utilise oratory storytelling as an important facet of their workshops. The third and final example is neither of these things. The practice described below follows a carefully articulated score and was followed

[35] Here Tom is quoting poet Mary Oliver and her poem titled Wild Geese (1986).

to the letter. It occurred over multiple hours and not a single word was spoken. Nestled in the temperate rainforests of North Pembrokeshire we wandered for miles in the pitch dark curating embodied experiences of place.

Figure 10: A bay where we swam with dolphins, build a bonfire, and shared favourite passages from books and poems during a workshop with Simon Whitehead and Kirstie Simson Pembrokeshire, 2022

Simon Whitehead and Practicing Places

The final ethnographic story is shared from a workshop with movement artists Simon Whitehead and Kirstie Simson. Starting in 2017, they devised a co-led annual workshop titled '*Practicing Places*'. I took part in the 2022 July rendition, *'Staying with it…' practices that engender resilience and kindness*. The four-day workshop included indoor and outdoor dance improvisation, walking, swimming, singing, drawing, making fires, and sharing meals. During those four days and nights I came face to face with personal fears of the dark and murky water. To animate this highly idiosyncratic and imaginative practice, I have chosen to utilise storytelling as the medium through which to describe me and my partner's experience of Simon's nocturnal movement score. Through this method, I hope to bring the reader closer to the bewildering and fey transformations that occurred during that final night.

Figure 11 Returning to Candlelight in Neuadd Abercych Hall

Twilight Transformations: Dancing Stories of the Visible and Invisible

Ten people are gathered in Neuadd Abercych Hall in Pembrokeshire, West Wales. The wooden floor is littered with large rolls of paper that carry the traced imprints of our bodies. A mural of Avon Teifi leading to Cardigan Bay looks down upon our handiwork from the day before. This is the final night the four-day workshop. Outside, the land appears to oxidise as dusk softly settles on the surrounding hills. Inside the hall five pairs stand listening to Simon describe the score, or series of instructions, for the night walk. The first partner is to 'drift', a technique introduced in earlier exercises that means to follow impulse, curiosity and desire as you walk without a destination in mind. The second partner was to follow the first as they drifted through the nearby streets and pathways into the woods. Eventually, the first partner would choose somewhere to stop. When they did, both partners were to sit back-to-back in the location and allow their focus and muscles in their neck to soften. Once you could feel the warmth of your partner's spine, you gradually lift the gaze to take in the landscape, paying attention to sight, sound, and smell to arrive at a sense of bodily landing in the place. When ready, the partner who chose the location will rise and move in the landscape; the other partner acting as witness to the performance. When the mover finishes, they make eye contact with the witness to signal the end of the dancing and the roles switch. The second partner then becomes the drifter and leads the meandering walk to a new location. Over the course of the night each partner chooses two locations and the entire nocturnal score is completed without speaking. The score takes place during the transition from dusk to night to experience the hormonal, metabolic, and perceptual shifts in the body during the shift to darkness.

My partner and I were the first to set out from the hall. I could feel my nerves bundled in my throat and I tried to swallow them down, to condense the growing fear of getting lost into something more manageable. Contrarily, my partners effervescent excitement bubbled through the soles of her feet, lightening her steps along the pavement. Her buoyant tread and giddiness failed to calm my nerves so much as transform them into something more benign, a sort of adrenal potentiality. This was the first of many transformations that would occur in the dark; silhouettes merging and animal calls filling in the deep fissures in space left by the receding light.

We walked down the hill and the outlines of buildings softened and darkened despite the pale blue colour of the dusk sky, darkness arriving in the languid, gradual nature of warm summer nights. My partner was the first to drift. Eventually we approached the path that leads into Ffynone Woods, where we had practiced earlier in the day. Instead of following the more well tread path on the left, she approached the open gate on the right with a sign posted outside: 'Not a public footpath. Enter only with the landlord's permission and at your own risk.' Mischief twinkled in her teeth as twilight illuminated her face, the weight of the arriving dark somehow acting as an invitation to bypass permission. Here in the night, form and structure are unmade. Myth unfolds organically from emptiness.

We walked up the steep path through the woods where we came across a large swathe of clearcut trees. Bracken and brambles were growing through the tombstone stumps of harvested trees. She chose to pause here, and we sat in the deep groves imprinted in the torn soil by heavy machinery. The ghosts of the place felt uncomfortably near. We followed the structure of the score and after the warmth of her vertebrae permeated through my own, she rose and took her place amongst the ruin. Eyes closed, her arms lifted and responded delicately to an unseen force. There was sensitivity in her fingers and face as she slowly shifted and rotated. While she danced, a pair of bats swooped and fluttered past to feed on insects in the air. A flock of jackdaws were made perceptible only through their calls as they moved through the forest, I was able to trace their presence along the horizon in counterpoint to the heavy silence on the harvested stumps. The jackdaws and bats were her constant companions in this subtle dance of mourning. A funeral for a forest turned field.

When it was my turn to drift, I followed a path through the clearcut section of the woods, back onto the main trail. A field of flowering grasses captured my attention, and I chose to wade through some brambles to veer off the trail. Once safely in the field I sat on a cut stump with my partner, again back-to-back. After taking some time to arrive and listen to the surroundings, I rose and walked over to a large fallen branch. Walking hand over hand I lifted the branch from the ground until the pressure caused it to snap. I stood holding a 3-metre-tall stick and balanced it against my spine, my vertebrae appearing to double in height. My movement was borne from intuition, exploration of texture, and cautious curiosity. There was no pre-planning or attempts to convey meaning or narrative. The performance and story 'came from the environment' and was received by my partner through her own perceptual interpretation. Later, she would comment on how the mass of

vines stuck to the long branch was serendipitously located directly at head height. In the darkness it appeared that a massive living tangle of hair sprouted from the back of my head and moved with a will of its own as the giant branch connected to my spine mimicked trees rising and falling from the long grass.

Leaving the second location to continue our nocturnal drift, we soon went beyond familiar routes and followed a narrow dirt road sheltered by tall trees. Our sense of isolation was pierced twice by stumbling into other couples silently navigating the night and once by the combined call and rustle of branches of a large unidentified bird. Eventually my partner jumped a gate into another field along the crest of a gently sloping hill. We sat among the grasses, and she rose to dance. By this time dusk had left completely and the world was a near-monotone series of blues and greys. The little moonlight there was, masked by cloud cover, transformed my partner into a silhouette. Abruptly, she took off towards the distant treeline, reaching the edge of my vision. Her silhouetted shape merged with the two-dimensional outlines of the trees behind her. The contrast of perspective meant that her body and the trees appeared to be the same size; human and arboreal limbs merging and being subsumed by each other. Her dance creating tableaus consisting of the chimeric images of a vegetal-mammalian being; fingers and branches appearing at odd angles. Repeatedly her body was swallowed completely by the tangled forest, and for short periods I was left completely alone on my hill, shared only with the stars and no-see-ums.

Eventually she returned from her pilgrimage beyond the hill, her sudden presence causing my heart to leap. Recollecting myself I took the lead again and began to drift towards our final destination. We walked through forested pathways that coalesced into midnight-black tunnels, alongside ruins of an abandoned structure, and down steep hills populated by twisted roots and misshapen stones that threatened our footing in the dark. At one point I was convinced I had gotten us hopelessly lost in the woods and I felt a lump in my throat germinating a seed of panic. Gratefully I had only misjudged a previously trod path which had morphed into unfamiliarity in the shadows, and after a few minutes shortly found myself back near The Nag's Head in Abercych.

Inspired by the brashness of my partner I leapt the locked fence that led to the pub's outdoor seating and then continued to climb over the gate that led to the river's edge. I could taste the scent of Avon Cych on my tongue. The aroma carried equal parts of trepidation and temptation as the stones of the riverbed were made incandescent by the moonlight. My partner crouched at the edge of the water, and I meticulously took off my socks and shoes to wade in the dark water. A single streetlight illuminates the bridge over the river as I begin to skulk on all fours from half submerged rock to rock. Transitioning from standing, crawling, squatting and crouching I travelled along the riverbed. Later, back in Neuadd Abercych Hall, my partner would describe this final dance as amphibian transformations aided by the dynamic contrast provided by the competing lamp and moonlight. In this final exploration, via the sense of safety afforded to me by my partner's witnessing, I was able to overcome both my fear of water and the dark transmuting apprehension into appreciation.

The perceived transformation and animation of typically inert objects coloured our mutual experiences of the night: our dances alchemising becoming and unbecoming, renewal and death. It is hardly surprising that these themes arose during explorations of a nocturnal movement practice. This experience mirrors the 'noctographic' work of Ellen Jeffrey's *Nightfalling* (2021). In her thesis, Jeffrey argues that her twilight movement practice entangles 'real and imagined, self and other' and 'has the capacity to transform human and more-than-human relatedness.' For Jeffrey the night is 'a world where imagination anticipates form rather than recognises it' and my experience as a participant in a nocturnal movement score supported her claims. Further, in communicating my experiences first with my partner in the candlelit village hall, and then here in the written thesis I draw from the Arendtian notion that:

> the storyteller's point of view remains *within* the world, moving from one particular place or person to another, and resisting all claims to ultimate Truth by reminding us that truth is relative to where we situate ourselves, to where we stand'
> (Arendt 1965: 52 in Jackson 2006: 253).

'Truth' and 'Form' remained intangible and porous in our experiences of each other's performances during the score. In this ethnographic encounter, the meaning we perceived in each other's work was made more potent through the ambiguity distinctive of both movement and darkness.

Conclusion

Quoting the work of Andreas Weber and Sylvia Winter, the activist-artists Isabelle Fremeaux and Jay Jordan write that 'societies orient themselves by the stories they tell themselves' (2021: 13). Further, they contend that 'reality is held together by the most successful stories we tell about it and therefore can be transformed, via different stories and myths, which shift attention' (ibid: 83). The ethnography described above provides examples of how movement artists in the UK use improvisational scores to practice a mode of attention that privileges the perception of relationship between human and landscape. In embracing narrative in different forms, be it through creative practice with Sandra Reeve, reflexive dialogue with Tom Goodwin, or as a way to communicate experience as I have attempted to do with Simon Whitehead's score, each is an attempt through storytelling to 'keep us morally engaged with the world by showing us how to care for it' (Cronon 1992: 1375). Aristotle describes narrative as one of our most effective methods for making sense of the world and understanding our actions in it. Environmental historian William Cronon argues

that just as humankind's actions invariably have real consequences in nature and the environment so too do natural events have real consequences on culture and society. In this way, despite not being able to speak, nature 'is hardly silent' and Cronon insists that 'nature co-authors our stories' (1992: 1373). The evidence gathered in this fieldwork demonstrates how dance and movement artists utilise both individual and grand narratives to grapple with the abstract manifold voices of 'nature' as they attempt to cultivate an environmental sensibility in their work and those they work with. To conclude, the sentiments of this chapter echo Haraway's claim that 'each time a story helps me remember what I thought I knew or introduces me to new knowledge, a muscle critical for caring about flourishing gets some aerobic exercise' (2016: 29). The knowledge these stories contain is often experiential and embodied, offering opportunities to perceive personhood in nature, to be enchanted, to be swept away into a 'stance of presumptive generosity' (Bennett 2001: 188). The telling of the stories reinforces these experiences for the teller while also welcoming listeners into an empathic relationship with the experience. As the next chapter outlines, having a community of practice like that of the Kinship practitioners or Sandra and Simon's workshops increases opportunities for the sharing and development not only of practice but also of experience. Chapter Three looks at the work of Hampstead artist Hayley Matthews and her network Sanctuary on the Faultline to examine how the community she developed sought to reimagine dance artists relationship to nature and structures of power.

Chapter Three: Communities of Practice, Liminality, and Imagining Alternative Futures

Introduction: COVID-19 and Sanctuary

The fieldwork undertaken as part of this thesis occurred between 2020-2022 and most of the ethnography included in this chapter occurred in and around North London. Due to an ongoing global public health crisis, it was characterised by repeated interruptions, a need for flexibility due to constant shifts between digital and analogue medias, the removal of many types of physical contact, and an enhanced sensitivity and care needed when approaching previously simple tasks such as taking public transportation or meeting new people. The COVID-19 pandemic claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and disrupted millions more. This chapter argues that the depth of the pandemic, with the repeated series of lockdowns and massive deviations from a previously accepted standard way of daily life, acted as a sort of global liminal phenomenon. Victor Turner describes the limen as 'an interval, however brief, when the past is momentarily negated, suspended, or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun, an instant of pure potentiality when everything, as it were, trembles in the balance' (Turner 1979: 41). Conversation during this period of lockdowns and isolations contained shared language, anxiously attempting to conceive an image of the 'new normal'. There may have been little agreement on what had changed, what might be reclaimable, or what needed to be abandoned, but there was a tenuous

consensus that we could not return to the past and the future was terrifyingly uncertain. We were thoroughly what felt like the middle of a liminal phase described by Graham St John as 'unsettled, unsettling, and ambiguous movement between fixed points' (2008: 19). We were moving somewhere but no-one knew where for certain.

Elaborating on Turner's theory Mihai Coman writes that 'through liminality, a society is able to evaluate itself, to reflect upon its structure and the possibilities of changing it; [and that] due to this quality liminality can be a threat to the social order' (2008: 95). However, Turner describes liminal phases as 'provisional of a cultural means of generating variability, *as well as* of ensuring the continuity of proved values and norms' (1985: 162). Liminality is not inherently revolutionary and may indeed eventually perform a cementation of previously experienced structures. Turner argued that one way these periods of liminality are navigated is through ritual and performance. He famously argued that ritual events may occur as responses to crises and act as a form of social drama, whereby mankind attempts to 'relive, re-create, retell, and reconstruct their culture' (St John 2008: 6). This quality was evident in the fieldwork when for many in the UK ritual events, identified by Turner to include performance, music, film, sports, and literature, acted as a form of refuge that provided purpose and connection to those traumatised and isolated by the pandemic. It remains to be seen exactly how this virus has irrevocably altered the social fabric of the UK. To provide a small sliver of insight, this chapter follows one London-based dancer's experiences during this liminal phase and her attempt to harness its inchoate potentiality, as well as her own vulnerability, to critique the structures under which she lived prior and imagine an alternative future.

First, I will introduce the work of Hayley Matthews and the organisation she founded, Sanctuary on the Fault Line ('SotF' or 'Sanctuary') as well as outline some of the impacts of COVID-19 on dance in the United Kingdom to illustrate the gravity of economic and existential loss many artists encountered. Next, I provide ethnographic descriptions of some of Hayley's performances and SotF gatherings to provide contextual evidence to further elucidate Hayley's motivations and ambitions. Etienne Wenger's concept of 'communities of practice' (2015) helps this chapter to frame not only the localised communities studied as part of the fieldwork, but also environmental movement practices in the UK as a tentacular whole. This is followed by a deeper analysis of Turnerian liminality, structure, anti-structure, and communitas particularly in relation to SotF, the desires of its founder and its ability to achieve them. Ultimately this chapter evaluates the liminal potentiality of SotF itself and its confrontation with wider structural resistance which disrupted and complicated its utopian dreamings. Examining SotF as an attempt to develop an anti-structural project during a liminal re-examination of social structure provides a significant glimpse into the complicated tension between the ideals of egalitarian counter-narratives and the regimented structures they attempt to circumvent.

Sanctuary on the Fault Line, COVID-19 and Dance

Hayley Matthews is a British freelance contemporary dancer and Rolfer.[36] She works primarily between London and Norwich where she offers one-to-one Rolfing sessions as a somatic therapist. Hayley provides Rolfing to assist individuals with chronic pain, postural alignment, relief from trauma or stress, or to develop performance quality. Her performance work, both solos and collaborations, are housed under the moniker 'ENSEMBLE'.[37] Hayley describes her artistic practice as focused on 'intimacy, freedom, grace, the power of vulnerability and authenticity, fugitivity, woman, the unleashing of creative life-force, dancer's health and potential and what she believes is the yet to be fully untapped and realised potential of dance performance' (ensembledance.org). Hayley also calls herself the initiator and caretaker of Sanctuary on the Fault Line. Sanctuary is a global network of professional dancing women which Hayley initiated during the summer of 2020. During the particularly difficult early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hayley, and many in the performing arts community were hit exceptionally hard by the sudden and absolute loss of all work and related income.

In the UK 55% of jobs in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation were furloughed, second only to Accommodation and Food at 56%; whereas the national industry average was only 16% (Chamberlain and Morris 2021). Furthermore, these record numbers of layoffs fail to account for the high prevalence of self-employed individuals working in the arts, where much needed support was both delayed and more complicated than for those who were furloughed by an employer. Only 54% of 181,000 self-employed people in the arts were deemed eligible, and only 62% of those eligible in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation made claims on the Self-Employment Income Support Stream (SEISS). A report completed by the University of Sheffield argued that this percentage is much lower than expected given the impact on the industry and that the complexity of the eligibility requirements not only deterred some individuals from applying, but also left many ineligible individuals who "fell through the cracks" and did not qualify for either the SEISS or Furlough schemes. The report noted that 'Many creatives move between employment and self-employment or do both at the same time' (ibid 2021). The 'dynamism and versatility' that the sector demands of artists ended up disqualifying many of them from both SEISS or Furlough or left them 'only been able to claim small amounts of support.' The actor's union, Equity, wrote that 'Most creative workers are self-employed with no recourse to the furlough scheme, yet 40% were excluded from the SEISS. Of those that were able to access the scheme, 59% did not find it sufficient to meet their basic needs' (Equity 2021).[38] As a freelance artist Hayley was one of the individuals who struggled to receive any governmental support during the

[36] Rolfing is a type of bodywork therapy that focuses on realignment of fascia and connective tissue to alleviate pain and discomfort. It was created by Dr Ida P. Rolf. More information about Rolfing can be found at https://www.rolf.org.

[37] Additional information about Hayley and ENSEMBLE can be found on her website https://www.ensembledance.org/about.

[38] "Open letter to Chancellor" Equity | BBC news report 26 Jan 2021

coronavirus pandemic while the precarious foundations and funding streams that she and many other artists relied on were ripped away.

In the depths of this loss Hayley devoted her daily allotted outdoor exercise time to developing and maintaining her performance practice through running and other physical training methods. Unable to access studio space, she was now limited to Hampstead Heath which she was fortunate to have available just outside her home. While Hayley was eventually able to secure support through Universal Credit, there was a period of six weeks where her Universal Credit got pulled and she had nothing. Recounting the experience to me in her flat, she described how during one of her runs through the heath she felt herself begin to cry and was overwhelmed not by self-pity, but out of concern for her place in society. She recited wondering: 'What if I can't give the thing that I need to give? And what if I can't rest either?'. For Hayley, dance is a gift that dancers give to the world. She strongly believes that dancers provide a vital service to society. She argues that dancers can 'remind people what true power is, which is our bodies moving in the world' through watching their performances and that these experiences play an important role in 'the tapestry of our emotional lives… which have an effect on our physical health'. Hayley was mourning an attack on her sense of self-worth, 'all these voices were telling me I had nothing that was worth anything.'

As if losing financial independence was not painful enough, Hayley and other artists suffered further perceived attacks on their jobs, which many link very closely to their sense of identity, by top figures in the UK government. In October 2020 a campaign advertisement backed by the government surfaced that pictured a dancer sitting on a bench tying her pointe shoes. Next to this image superimposed text read: 'Fatima's next job could be in cyber. (she just doesn't know it yet)' (see Figure 1).[39] This highly controversial ad also came shortly after comments made by then Chancellor Rishi Sunak on the approaching end of his furlough scheme. Sunak said that the government would do its best to support 'viable jobs'. The conditions set on receiving financial support meant that only those who were working a third of their usual hours could make claims. This left industries that were still shut down, such as dance, music, and theatre, in the inferred 'unviable' category. Whether these comments or advertisements supported by government officials were purposefully meant to degrade the arts industry and creative practitioners or not is beside the point; the comments themselves were perceived by many as assaults on their self-worth and self-identity. The comments were especially biting as they were made by those who were deciding whose careers were worth preserving or not, *who* was worth preserving or not.

[39] To add insult to injury, the photo is of Atlanta based dancer Desire'e Kelly and was used without her or the photographer's consent. The photo was found on a stock photography website which terms of license allows for commercial download and usage. However, there is a caveat in the terms which states permission is needed if a person is recognizable in the photo.

Figure 12: CyberFirst Campaign advertisement from October 2020

Amid the self-doubt and introspection of the summer of 2020, Hayley invited her local friends to come and watch her perform in a wooded part of Hampstead Heath under an isolated grove of beech trees. At first, she could only invite five people to stay within the 'rule of six' set during the pandemic. During these performances she witnessed her neighbours and friends being moved to tears watching her perform and she recognised the potential for her dancing to heal and connect. This is one aspect of 'the gift' Hayley feels dancers share with their audiences. Instead of allowing herself to fall deeper into despair, she continued to host these intimate, local performances. The performances and their effects enabled Hayley to recognise she was touching 'the bottom of the well of a very deep thing' that had long been troubling her: the agency, or lack thereof, of dancers and their craft.

SotF is ultimately about recapturing and advocating for the agency of women dancers; providing them with structure and community to support themselves, develop their art, and provide opportunities to demonstrate what she calls 'the dancer's gift to the human family'. On her website, Hayley describes SotF as:

> a strengthening, a drinking in, a blossoming, a gathering, a mycelial infiltration, a recalibration, a rewilding, a recovering, a deep grounding, an uplifting, an unshackling, a beautiful disappearing from grasp, a beating drum, a flooding of dance and 'woman' ~ in all her powers ~ through women dancers ~ to you. (Matthews, n.d.)

For Hayley, SotF is a way to share and empower other women dancers with what she learned during this period, to create a wide community of dancers performing outdoors for local audiences and supporting themselves via a gift economy rather than the unending cycle of grant applications and fickle whims of funding bodies.

Hayley had for a while felt grateful for, yet also restrained by, the repetitive cycle of grant applications that fund many independent artists. She felt that the arcane process of churning out huge grant applications along with the requirements and parameters tied to successful projects made her feel like a 'dance machine' or a 'dance factory' just to receive the financial support to create her work and obtain basic subsistence. Haley credits her work as a Rolfer, helping people to uncover and 'move through whatever inhibits them from moving through life pain-free', in assisting her to realise that these funding structures were inhibiting her and the fellow dancers she encountered as a Rolfer. She later described the physical effects of these structural inhibitions on her body and practice:

> if I'm in flexion all the time, but if I never come into extension and can reach, and if when I'm reaching, I'm scared, because I've got to pay my electricity bill and there's no way I can, [then] I can never actually reach for what I really want.

The metaphor of constant flexion, of contracting and pulling in, made her feel that she was never able to truly extend and express her work, that of movement and performance, from an authentic place. The lack of authenticity therefore limited the ability of her work to demonstrate feelings of extension, lift, and freedom that she felt audience members needed to experience. Only a liberated dancer could authentically move with grace and freedom and transmit these to her audiences. Ultimately, the pandemic intensified the lack of foundation she was already feeling from working in the sector and felt that she needed to step up as a leader to imagine alternative structures to allow dancers to produce and share their work. Sanctuary is her attempt to provide such an alternative structure; for dancers to go outside and perform locally, to circumvent the need for funding bodies, and for the public to be able to support individual dancers financially. This structure would be made stronger through organising as a community of dancers to share resources, skills, and audiences.

At the time of writing, Sanctuary on the Fault Line hosts gift economy links and support for eleven dancers in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Greece. SotF has secured Arts Council funding to provide free or minimal cost week-long conferences/residential training in Norwich to woman-identifying dancers each January for the last three years as well as funding for the core group of organisers to create films of their performance work. Hayley also periodically organises monthly digital meetings for SotF members to share best practices, discuss challenges, and support each other's work. Hayley is dedicated to cultivating SotF as a 'Global Fugitive Network' of professional women dancers making 'wild dances.' While she is the founder of the network, she attempts to keep the organisation democratic and consults with other members. Currently there is a 'Founding Circle' of the eight original members who discuss decisions that affect the network as a whole.

Hayley's personal performance philosophy and the development of SotF act as a case study to examine how when structures of support collapse, community may be imagined and developed in response to that collapse as an attempt to cultivate alternative counter-structures or modes of practice. It is important to recognize that communal

practice is also a standard essential component in many of the environmental dance forms encountered in the UK including the Kinship Workshops detailed in Chapter One, Sandra Reeve's and Simon Whitehead's work in Chapter Two. However, Sanctuary must also be understood as a product of a particular moment in time and is representative of attempts to seek community and connection amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, which this chapter attempts to frame as a near-global period of liminality.[40] The next section includes ethnographic observations from one of Hayley's public performances to contextualise her philosophy as well as briefly introduce research that examines the effects of witnessing performance on audience members.

Performance: *Lakes of Anima*

Figure 13: Hayley Matthews Preparing to Begin Lakes of Anima in Hampstead Heath

The first performance I saw of Hayley's took place on Hampstead Heath, nestled inside a cloistered beech grove I would come to know very well during the fieldwork. The performance, titled *Lakes of Anima*, began at dusk, which at this time of year was around 7:00pm. The start time of the performance would shift slightly as the weeks and months went by to stay in line with the fading of twilight into early night. This way Hayley's

[40] I hesitate to describe this period of liminality as completed, finished or 'over'. At the time of writing, it is too soon to describe the pandemic as something as existing exclusively in the past. Regardless, the period from Winter 2020 to Autumn 2022 contains a previously accepted societal structure that experienced an abrupt rupture, a period of severe instability and unknowns, and an attempt to 'return to normal'. Whether the 'transitional' phase of lockdowns and restrictions is actually over remains to be determined.

performance would gradually shepherd us into darkness.[41] As I arrived at the grove the wind carried an encroaching autumnal chill and the bare ground characteristic of beech groves lacked a soft herbaceous underlayer to cushion the hard earth, so I huddled against the back of one of the beeches. There were only a few people at this performance, attended mostly by Hayley's neighbours and friends from Qigong or Tai Chi who also meet to practice in Hampstead Heath. Her husband had set up a single theatre light, illuminating part of the forest floor, the contrast of light and dark creating a dark curtain behind her obscuring much of the underbrush. The performance began with two of early modern dancer Isadora Duncan's solos, the *Mother's Etude* (1921), and *The Revolutionary* (1923).

Isadora Duncan and her repertory, which are discussed in greater detail in this chapter, are a significant part of the SotF community Hayley built. Each of the annual labs Hayley facilitates include daily classes with Barbara Kane, a legacy Isadora Duncan dancer. The two Duncan solos that open *Lakes of Anima* are about loss and rage respectively, demonstrating Hayley's journey from a place of deep grief and channelling it into a force for change. The work ends with Hayley's own choreography showcasing her own creative force as an artist. Utilising repetitive gestures and strong use of directed focus, this section was emotive and hopeful. Despite being stationary for most of this section, the use of both subtle and direct changes in gaze illustrated shifts between internal and external stimuli. Nearing the end of the work, Hayley's gestures increase in speed and complexity, crafting a rising sense of effort and tension. As the end of the performance approaches, the repetition slows, and she gently raises her gaze up towards the bare canopy.

As an audience member I felt my own gaze lift in reflexive response. The gradual onset of darkness as the performance brought us from dusk into darkness had escaped my notice; my focus on Hayley as a solo performer had gradually shrunk my experience of space onto the small patch of disturbed earth and partly covered roots she danced on. As I mirrored her shift of focus upwards, I noticed the lower branches of the beeches illuminated by the powerful light below and I was suddenly shaken with an extraordinary sense of awe at the vastness of the trees and of the night sky. There was a dramatic shift in the sense of scale: Hayley's body was abruptly dwarfed, and our bodies by extension, by the giants we sheltered underneath. There was a sinking sensation that began in the back of my throat and fell deep to the pit of my stomach that accompanied the sudden experience of expanse. Hayley's gaze had taken me with her out of the sheltered grove and flung into the capacious night sky.

Following the performance, I spoke with a few of the people in the audience as they greeted each other and began to wander home in the dark. One described Hayley's movement as 'not animalistic but reminds me that we are animals. It is sensual and ecstatic,

[41] Dancing at dusk would also come to be a poignant recurring element experienced in the field. Simon Whitehead has a night dancing practice detailed in Chapter Two. Charlotte Spencer's *Is This A Wasteland* is scheduled to end just as twilight falls, asking the audience to join the performers around a small bonfire. Carolyn Deby's *Becoming Fungi, Becoming Forest* had audiences meander through Coventry in the dark stumbling across various performers hid around the city. Finally, Ellen Jeffrey's PhD Thesis (2021) details her own night-time dancing which she calls 'noctographic movement practice'.

it is a gift that she shares with us.' This statement echoed Hayley's own belief that the dance itself is a gift that dancers have a duty to share with others. The current structures fail to properly support dancers to fully share that gift, hence Hayley's desire to create new modes of community and resources which might generate alternative structures. Another audience member said, 'Her energy resonates beyond the performance and helps me feel connected – especially during the pandemic.' Each of the audience members I spoke with repeatedly attended the same performance as it developed over time. Renate, one of the Qigong practitioners, had already attended six of Hayley's dances in Hampstead when we spoke later in November 2020. When I asked why she returned, Renate said that Hayley's dancing had a very profound effect on her, that it was a visceral, arresting experience. Hayley's embodied emotional presence affected her deeply, and it continued to do so each time she returned. She felt that the location played an important role in that efficacy. Renate said 'there's a particular kind of presence here on the heath that she connects to... sometimes it's almost as though there's no separation with her and her environment. She's so at one with it. There's no boundary almost.' She pauses and perhaps acknowledging the phantastic nature of her claims asks, 'Does that make any sense to you?'.

Kathy, another audience member, also regularly attended Hayley's performances in the summer and autumn of 2020. She said that the performance had 'an essence that was worth remembering', and that she needed to go multiple times to remember it. Attending the performance gave her an opportunity to spend time with her sister when everything else seemed to be closed. Kathy also spoke about how watching the performance in that specific location on the heath contributed to her ability to pay attention:

> The earth is there, and the trees are there… you can feel the earth under your feet… we had birds, and there were bats drifting… it rooted the performance. I don't know how much it would have grabbed me in a theatre. [This place is] where I see the change of seasons, it's where I feel the change in temperature and it's where I notice what's happening in the natural world. So, all of that feeds into the performance.

The grove of beech trees Hayley performed in was where Kathy practiced Qigong and Tai-Chi, so the place held several purposes and identities for Kathy. The performances she attended took place in different seasons, and so the experience of light and quality of the air changed each time, even if the movement stayed mostly the same: 'It's that sense of change, the cycles moving around, and doing it in the dark was just magic, I mean it was absolutely magic.'

Hayley's performances on Hampstead Heath drew together a local community of Qigong practitioners, neighbours, and dance appreciators. It provided opportunities to meet, gather, and talk during a time when it was difficult, potentially even dangerous, to do so. The opportunities to perform helped Hayley hang on to her sense of self and worth; while also inspiring her to draw together other artists struggling with the same uncertainties and precarity she was contending with. Imperfect and improvisational, SotF is one example

of how dancing outdoors in natural spaces can draw together community on multiple levels to imagine alternative and sustainable approaches of living.

Witnessing Performance: The Dancer's Role in Society

After the logistical limitations imposed by necessary public safety measures forced Hayley to move her performance and training outdoors, I asked Hayley to describe the effect moving outdoors had on her and her craft. Firstly, she said a regular outdoor practice helped her 'to stay robust', to combat the physiological effects of lockdown on her both physically and socially. Performing every week for her neighbours and training outdoors helped her to experience a 'softening of the layers of socialisation' and the weekly performances for her neighbours made her feel 'surrounded by a loving and appreciative presence'. She described her dancing as a way of processing her life during lockdown, and she acknowledged that every one of her audience members were also suffering in their own ways. She felt that her neighbours came to witness her process isolation, shutdown and dealing with threat. For her, it was an experience far removed from performing in front of a theatre audience 'just there to clap'. The interviews I conducted with audience members at the *Lakes of Anima* performance supported her experience. Hayley's performances provided consistent opportunities to connect to feelings of 'humankindness' during a period of otherwise intense remoteness and separation.

Secondly, while dancing outdoors was first a necessity; it made impossible things possible again, it also aided Hayley to confront who gets to dance and where. It allowed her time to 'strip back' all the layers of work that go into creating a performance. Prior, in order to show work to an audience and get paid, many resource-intensive activities predicated the actual performance: producing and editing a show reel, writing grant applications, creating the show, filming the show, advertising the show to programmers, and then somehow also finding the money to pay bills. She felt that in forcing her dance to fit into these 'capitalist and monetised structures' she severely inhibited the 'grace, vulnerability, and compassion' of the work before it ever made it to audiences. She argued that the demanding and esoteric funding structures and processes also inhibited her ability to authentically share and express these qualities in her work.

For Hayley this authentic expression is essential. She spoke about how by spending all day walking or sitting in shoes in cities and on hard concrete, individuals lose their 'gecko-ey, haptic, feeling connection' to the ground and it shows up not only in physical afflictions like back pain and plantar fasciitis, but also in emotional afflictions like anxiety, depression and overwhelm. Feeling the ground with 'her whole haptic foot' enabled her to 'discharge' that energy into the ground. Akin to how her performances helped her neighbours process their experiences of lockdown and isolation, Hayley firmly believes that bodywork modalities such as Rolfing and watching dance can remind individuals how to move in ways that make them less vulnerable to back pain, depression, and anxiety and can

even help confront 'the crisis of young people and their mental health, the crisis of the environment, and the crisis of capitalism.' Hayley's claim that watching performance "does something to you" is supported by contemporary research in neuroscience and psychology.

An unpublished study by the UCL Division of Psychological and Language Sciences in 2017 found that audience members attending a performance of *Dreamgirls* heartbeats synchronised and their pulses slowed down or sped up at the same rate (Devlin *et al.* 2017).[42] The same group of researchers also found that watching a live performance could produce the same cardiovascular results of a 28-minute workout. Further, popular science of mirror neurons suggests that through watching an action, the witness's mirror neurons correlating to that action will also fire, eliciting a shared embodied, empathetic reaction (Tanaka 2021). The caveat here from Hayley's perspective is that dancers can only express this haptic connection and share it with audience members if they themselves feel that connection genuinely and from a position of strength and self-knowing, not one of endless precarity and struggle. This information briefly recounted in these studies are popularly discussed by dancers encountered in the UK. The idea that watching performance can affect somatic, physical, and emotional responses in audience members is considered common knowledge obtained heuristically or dialogically and generally accepted as fact. This type of knowledge plays a considerable role in Hayley's understanding of her practice, its benefit to society and her motivation for initiating Sanctuary on the Faultline. However, she firmly believed that this was not an undertaking dance artists needed to undertake on their own and that they would be stronger and more sustainable working together.

Sanctuary as a Community of Practice

Practicing 'togetherness' and being 'in community' were common desires expressed by individuals and groups in the fieldwork. However, what it means to be 'in community' is not so easily defined. In 1973 David Clark wrote 'if the concept of community is dead, it stubbornly refuses to lie down' (1973: 397). Years prior to Clark's claim, G. A. Hillery collated over 90 distinct definitions of community which have surely only continued to proliferate. Hillery concluded that 'beyond the concept that people are involved in community, there is no complete agreement as to the nature of community' (Hillery 1955: 119). Instead of coalescing into a more uniform understanding, the concept of community continues to remain slippery and ambiguous, yet abundant in popular rhetoric and politics. In *Community, Solidarity and Belonging* Andrew Mason (2000: 18) argues that community is a term that is used so widely used and so disputed that it classifies as an 'essentially contested concept'. This term was coined by W. B. Galie whose list of essentially contested concepts included 'democracy, social justice, a work of art and a Christian life' (ibid: 19).

[42] UCL's announcement can be found here: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/pals/news/2017/nov/audience-members-hearts-beat-together-theatre

Mason adds community to this list of complicated and contentious yet commonplace ideas. Despite the plethora of definitions and perspectives, Mason does not agree that they should be given equitable consideration:

> essentially contested concepts are open to a number of reasonable interpretations, but this does not mean that all these interpretations or conceptions are equally good or correct; some may be better than others, and one particular conception may be the best of the lot (ibid 19).

Mason's stance attempts to free theorists from an inescapable relativism of definition while also avoiding a limitation on discourse. However there remains a danger of solipsistic egos espousing their own ingenuity debating whose definition is 'the best'. Rather than seeking to demystify community, this chapter leans into its mutability and changeling nature. One particularly useful way to examine what communities *are* is look at what they *do*. Therefore, I lean on the work of Etienne Wenger and her concept of 'communities of practice' to better grasp the work of groups of artists such as Sanctuary on the Faultline, Kinship Workshops, and other practicing environmental artist groups in the UK.

Wenger defines communities of practice as 'groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015). A community of practice is essentially a 'social learning system' and Wenger argues that as a system its characteristics include: 'emergent structure, complex relationships, self-organization, dynamic boundaries, ongoing negotiation of identity and cultural meaning' (2010: 1). We could examine environmental movement practice in the UK as a broad community of practice, but there are many disparate actors, approaches and philosophies that do not always align. Instead, this chapter will take a closer look at an exemplary candidate from the fieldwork and extrapolations to other practices can then be made from the shared characteristics.

SotF's organisational structure is both emergent and plastic. Hayley remains a leader and key decider but insists on describing her role as caretaker rather than executive or leader. She regularly consults the group for advice on how to move the organization forward, what "forward" might look like, and what each member wishes to contribute to or receive from membership in the collective. There is a complex relationship between hierarchy and egalitarianism in attempting to create a radical global collective but also needing to make choices quickly and efficiently. New structures and strategies for development and support of members are suggested in meetings and trialled as a group. While Hayley primarily organises the online gatherings and annual conferences, each member is given access to a group Instagram account and has the ability to advertise their performances through a shared social media presence. Although it is expected that members will perform and contribute to the growing online presence and potential audience members, it is not enforced. Members choose where, when, and how often they perform or advertise on the platform. In this way although basic structure and resources are provided it is essentially a self-organised practice. The boundaries of the group are porous

and go through cycles of opening out and closing in. SotF has an annual period of recruitment between October 31st and March 21st; In the summer they are closed to new members and focus on the growth and development of existing members. As demonstrated, SotF's organisation contains many of the systems characteristics identified by Wenger. Wenger also notes that while learning may occur inside of a community of practice, it is not always the principal intention and may occur alongside other aims of the community. She also clarifies that not all communities are communities of practice and sets out three clear features to set them apart: domain, community, and practice (2015).

The domain of a community of practice is described by Wenger as a 'collective competence' or 'expertise'. The expertise is not necessarily recognised by others outside of the community, but membership to the community carries with it the expectation of a commitment to this shared interest or skillset. For SotF the domain is "rewilding dance" and "rewilding woman". This rather opaque yet vibrant claim includes reclaiming agency for woman-identifying dancers on multiple levels. For Hayley, rewilding the dance begins with freeing it from the 'capitalised and monetised structures that inhibit it'. One way of doing this is through circumventing standard funding processes and requirements by performing outdoors, negating most of the need to pay for rehearsal and performance spaces. This also often, yet indirectly, means not asking for permission before performing in outdoor spaces as well. Hayley's version of rewilding dance could not however be described as a wholly anticapitalistic project as it still attempts to advertise and monetise the work of the artists involved, what it does however achieve is an attempt to shift some agency back to the artists to decide where and when they perform.

Rewilding woman and womanhood is also important to Hayley and SotF members. Hayley draws much of her inspiration from female figures who represent wildness and freedom from structure – the goddess Diana of the Woods and modern dancer Isadora Duncan. The significance of this is explored in greater detail in this chapter. However, Hayley is primarily concerned with recapturing the Freudian 'anima' or female spirit, in opposition to the 'animus' or male spirit. She describes the anima as deeply compassionate yet practical, as vulnerable yet containing profound soft power. She believes the anima is undervalued in contemporary British society. While Hayley also subscribes to the Freudian description of both men and women containing both anima and animus, she describes SotF as a network of professional *woman* dancers which has an impact on who chooses to apply for membership. When asked, she was not opposed to male-identifying individuals joining and she allowed me to be present in residential labs, monthly meetings, and performances but there was some surprise from new members by my presence. The members I spoke to, while surprised at first, did not take offense by my physical attendance of workshops and meetings and did not detract from femininity and womanhood being a recurring theme in discussions. It is highly possible my visible queerness made my presence as a man an easier and less confrontational experience. There were no other male identifying network members or workshop attendees. However, Hayley does occasionally include other male identifying collaborators such as Bayo Akomolafe, founder of the Emergence Network,

Adam Benjamin founder of Candoco Dance Company, and Hayley's husband Alistair Simmons to deliver talks, produce choreography, or film performances.

The domain of SotF includes a desire to 'rewild' both dance and the concept of womanhood.[43] Membership is exclusive to professional dancers, and it is expected that individuals perform movement outdoors for others as a part of their profession and have done so previously. It is a collaborate collective of professionals, not an educational group aimed towards novices. The focus on womanhood also means that the members must be interested in connecting to their 'anima' and the choice of language used in advertising meant that although Hayley might have been open to the idea of men joining the collective, aside from myself it remained exclusively female. Wenger also notes that those outside of the community may not recognise or value the domain expertise of members inside the community. This perhaps helps to explain some of the difficulty in grasping a concrete understanding of rewilding women and dance, yet for members felt strongly and passionately attracted to these ideas. For Hayley, this nonrecognition contributed directly to the motivation and need she felt to nurture a space for an expertise she cherished.

The community element of a community of practice is defined through how 'members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information' (2015:2). A website on its own does not necessarily create community and neither does simply sharing a similar profession or skillset. What is essential to community for Wenger is that members 'interact and learn together' in pursuit of their common domain or interest. The bi-monthly or monthly gatherings and the annual January lab in Great Yarmouth are the primary methods through which Sanctuary members share information and learn together. The monthly meetings include a shared ritual practice of opening and closing circles. The rituals here borrow from Wiccan tradition and to open the circle, dancers are invited to walk a counter-clockwise circle three times and then lie down in the centre of the circle while a song is played.[44] Hayley describes this as the moment we have now entered 'the sanctuary on the faultline'. At the end of the meeting the circle is closed by repeating the ritual but this time walking clockwise. In the labs at Great Yarmouth, walking the circle included a lit candle in the centre and tracing the circle with a piece of chalk instead of simply walking. In the online meetings once the circle had been cast there was an opportunity for members to share 'what's arising'; this generally included observations and discussion on difficulties members were facing with audience generation, ideas for artistic creation, recounting recent performances, or general thoughts on the topics of dance and womanhood. Hayley also included in the agenda conversation on monthly topics which included generating ideas for new funding bids, discussing upcoming labs, the development of films of members work, how to welcome new members, and the definitions of health and womanhood. There may be follow ups on important topics via email and shared promotion of events via social media.

[43] Rewilding is a popular concept in contemporary environmentalist discussion. For a popular view on British Rewilding as an ecological movement, and an introduction to the term for many, see (Monbiot, 2014).
[44] Most the of the time the song played was the *Kyrie Eleison* hymn however it changed periodically.

Wenger defines the final element of a community of practice loosely by arguing that they do not simply share an interest in a thing, but that they are practitioners themselves. They have a shared 'repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, [and] ways of addressing shared problems' (2015:2). The practice is tied intimately to the domain; Sanctuary members are not just enthusiastic and knowledgeable about dance, performance, feminism, and outdoor movement practice, but as demonstrated above, have shared accumulated lived experiences which they discuss to cultivate their craft and sustain their professional development.

As an organisation that seeks to start a global movement, Sanctuary demonstrates Hayley's desire to generate a widespread community of practice from a sense of felt responsibility. During the fieldwork I witnessed the initial birth and rhythmic expansion and contraction of SotF. The data gathered in interviews with Hayley, other key SotF members, audience members, my attendance of performances in Hampstead and Norwich as well as participation in the January Labs in Great Yarmouth animates the story of SotF as an emergent community of practice that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic in response to the collapse of already precarious foundations. Before engaging in deeper analysis of Sanctuary and its liminal qualities what follows are supporting examples which demonstrate the prevalence of communities of practice in environmental dance movement in the UK.

Additional Fieldwork Examples

While some artist groups were prompted by the liminal experiences of the COVID moment other UK movement artists have included 'living in community' as part of their creative method and artistic practice for years. Movement artist Simon Whitehead's 'Locator' workshops on the Llyn peninsula of North Wales have occurred nearly every year since 1994 (they paused in 2020 and resumed in 2021). Locator is described by Simon as 'an ongoing forum to share ecological ideas through movement practice' (Whitehead 2021: 285). A creative community is an essential component to these workshops; locator 'proposes ways to be together in the making of home, a place to rest, to eat, to commune and somewhere to return to'. Simon writes that the 'the residential nature of the workshop within its wider location allows an intensification of lived experience thorough a series of repetitive manoeuvres and the slow building of an ontology based in communal self-regulation and co-operation (cooking, caring for the space and clean-up is done collectively)' (2021:87). Due to fieldwork limitations, I was unable to experience a Locator workshop but was able to visit the Llyn peninsula and Simon's home in a residential Kinship workshop held there.[45]

[45] I was however able to partake in a workshop with Kirstie Simson and Simon in 2022, ethnography on Simon and Kirstie's practice is included in Chapter Two on storytelling.

Kinship began as a residential experience but was scaled down to make it more accessible. Katye and Tom continue to try and hold at least one residential version of the workshop each year. During these residentials, akin to Simon's locator, we all lived in the same cabin or in the nearby vicinity. We cooked and ate every meal together, partook in shared movement practice and scores throughout the daytime, and slept in close proximity. I am a naturally early riser so I would wake up, put the kettle on, and start a large pot of porridge as the rest of the participants made their way downstairs for breakfast. After breakfast we would gather our belongings to walk to the nearby village hall where Katye and Tom would lead a two-hour indoor dance class. The class was mostly improvisational working with gentle somatic warm-ups, scores, and eventually partner or group tasks. Katye would remind us that when we are working in the studio, we are never alone: 'We are always in the presence of three companions or sisters: gravity, breath, and community'.[46] Katye also took the time to acknowledge her teachers before sharing morning practice which included Ann Halprin, Helen Poynor, Deborah Hay, Charlie Morrissey and Suprapto Suryodarmo. Following morning class, we would leave the village hall as a group and explore a nearby location for outdoor movement tasks and discussion. This included familiar Kinship exercises such as the sit spot, blind leading and following, weight sharing, and eventually a communal packed lunch. However, the residential also allowed for extended walks and one day we walked the entire distance from Abercych to Cardigan Bay which took over eight hours of walking. Each day ended with two volunteers to cook dinner for that day, a leading chef, and their assistant. After dinner, the four of us who stayed in the cabin often finished the evening crowded around the small woodfire drying our soaked socks, boots, waterproof trousers, and jackets while we discussed the days practice and observations.

To support the growing network of Kinship practitioners who took part in the residentials and two-day workshops, in 2021 Kinship developed monthly online 'practice group' gathering. The gatherings were for 'participants, facilitators and collaborators [to] regularly meet and share outdoor practice beyond the end of the workshops to strengthen connection to the living world'. These online meetings would set monthly tasks for attendees to consider in their own personal nature connection practices and then report back on them during the following meeting. This online community represents a desire on the part of both the participants and facilitators to continue to develop expertise in their domain and practice, something that demanded revitalisation and renewal through discussion with others.

Kinship and Sanctuary are not the only examples that stressed the essentiality of collective practice. Frank Van de Ven's Bodyweather workshops follow a similar premise of cooking, sleeping, and eating communally.[47] When asked during a workshop in Molières-

[46] This is a subtle reference to the Indigenous Native American Three Sisters farming method which utilizes the mutually beneficial relationships between growing corn, beans, and squash over the same patch of land.
[47] Bodyweather is a performance training methodology developed by Min Tanaka in Japan in the 1980s. Frank is one of the original company members who trained with Tanaka and now teaches residential workshops worldwide. Dance scholar Rosemary Candelario (2018; 2019) has written extensively about Bodyweather.

sur-Cèze, he confirmed that living in community was just as much a part of the Bodyweather practice as the movement training. Two observed performances during fieldwork also used community living as part of their rehearsal process and artistic research. Charlotte Spencer's *Is This a Waste Land* (2021) initial research period included time spent indoors in studios, a lengthy and convoluted process of attempting to get access to land, and then multiple periods of a week or more working and living together camping outdoors. Spencer later recounted:

> [W]hen I look back through my notebooks, most of the main ideas became clear during that week of living and working together; working in the early morning at dawn and working at night and resting together and cooking together and building the infrastructure and the structures that we needed in order to support ourselves.

Simone Kenyon's *Into The Mountain* (2019) inspired by Nan Shepherd's memoire *The Living Mountain* (2011) also relied on the dancers and choreographer living and camping together as part of the creative process. Mountaineering through team excursions was an invaluable method for learning about the land and developing the performance work.

Throughout the fieldwork living and working together was essential to the development of both process and product; for artists creating new performance work or facilitating participatory workshops. It is also important to note that as Kinship participant Chrys noted earlier, she most likely would not have attended a Kinship Workshop were it not for the set of circumstances imposed upon her by the pandemic. The intensified desire for 'being together' brought unlikely individuals to some of these ecological movement practices. It also disrupted some of the more regimented and structured residential practices as seen in Locator while inspiring the creation of new digital fugitive networks as seen in Hayley's Sanctuary on the Fault Line. Speaking with participants from all of these practices, what the pandemic experience incontestably reinforced was that while environmental movement practices could theoretically be done alone, they needed a community to both share and amplify experiences; they required a community of practice. The following section argues that the pandemic can be examined as a period of shared liminality via Turnerian analysis and focuses on the significance of Sanctuary's development as a community of practice during this juncture. Turner, following van Gennep, and more recent critiques, will help us apprehend both Sanctuary's turn to ritual and its greater struggle to imagine itself as an anti-structural organisation within a highly structured society.

While some workshops do occasionally occur in the UK, I was unable to attend during the fieldwork period and so is, for the most part, beyond the scope of this thesis.

Sanctuary and Liminality

In order to analyse the specificity of Sanctuary as a community that emerged during the coronavirus pandemic, Turnerian liminality provides a useful starting point. Arnold van Gennep originally coined the term in 1909 however Turner popularised the term when he used it in his 1967 analysis of Ndembu ritual following the English translation of van Gennep's work in 1960 (Wels *et al.*, 2011). Liminality was traditionally used to denote the middle phase of rites of passage when 'the individuals involved are understood to be "no longer" and simultaneously also "not yet"' (ibid: 1). Moreover, Turner describes liminal individuals as 'neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial' (Turner 1969). However, the term was expanded by Turner to include any, generally brief, period whereby previous custom and hierarchy has been upended and there is a potentiality for prior power structures to be reversed. In their analysis Wels critiqued this understanding of liminality as being too laissez-faire and ambiguous to be useful, however that same ambiguity contributes to flexible adaptation by scores of anthropologists (Beech 2011; St John 2008; Yang 2000). As described in the introduction, liminality is a marginal quality and an opportunity for social critique.

Turner uses fluctuation between structure and anti-structure to illustrate how society critiques itself and generates change. Structure for Turner described 'daily life' and anti-structure was the 'ritual process' whereby change might occur. Anthropologist J Lowell Lewis (2008) critiques this dynamic as an overly 'objectivist or systematic view of culture as structure' that downplayed the 'structural or regulatory force of ritual events' (42). Lewis argues that 'special events', which include ritual, performance, and experiences of liminality:

> are basically intensifications of some of the tendencies inherent in any ordinary activity, but often latent or subliminally present. Thus, normative practice (everyday life) carries the seeds of its own negation, or it exists in a field of alternative possibilities, some of which may never be acted out. (43)

In this way Lewis argues that primarily, but not exclusively, "ordinary life" privileges continuity and structure whereas "special events" may privilege opportunities for creative imagining of culture. However, his argument also demonstrates that a rigid distinction between structure and anti-structure may ignore the potential of innovative facets of daily life and the normative role of 'state ceremonies such as coronations, memorial days, independence days, and the like' (ibid). Whether daily life or special events contain normative or revolutionary potential needs to be carefully examined, nevertheless, making a distinction between ordinary life and special events is crucial to a Turnerian "social drama" and is a helpful tool for cultural analysis.

Turner describes social drama as a dialogic relationship between structure and anti-structure characterised by a four-part process that occurs after periods social upheaval:

breach, crisis, redress, and schism or continuity (Turner 1982). This process describes how generally ordered societies navigate historic disruptions through the creation of ritual and other performative acts to restore a sense of order: 'In doing so they must reflect on who and what they are (as a group and as individuals), and out of these reflexive performances social change may also be generated' (Lewis 2008: 44). It is in the third redressive phase where ritual and liminality thrive. These special events, represented by the whole spectrum of performative genres, engendered during this phase are Turner argues, 'the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting "designs for living"' (1987: 24). However, Turner warns that extreme anti-structure – or the special events described by Lewis – are just as likely to lead towards despotism as they are to greater collegiality (1969).

A student of Turner's, Sherry Turkle writes that during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic some societies entered a collective state of liminality which she defines as: 'a state of people who have fallen out of recognized communities and straightforward relationships with shared social norms' (2022: 487) Turkle describes a 'permanent threshold' of experience when Americans faced 'a virus that plays by one set of rules, politicians who play by another, and a professional life that proceeds independently of each' (ibid: 487). Many countries in the world imposed various forms of countermeasures to inhibit the virus which included lockdowns and quarantines. The US and UK are both bastions of Western power that seek to represent "democracy and freedom" on the global stage. At the time, both countries were led by bombastic conservative idealogues whose politics directly conflicted with the limitations they enacted which resulted in significant public resistance to the measures.[48] While these countries' experiences are not unique, I argue that Turkle's analysis of the American experience contains useful parallels to understand the British as also experiencing a similar forced liminality. Turkle argues that this period of liminality contained (and perhaps still contains) inchoate potentiality that remains heretofore indeterminate. The shared liminality of the COVID-19 experience highlighted for many the importance of family even over great distances, the miracles of human generosity, and the essentiality of access to green spaces; but it also accentuated the systemic inequality of living spaces, "working from home", access to food and medicine, and underfunded public services like the NHS.

Much of the fieldwork took place during this potent period of in-betweens and unknowns. Likewise, the human desire to "be together" was a powerful motivator of individuals actions during this time – as described in this thesis by participants of Kinship Workshops and Hayley's audience members. Turner writes that certain crises can generate 'a sense of the generic social bond between all members of society' (1969: 116). He calls this

[48] Allegories between Trump and Boris were rife in the media during and immediately following the pandemic. For examples see, Allsop, J. (2022) '*Johnson and Trump aren't the same, but they swim in the same cesspoo*l'. The Guardian. 9 Feb 2022; Newman, C. (2022) '*Defiant to the bitter end until it was too late – how Boris Johnson became Britain's Trump.'* The Independent. 7 Jul 2022; Fletcher, M. (2021) '*Why Boris Johnson is Dangerously similar to Donald Trump.'* The New Statesman. 11 Jan 2021.

sentiment 'humankindness' which he defines not as 'some kind of herd instinct' but a product of 'men in their wholeness wholly attending' (ibid: 128). He says that conditions of liminality or structural inferiority can incite both action and thought and that the experiences inspire 'reclassifications of reality and man's relationship to society, nature, and culture' (ibid: 128-129). Turner writes that liminal movements typically 'arise in times of radical social transition, when society itself seems to be moving from one fixed state to another' (1969: 133). Further, he describes these phases as periods 'of scrutinization of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs' (ibid: 167). It is during this emergent yet unsteady potentiality that Hayley shaped Sanctuary on the Faultline. Dissatisfied with "how things are or were" SotF represents a redressive action taken to optimistically imagine what "could be". It is a movement that arose during a liminal period in resistance to the structures that existed previously. In its genesis as a liminal movement, Sanctuary began as an attempt to enable dancing artists to harness their liminal, and critical, faculty. This would, in theory, grant them greater capacity to criticise and reflect on society and its structure. [49] Before turning to an analysis of Sanctuary's development it is helpful to reflect on key liminal figures that inspired Hayley's artistic practice and the liminal potentiality she attempted to shape.

Liminal Potentiality: Figures in Myth and History

Hayley's ideal vision is for dancers to be able to remind others about an expressive, haptic way of living that isn't 'banging around on concrete all the time or sped up by busy-ness'. She does not feel that everyone needs to dance, or that we need to abandon cities and concrete, rather she imagines the role of the artist and performer as a way through which we can critique society, nourish communal emotional health and imagine alternative ways of living.[50] Sanctuary on the Fault Line presents an attempt by Hayley to come closer to a mode of living whereby the dancer can occupy a nearly perpetual liminal position in relationship to society. Her vision is of a 'global fugitive network of dancing women' that provides dance in an accessible and sustainable manner, a space 'where new solutions will come', where dancers and audiences can 'dwell in intimate connection' to 'process the world through movement and connection'(Matthews, n.d.).

Turner writes that during liminal phases 'we find social relationships simplified, while myth and ritual are elaborated' (1969: 167). Myth and ritual are both significant to the development and identity of Sanctuary. As described above, Sanctuary gatherings are characterised by a ritual practice that both opens and closes meetings or movement practices. In addition, Hayley's performances typically take place on the sacred dates of the neo-pagan 'Wheel of The Year'. Her performances were inspired by themes that defined

[50] By 'society' here I follow Turner who describes it as a 'system of social positions' primarily defined by 'relationships between statuses, roles and offices' (1969:131).

different seasonal holidays including Samhain, Lammas, Yule and Beltane.[51] Sanctuary drew from both ritual and myth considerably to reinforce and develop its philosophy. Given Hayley's desires and Turner's analysis it is hardly surprising that two of Hayley's primary sources of inspiration are figures from myth and history with liminal qualities: Diana of the Woods and Isadora Duncan. Rather than draw on the many historical and archaeological analyses of this deity and dancer, I will purposefully rely on Hayley's descriptions to depict the symbolic importance of these figures to her and the politics of Sanctuary.

Diana of The Woods is Hayley's preferred title for an archetypal goddess of femininity, wildness, and the moon. Diana is also referred to as Artemis in ancient Greek myth and sometimes included as one of the three facets of the pagan goddess Hecate. Hayley describes Diana as dwelling in a 'halfway point between city-living and the hermit'. Diana occupies a space outside of the city, 'living in community with the animals' rather than the exclusionary, solitary position of a hermit. She is resourceful and can fend for herself in the wild and doesn't need to connect with civilisation, but, and this is crucial, chooses to return to civilisation 'to share her wisdom'. For Hayley, Diana does not represent a gnostic retreat from civilisation to seek enlightenment, but instead a coming and going from the city and the countryside; she is 'in action' in this liminal space rather than in isolation or exclusion. Diana serves as a key inspiration for Hayley's desire to 'rewild' the dancer: to free her from structures that inhibit her process and sharing her gift with society. Isadora Duncan also resisted hierarchical structure she encountered in her life and criticised ballet training and technique as 'unnatural'. Duncan, who drew from ancient Greek culture for much of her own inspiration, was an influential artist whose career and resulting legacy could also be said to contain liminal characteristics.

Duncan was an American dancer who performed and taught mostly in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She had a reputation for being fiercely independent and led a non-traditional personal life: 'She ran her own finances, didn't rely on any man, took on anyone she wanted as a lover… She did what she wanted and didn't suffer fools and didn't care what people said or thought about her' (Drury 2020). Duncan is well known for her rejection of ballet technique, dancing barefoot in loose-fitting clothing, and advocating for dance as a sacred art close to nature. She was inspired by 'natural free movement' and her dances included running, skipping, jumping, leaping and expressive gesture. Reading one of Duncan's biographies inspired Hayley, and she became an idol who represented the ideals of freedom, liberation, and womanhood. Throughout her life Duncan formed two schools, one in Berlin and one in Moscow. Fragments of her performances and technique exist and continue to be preserved and passed on through legacy dancers, rather than through codified technique classes like many early modern choreographers. As a pioneering feminist and early modern choreographer Duncan occupied a transitional position between

[51] These holidays are taken from the neo-pagan Wheel of the Year which includes holidays for each of the two solstices and equinoxes and four 'quarter-days' or midpoints between a solstice or equinox. Kathryn Rountree (2011) provides some context for the origin and inspiration for the pagan holidays. These dates are popularly celebrated by Wiccans and other neo-pagans.

neoclassical and romanticist movements in art and culture. Duncan's philosophy and life seemed to resist structure both literally and figuratively, taking a mythic position as the 'Mother of Modern Dance'. Even her death is shrouded in myth: the popularised story states that as she was set to ride off in a carriage she cried out "Adieu, mes amis. Je vais à la gloire" (Farewell, my friends. I go to glory) (Desti 2004). Her scarf then got caught in the wheels of the carriage which snapped her neck and instantly killed her. Despite the debated accuracy both of her final words and the event, the myth persists in popular culture. Duncan connects Hayley both to archetypal cosmologies of wildness, sacredness, and femininity and to a legacy of resisting hierarchy and structure, be it ballet or funding apparatus.

Both Duncan and Diana serve as mythical figures of transition, liberation, femininity and wildness; seeding Sanctuary with the stimulus to occupy a liminal position between a world of structure and one of wildness. Duncan and Diana act as imperfect, yet relevant icons of liminality and anti-structure calling for knowledge gleaned from 'the wild' to feed back into 'civilisation' for the betterment of humankind. Sanctuary is Hayley's attempt to harness this liminal potentiality to generate a felt sense of communitas to imagine alternative futures for her art and its role within society.

From Liminality to Communitas

Edith Turner writes that for Victor, communitas conceptually began as a 'phenomenon found in the liminal phases of rites of passage' but was also applicable to 'what an entire nation might be going through when in a state of change' (Turner 2008: 37). Communitas is used by Turner as an attempt to describe the feelings of intimacy, cooperation, and equality that may emerge during shared experienced of liminality culminating in 'a relatively undifferentiated community, or even communion of equal individuals' (Turner 1969: 96). Recounting her husband's work, Edith Turner describes communitas as 'a sense of one's fellow's as basic unaccommodated human beings' (2008: 36). She writes that Victor encountered communitas many times both in his personal life and research, citing his experience of loading food on wagons during World War II and observing Ndembu healing rituals. Victor Turner's understanding of communitas was also greatly influenced by his participation in Christian pilgrimage (Turner and Turner 1978). In his introduction to an edited volume on Turner, St John argues that communitas continues to be 'an apposite conceptual framework for extraordinary social experience' (2008: 14). In contemporary anthropology the term has since expanded to include many other experiences including the sense of collective feeling and utopian desires following disasters (Matthewman and Uekusa 2021), dark tourism (Bristow 2020), play (Henricks 2015), and the potential for transformative learning following COVID-19 (Scully-Russ *et al.* 2022) to name a few.

Bruce Kapferer infers a parallelism between Turnerian communitas and the Kantian concept of the sublime (I would add here, by extension, enchantment as defined previously) in that it is 'where the limits of cognition and reason are reached and the senses take over in the extension of knowledge' (2019: 2). In this way there are multiple potential fieldwork

examples through which artists attempted to knowingly or otherwise engage with schema adjacent to communitas. However, the term is not particularly useful in the analysis of Sanctuary. It is mentioned here as it would be remiss to ignore a substantial element of Turner's contribution and continued influence on anthropological analysis of performance and its potential to impact or critique society. Instead, the term may be more apropos to the analysis in Chapter 5 of the 'Pilgrimage for Nature', a performance and activist group that developed in 2021. However, its experiences are very different from Sanctuary on the Faultline and in order to focus the analysis here, exists as a separate chapter.

Imagining Alternative Futures

Sanctuary and other groups studied in this thesis via their liminal critiques of contemporary structure include attempts to imagine alternative futures. By alternative futures I mean an imagined, yet plausible organisation, way of living, or general state of the world in the distant or near future. The imagined changes can range from subtle subjective perceptual shifts to drastic and radical reconfigurations of global economies and governments. Alternative futures suggest a possible 'over there' distinct from the 'right here' that does not at first glance appear in the current trajectory but could be. They are hopeful, they are visionary, and they are daring. Faced with multiple hyberobject-like crises, the future demands radical action (Morton 2013). Morton uses the term hyperobject to describe entities with such vast temporal and spatial reach they escape contemporary understandings of what a 'thing' can be. Hyperobjects listed by Morton include nuclear weapons, evolution, and the climate. He argues that climate change and other hyperobjects have destabilised the concepts of nature and world putting 'unbearable strains on our normal ways of reasoning' (ibid). Sanctuary, Kinship, and choreographers Charlotte Spencer and Adam Benjamin are examples of how artists are attempting to radically reconfigure the way individuals perceive and think about their relationship to nature, financial independence, and systems of power.

As a network, Sanctuary does not typically pay its members to produce their work. Instead, it is an attempt to imagine an alternative way for dance artists to share their work with audience and receive financial support in kind. SotF's primary method to achieve this goal is through a gift economy. The logistics behind this remuneration has evolved since its inception and has multiple avenues. A Sanctuary dancer has access to a joint Instagram account and webpage. If she would like to organise a performance date, the date will be announced on the social media platform via the 'stories' feature and a permanent post. The above image is a photo of board hung outside near one of Hayley's performances. The printed image contains a QR code which, if scanned, directs you to the SotF website. From there a user can find postings for performances and PayPal links to donate to a dancer. The

idea is that while attending these performances is free, audience members can choose to donate to the network performers after attending rather than pay for tickets. This is an attempt is to make performance more accessible to audience members while also including a form of remuneration for artists. Sanctuary also received grant funding to pay artists to produce videos of their outdoor performances. Unfortunately collecting and analysing the data on the effectiveness of this remuneration method is beyond the focus of this thesis.

Sanctuary was not the only practitioner during the fieldwork to attempt a gift economy; Katye and Tom also ran their 2021 Kinship Workshops with this method. In their advertisements for that year's program, they ran with a suggested donation that covered operational costs only. Applicants to the workshops were then invited to suggest a time or skills-based contribution in exchange for participation in the workshop. The goal was partly to expand the financial accessibility of attending a workshop but also to build a community of practice around nature connection and generate an exchange of skillsets to help Kinship Workshops expand its reach. Some examples of contributions made by attendees include short bits of writing, facilitation of online meetings, and the development of a podcast or pieces of writing. Both Sanctuary and Kinship moved their movement practices outdoors as an attempt to democratise access to performance and workshops while providing ways to support themselves financially as artists.

Performances themselves may also attempt to elicit emotional responses or consideration of alternative futures. Choreographers frequently use performance to comment on social issues using elements of narrative and non-narrative storytelling. Dance scholar Gemma Collard-Stokes writes, 'When we witness these performances, they stimulate emotion and empathetic insights, two components that can sometimes be missing from the factual world of science' (Collard-Stokes 2021). Performance can help bridge past, present, and future and Collard-Stokes evokes Caitlin DeSilvey's 'anticipatory histories' in the ways her work might convey and respond to ecological developments without relying on the conservation of a present that might not survive the collapse of transformation (DeSilvey, 2012). Charlotte Spencer's participatory performance *Is This a Wasteland* (2021) proposes reflection on the here and now, where we are going and where we came from through its prompts delivered to audience members via headsets. Near the beginning of the performance, Charlotte's voice transmitted via the headphones to participants says: 'The space is waiting. Well, actually it's not really waiting, it's just getting on with its own thing. Maybe it's more that *we're* waiting for it to become something else.' Later, after being prompted to use your hands like a microscope to inspect a small part of the performance space the voice asks again: 'Can you remember what this place used to be? What did it look like? Who came here then? What thrives here now?'. Then, as participants are being guided to build structures and fences with the collapsed rubble of previously destroyed creations, the voice comments: 'Intuitively, responsively, clumsily, haphazardly but co-operatively and honestly… we're building something new. figuring it out as we go along.' Spencer's work provokes the audience to consider how spaces are built, used, fall into disrepair and are

reimagined again through a hands-on collaborative experience. Forgotten, disused spaces are transformed through the many hands of strangers.

Adam Benjamin is a choreographer and performer currently based in Cornwall championing a movement he calls 'The Dancer's Forest'.[52] This project was developed partly in response to the Art's Council 2018/2019 Environmental Report which listed Dance as contributing 8% of the pollution generated by the entertainment industry in the UK (Serota and Tickell, 2019). However, the primary impetus for Adam's project also arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adam was struck by 'the urgent need to do something, to contribute to positive change'. 'The Dancer's Forest' is an attempt to safeguard and rewild local spaces not only to be reforested to act as carbon sinks and home for wildlife, but also to use as outdoor performance spaces. He comments that many dancers, and other performing artists, measure success through securing national and international tours which end up contributing massive carbon footprints from travel and theatre usages. These newly rewilded spaces are opportunities to 'think globally and dance locally'. Currently there are two sites for the project: one in Coombeshead, Devon and one in Mason's Farm, Berkshire. Adam's dream is to have local, outdoor sustainable spaces accessible to everyone across the breadth of the country. Adam says that dances about climate change and deforestation aren't enough, that dancers need to radically reconsider how the discipline functions, and this is his attempt to generate a vision of alternative futures.

These are just a few brief examples of how dance artists in the UK are attempting to radically revise both process and product to respond to contemporary crises through engagement with wild or disused spaces. In each of these examples, the outdoors, wild spaces, or abandoned spaces, provoke reflection on contemporary metropolitan life. Nature is pulled into artistic practice as a liminal actor to critique social structure. For Hayley, nature is constructed as a medium for liberation. She evokes 'the wild' as a place to escape structure and defines a 'wild space' as 'an outdoor space where dancer and audience can be in relationship to earth, sky and landscape - whether forest or beach, rooftop or garden.' Essentially, cities are not excluded, and humans are not excluded from this definition of nature. Regardless wildness performs the work of a location from which to find freedom from oppressive structures. Likewise with Kinship, much effort is spent focusing on perceiving humankind as inseparable from nature; the monthly online meetings requests individuals to find 'sit spots' in their immediate vicinity, not pristine far-away locations. This might be just outside your front door, a balcony, garden, or an urban park. However, Kinship Workshops themselves always happen outside of cities even if nearby, such as Epping Forest in North London or Ashton Court in Bristol. I asked Tom why Kinship happens in the forests and fields of Epping and not a Sainsbury's parking lot or pedestrianised streets we passed along the way. He said that even though he views each of these locations as part of 'nature' that 'there is something being accessed much quicker and easier in wild spaces.' He argued

[52] Read more about the Dancer's Forest and associated locations here: https://www.adambenjamin.co.uk/enviroment-dance-space

that it is something about permission, and that there are many 'behavioural codes' in less wild places we feel disposed to follow. For both artists, wildness allows *parts of nature* to behave in a liminal way, as a threshold crossed to escape cultural habituations, be they internal conditionings or external expectations.

Similarly for Spencer, *Is This a Wasteland* has been performed in multiple locations around the UK including abandoned lots near London City Airport, abandoned airport runway near Findhorn in Scotland and in a fenced-in, paved over area on Stratford High Street. These are importantly developed spaces, not wild spaces. However, they are abandoned, disused, forgotten; the social codes that used to apply are erased. These locations are chosen to provide a place to critique how we use developed land in other places. Benjamin's *Dancer's Forest* project views attempts to draw dance as an art form back to the local rather than the international through imagining rewilded spaces as opportunities for more sustainable forms of performance work.

However, it is important to note that the egalitarian dreams populated in these interstitial gaps do not always fit into the fault lines left by societal ruptures easily or gracefully. Communities and networks can inadvertently brush against societal hierarchy and fragmentation, reminders that these spaces, no matter how visionary, how natural, or how wild, remain ensconced in a greater social framework. How radical are these reconfigurations of nature and human relationships in a late capitalist industrialised nation? Are the alternative futures imagined in these liminal periods and wild spaces able to manifest upon a return to daily life? Geertz wrote that 'Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun' (Geertz, 1973). The final analysis of this chapter considers whether these attempts to slip beyond and reweave the 'webs of significance' were truly liberatory.

Nature's Liminal Limits: A Return to Structure

Figure19: oil drum bonfire post Is This A Wasteland in Stratford, London 2021

The analysis of the liminal quality of wild time and space as a way to return to more sustainable forms of living includes three primary assumptions that require deeper investigation. The first premise questions the distinction between wild and non-wild spaces and the social construction of nature. The second premise questions if wild spaces are truly free from behavioural codes and social structures; while the third premise questions if the ideas developed in and with wild spaces are truly revolutionary or simply reproducing the constraints they attempt to abolish.

What is the wild? Jack Halberstam describes the wild as a space that is unpredictable and resists taxonomy (2020). For Halberstam, the wild is an inherently queer space from which we can critique modernity's liberal subject and ordered impulses. The wild has long been a place of Euro-American romanticist attraction since the 19th century; the writings of Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, William Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter to name a few. In this romanticist distinction, wild nature is opposed to human culture as separate domains and anthropological literature at the time shared this perspective up into the mid 20th century following a Levi-Straussian structuralist approaches. However, contemporary understandings of nature and culture have taken a massive anthropological turn following the work of thinkers such as Strathern (1992), Viverios de Castro (1998), Ingold(2000), Descola (2013), and Latour (1986). The work of these theorists demonstrated the social construction of nature and messiness behind the distinctions.[53] It is clear from interviews conducted with research participants that most consider humans to be part of nature, not

[53] The methodology chapter of this thesis contains a much more in-depth analysis of the anthropological history of the word 'nature' and its specific use in this thesis for a reminder.

separate from it. Indeed, Carolyn Deby in *Becoming Fungi, Becoming Forest* (2021) goes so far as to try to frame Coventry and the buildings in it as part of nature. In Chapter One on enchantment we see Arun try to apply the same attention to trees he learned in Kinship to skyscrapers in Stratford. He recalls his annoyance at the difficulty - what was so inaccessible to him about this shift? Another Kinship participant commented:

> Doing a kinship workshop is a disturbing experience - stay with me! - in that it disrupted my normal patterns of time, moving, thinking and feeling… There were many moments throughout the experience when my usual thought patterns were completely absent, and it was as if a repressed self (one that doesn't get much of a look in living under a hyper-capitalist and controlled society) was able to emerge.

Despite the perspective that most of the artists took on the universality of humankind as nature – there is an acknowledgement that something particular happens in 'wild' spaces. So we move forward with the acceptance that this is beyond the simple nature/culture narrative as artists do bring their work into cities, ruins, and urban parks but that there is something particularly potent about spaces that are seen as wild. The fieldwork supports Halberstram's perspective and the liminal framing of wild places, locations where there is less obvious or presently occurring human activity, as efficacious places of social critique.

But are these places truly free from cultural frameworks, expectations, and codes of conduct? After completing a wayfaring exercise in Epping Forest with Katye and Tom, the group regathered for a final time to share their experiences. Arun, a man of South Asian descent, had an encounter that reminded each of us that our bodies are never neutral, even in a secluded part of what feels like wild forest. During his solo practice he was approached by a park official and asked quite aggressively, 'What are you doing here? Why are you here?'.[54] Why was Arun approached and not any of the rest of the group during their solo practice, the majority of which were white women? What about his gender or racial appearance marked him as threatening and needing to be confronted? He was thankfully able to deescalate the officer's hostility and explain that he was here as part of a group, however his sense of safety, curiosity, and wonder was shattered.

During the sharing later that afternoon Arun said he had felt angry and ashamed. After the encounter with the park official, he considered just going back to the group meeting spot but on his way there he came across a partially dislodged tree that looked as if it had been severed to make way for a path. He felt that he and the tree had both been uprooted by similar forces and structures of power. Arun said that as a queer brown person he often felt severed from nature, and despite the negative experience of the confrontation, he found kinship in this shared moment with an uprooted and severed tree. The communion with the tree helped him find peace after an abrasive experience. I have had similar experiences as a queer man, although not so direct or confrontational. Through this I was able to find empathy with Arun and his emotional experience, while also realizing the

[54] Note that Epping Forest is a public area and anyone is free to access, Queen Victoria declared it the People's Forest in 1882 after a series of protests fighting against its enclosure (Hayes 2020).

privilege and protection I am afforded through my whiteness. Arun's choice to share this experience could not have been easy and revealed the problematic approach of viewing nature or wild places exclusively as benign groves of healing, free from the political troubles of 'civilisation'.

Arun later shared with me how on his way home following the workshop he actually felt a 'much deeper sense of belonging' walking through Stratford Shopping Centre as he was no longer the only person of colour. Despite the forest being surrounded by diverse neighbourhoods, Arun described his experience of Epping Forest as very white. A part of himself was able to relax in Stratford that hadn't been able to in the woods. The demographics of most of the workshops under the umbrella of dance and nature attended as part of thesis were almost exclusively white, female, and heterosexual. Nature and natural spaces are not singular notions of respite and restoration. Throughout history the concept of nature has been weaponised through colonial practices (see Federici 2004; Merchant 1989; Turner and Bailey 2022). Some bodies are categorised as being 'too natural': Arun noted that the phrase 'let's get in touch with our animal bodies' lands very differently for people of colour. He said he has felt pressured to always present himself as clean, with no mud or dirty shoes, in order to appear civilised and not 'wild'. Jolie shared similar remarks during the Pilgrimage for Nature as to why the group was not only entirely white, but also mostly middle-class. She argued that one must present themselves as clean, as 'civilised', to avoid receiving racist or classist abuse. There is a practical element as well in that not everyone has the resources to afford new clothes or shoes that might get damaged rolling around on the ground. In this sense where wildness might be a word of emancipation for Hayley, for others it is a crippling label to escape from.

Where some groups are defined as too close to nature, others are defined as 'unnatural' leaving quite a very narrow "acceptable" window. Timothy Morton writes that in 2008 'Pope Benedict XVI declared that if tropical forests deserve our "protection," then "the human being" (defined as "man" and "woman") deserves it no less: "We need something like human ecology, meant in the right way"' (2010: 273). In the words of the Pope, gender is directly associated with a capital Nature that must be defended from the pernicious attacks that trouble pure binaries. Further, Morton describes ecocriticism as 'a vector for various masculinity memes, including rugged individualism, a phallic authoritarian sublime, and an allergy to femininity in all its forms' (2010: 274). Therefore we must acknowledge that communities seeking to engage with 'wildness' can just as easily create, or experience, exclusionary environments as radically egalitarian ones. While it may be experientially true that most individuals reported feeling less restricted in wild spaces, the wild too can be haunted by colonial or oppressive spectres.

This brings us to the third and final premise; if the ideas generated in wild spaces can ever be truly liberatory as structure is likely to ensnare just as easily and unintentionally as the wild. In developing her global fugitive network Hayley inadvertently found herself once again making huge grant applications and having to hire grant writers to place bids to fund January labs or the making of films by network members. While Hayley was able to generate

a recurring local audience that make occasional donations to her, network members in the monthly meeting repeatedly mentioned experiencing difficulty in generating any income via the gift economy. Currently Hayley is grappling with integrating Sanctuary on the Faultline into a world emerging from the pandemic and reverting to its, shocked, yet structured economy. Hayley called me in December of 2022 to say she had to close down the network. On the call, she shared her experience of a recent conversation she had with the network members. Hayley had come to realise that two years on she was spending hours of unpaid labour trying to build the network and after two unsuccessful funding rounds it was becoming unsustainable. So, she asked for the other members to pay a nominal monthly fee to be part of Sanctuary, receive monthly classes, attend meetings, and access online resources. The other network members did not respond well to this proposal. They argued that they too were independent artists struggling to survive off of their work. While Sanctuary's dreams were grand, Hayley and the others had inadvertently stumbled into yet another facet of the neoliberal gig economy, possessed by entrepreneurism and reproducing constraints they tried to flee.

Lewis (2008) warns that liminal phases are just as likely to create 'obfuscation, mystification, confusion, sensational excess, or rampant escapism' and that the liberatory essence of Turner's liminality needs to be 'tempered by the equally strong tendency toward destruction of the self and the environment' (45,55). Maxwell (2008) also argues that too optimistic a view on liminality omits the capacity for performance and ritual to effect 'radically dystopian change'. While I do not feel that any of the outcomes described in this chapter approach anything near the dystopian or destructive, Sanctuary in particular faced severe practical difficulty when faced with the return to daily life. As this chapter has shown periods of anti-structure, while rich for the genesis of new performative modes and perspectives, are just as often likely to 'to undergo what most people see as a "decline and fall" into structure and law' (Turner 1969: 132). For Turner, social life is a dialectical process oscillating between states and positions, between structure and anti-structure. In the liminal haze of the coronavirus pandemic Hayley dreamt an alternative vision of producing and creating performance work, however her collectivist utopian goals were perhaps muddled by an entrepreneurial reality, transforming a critique of the gig economy into a slightly greener doppelganger.

However, this may be slightly too critical a picture. Even though Sanctuary did not achieve exactly what it set out to do, the organisation accomplished plenty during its momentary light. Hayley developed a personal performance practice that sustained her during an extremely difficult period and continues to produce new work through this method. Her performances, as evidenced by the interviews with audience members were crucial opportunities for connection and reflection. The January labs evidenced by interviews with attendees were rife for critical reflection of their own womanhood and performance practice. Sanctuary and the January labs led to new collaborations between Hayley and other writers, scholars, teachers and artists and it remains to be seen what will unfold in the long term. Currently, as of January 2023, Katye and Tom were able to secure a

residency titled *Cultural Reforesting* hosted by Orleans House Gallery near Richmond, Greater London in the Spring of 2023. In this residency they will explore how to transition Kinship from 'meaningful experiences in nature into being sustainably active and activist in human thinking, in organisations and in communities.' Support and interest for these type of environmental movement practices appears to be growing with more organisations offering educational and artistic opportunities such as the organisation Intercultural Roots and their growing programs of artist support and Schumacher College with the development of a new MA in Movement, Mind and Ecology. This ethnography supports Turner's theory liminal phases generating anti-structural critique that eventually move towards some kind of structure, which may in turn eventually lead towards desire for anti-structure once more. However, the ethnography also demonstrates how despite their ephemeral nature these periods are rich opportunities for reflection and imagination and these qualities are essential to life on a changing planet.

Conclusion

Throughout the fieldwork "making with" was an essential feature of nearly every field site. Some artists prefer participatory workshops, developing opportunities for learning and experiencing through generating communities of practice. Others prefer to create performance and works of art, with varying amounts of audience interactivity, generated through periods of living in community. Some of the networks emerged through the simultaneously generative and mournfully destructive early period of the COVID-19 pandemic as a tender, yet life-threatening experience of co-liminality. Others have been working for decades in the UK and have bolstered their drive for communal practice in the aftermath. Liminal experiences of anti-structure often thicken back into structure, making their brief temporality that much more exceptional. As demonstrated, these alternative visions also struggle to fully extricate themselves from the societal hierarchies and fragmentations that lurk beneath gleaming ideals. While the wild may for some represent a place rife for reflection and refuge, it is not a neutral place. What this chapter has shown is that an environmental approach to movement and dance, like the myth of the rugged entrepreneur, is nigh unachievable without community. We have never been individuals; we are all lichens now (Gilbert *et al.* 2012).

This sense of community further supports opportunities for generating an ecological sensibility through the sharing of practice and experience as part of a shared domain or interest. Up until now this thesis has been focused on the generative creative work of artists and facilitators creating workshops or performances that focus on human-nature relationships. The remainder of the thesis shifts focus slightly to directly explore more overt activistic goals among UK performance artists. As the following chapters will demonstrate, calling oneself an activist or claiming activist intentions is a contentious and potentially dangerous choice considering rising authoritarian crackdowns of protest in the UK. This may

be partly responsible for the differing moods and responses artists have towards environmental activism and how it relates to this work. First, I discuss these complicated relationships while examining one of the more outspoken environmental groups in recent years, Extinction Rebellion, before culminating in offering an alternative lens to understand some of the more subtle activistic qualities in the work of artists discussed so far.

Chapter Four: Am I An Activist? Artist-Activist Identity and Intention

Introduction: Activism, Eggshells, and Ethics of Care

We are slowly, cautiously, descending a stone staircase down to Lumb Hole Falls along the Crimsworth Dean Beack north of Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire. This walk is part of the second day of a Kinship Workshop in Hebden Bridge in August 2021. It is raining, just as it has been the entire day, just as it was all day prior. My bones and the stone of the steps are perforated with moisture, causing them to feel slippery and unsteady. The slick steps cause us to move with care and offer support to those behind us along the descent. It is a slow and deliberate process. Ahead of me, I see Tom pause; he kneels and gingerly picks something up off the ground. He holds it for a moment and then tenderly places the object on the stone wall to our right. Satisfied, he then continues the descent down the steps. When I approach the same portion of stone wall, I glance over to catch a glimpse of what he had moved. Tom had affectionately lifted a gleaming white egg from the stone staircase, removing it from harm's way. After closer inspection, I realize the egg was already broken and yet, despite this, Tom still afforded the tiny, shattered thing tender care and attention. This moment has stayed with me for a long time.

When we reached the end of the staircase one of the other participants in the workshop, an experienced activist, described three different facets of activism: stopping and resisting, creating alternatives, and changing perspectives. She said that all of these facets are needed, however we have a tendency to focus on the first category and see it as the only "true" activism. She argued that many activist-artists feel that they can only claim the right to being an activist if they are out in the streets, blocking the roads, marching in large protests, dismantling oppressive systems. She said that we forget how this work needs to be balanced with acts of care and imagination. I found her description of these three types of activism stimulating and helped to broaden my understanding of what activism can and might look like. Many of the participants of this research project engage in facets of environmental activism in their own way. However, many also did not feel comfortable claiming the title of "activist" and had reservations about their right to use the term. This tension between the strong desire and passion for environmental justice and the trepidation or feelings of inadequacy when it comes to being called an activist is an important part of this research.

Over a year and many interviews later, I sat at my writing desk and opened my email to receive an annual newsletter from Sandra Reeve which outlined her program of movement workshops. In the email she lamented how the world is "on the brink of the climate catastrophe" after an inadequate COP 27 summit and the hair-raisingly close call of bomb shells landing within metres of Ukrainian nuclear facility Zaporizhzhia. The newsletter continued:

> ‘In the face of this, I ask myself about the relevance of offering my programme of movement workshops and training for 2023. I imagine many of us are asking ourselves a similar question in a variety of different ways.’

In this newsletter, Sandra reaffirmed the troubled feelings I encountered in the fieldwork and simultaneously acknowledged their prevalence in her own social and artistic circles. However, this hesitation is simultaneously a reflexive action.

As Sandra continues her written reflection, she evokes her previous work, *Nine Ways of Seeing a Body* (2011), where she describes the ecological body, the basis of her work, as such:

> The ecological body perceives the moving world through movement and experiences itself as one part of a changing situation. As an ecological body I am aware of the effect that my movement is having on others and on the environment itself and how they, in turn, are conditioning my movement. (2011: 50)

This idea of movement influencing ‘others and the environment itself’ is essential to her practice; she writes that her work attempts to ‘foster an attitude of biocentric equality through movement’. Sandra argues that barrages of facts and factoids are insufficient when it comes to altering public opinion, something supported by the work of eco-philosopher Timothy Morton (2018). However, she does believe in the efficacy of an empathic relationship to place: ‘when people fall in love with a place through embodied experience and imagination, they fight hard to protect it; to protect it from litter, from pollution, from pesticides, from inappropriate construction, from human overuse’ (Reeve 2022). To conclude her newsletter, Sandra reaffirms her position in an adamant statement of hope and perseverance:

> So I have made my decision: I remain convinced of the relevance of movement, embodiment and imagination within our collapsing world, in whatever shape or form they may arise in your own work and creative lives. I shall carry on. (Ibid 2022)

This chapter presents evidence of the contentious and complicated relationship encountered between environmental activist identity and environmental movement practices. Interviews with UK movement artists provide further examples of the same deep sense of conflict Sandra chose to vulnerably share with her community. Not all of the artists interviewed came to the same conclusion as Sandra does above, but most had at some point questioned their own sense of activist identity and the relevance of their artistic work in a swiftly changing world.

This chapter attempts to share a condensation of this conflict, not to resolve it, but to identify and acknowledge. Once identified, the conflict helps us to recognise different forms of activism perceived by the artists and how these forms relate to the goals of their work. Utilising the three types of activism outlined by a workshop participant as inspiration, this chapter discusses two distinct, yet essential and complimentary forms of activism encountered: hard and soft. The ‘hard’ activism includes the types of activism that involve ‘getting in the way’, blocking roads, marching in groups; these acts are often loud and they

are public. The 'soft' activism includes the quiet, relational form of activism that seeks to revolutionise connection on the level of individual and intimate communities. This form of activism could also be called an activism of attention. Conversations with activists and artists as part of this research has led me to believe that neither can achieve societal change without the other, and that harder, more direct approaches to activism often attempt to balance their own confrontational practices with regenerative and restorative work. The bulk of this chapter presents a case study of Extinction Rebellion protests, marches, and performance spectacles as a documented form of 'hard' activism. This more traditional understanding of environmental activism is examined through the scholarly work of choreographies of protest (Foster 2003; Martin 2006), dissent (Bayraktar 2019), and choreopolitics (Lepecki 2013). The chapter immediately following will contrastingly describe what a 'soft' activism might look like and how it is already present in these artists' work. Ultimately both chapters seek to demonstrate how activist-artists in the UK, despite different tactics and ideologies, utilise similar tools and achieve similar outcomes via engaging with the body and performance as mediums of change.

Am I An Activist?

In *The Art of Activism and the Activism of Art*, Gregory Sholette (2021) documents and historicises the contemporary wave of activist art in the 21st century. Primarily using examples from North America and Europe, he argues that much of this activist art has arisen as reactions to the lived effects of colonialism, capitalism, gentrification, and rising authoritarianism. Sholette, alongside Fremeaux and Jordan (2021) critique the boundaries between art object and useful object, between performance and protest. Increasingly, aesthetics and activist principles are combined to draw in supporters via social media and spectacle, as 'the role of the artist is to make the revolution irresistible' (Toni Cade Bambara in brown 2019:4). While there is much to be said about the use of art and performance in historical protest movements in the last century including Women's Suffrage, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, ACT UP, Occupy Wall Street, and Black Lives Matter to name a few, this thesis focuses on environmental activist art in the United Kingdom as a response to the ongoing threat of climate change and ecological disaster. While all of the artists interviewed as part of this research make work about the environment and have concerns about human-nature relationships, many resisted identifying themselves as activists. Despite avoiding an activist label, they continue to enact and embody change they hope to see in their society. This section contains interviews with artists from various fieldsites and projects in the UK that demonstrate the complicated relationship between activist expectation and artistic practice that Sandra Reeve articulated in her newsletter. Artists may contradict each other or even themselves as they continuously negotiate and question activism and activist identity.

Examining these artistic practices as forms of activism or resistance provides important contextual evidence of the shifting form of power in 21st century UK. In her

writing anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod flips the Foucauldian argument that 'where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault 1978: 95) claiming instead that the ethnographer should also consider 'where there is resistance, there is power' (Abu-Lughod 1990: 42). Her inversion charges the ethnographer to view sites of resistance not exclusively 'as signs of human freedom' but also as objects of discourse to 'strategically tell us more about forms of power and how people are caught up in them' (ibid). For Foucault and Abu-Lughod, political power shapes the form of its own resistance and analysing resistance can consequently reveal power in unexpected and fundamental ways. For example, Extinction Rebellion's imaginative and vivid acts of resistance created attempt to counter narratives of power that either frame the climate crisis as inconsequential and trivial or as an unavoidable and fatalistic race to the consumptive bottom. Extinction Rebellion continually shifts their tactics, privileging both multi-pronged economic disruption and grassroots community building. These strategic choices reveal the contradictory and chimeric governmental attempts to both frame the movement as a dangerous extremist group which demands tough, restrictive legislation and dramatic increases in police presence, while also narratively minimising the movement by describing them as a 'public nuisance'. [55] As documented in this chapter, an increasingly populist conservative government in the UK continues to exercise power through cracking down on protest to demonstrate its legitimacy through the introduction of harsher criminal sentences and increased police powers. Escalating displays of media and carceral power shape a public discourse that criminalises and vilifies disruptive and vocal forms of activism.

While Extinction Rebellion grapples with public displays of state power, the interviews below demonstrate artists distancing themselves from this image. Instead, they chose to favour small-scale, intimate, analogue, and subtle forms of activism. This choice could be seen as a refusal to associate with more dramatic and high-risk forms of resistance faced with increasingly violent suppression of demonstrations and protests. It could also be a response to ever-present governmental surveillance via CCTV, data-collection, and algorithmic control;[56] a turn away from digitality, disembodiment and disentanglement from the local. It is my aim that the interviews below illuminate some of these concerns and provocations, questioning the relationship between dance artists and environmental activism in the UK.

[55] Reported in *The Guardian* by Vikram Dodd and Jamie Grierson on 10 January 2020, U.K. Counter-terrorism police placed environmentalist groups Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace on a list of extremist ideologies alongside neo-Nazi and pro-terrorist groups. The relatively tame police response I encountered in 2019 would be vastly overshadowed by the mass mobilization of police force and full governmental response to actions between 2020 and 2022 attended as part of this research.

[56] 'algorithmic control' might be overly dramatic syntax, but has entered popular consciousness following the Cambridge Analytica scandal and their influence on the 2018 US presidential election and 2016 Brexit Referendum (cf. Hinds et al., 2020; Wylie, 2019).

Artist Interviews

It was clear in the fieldwork that movement artists working with the environment were concerned about climate change and considering what capacity, if any, their work might have to safeguard the planet. To illustrate, about 18 months prior to the newsletter described in the introduction to this chapter, I interviewed Sandra Reeve about her artistic practice. Sandra had already begun to notice a subtle change in herself and her goals as an artist and facilitator, questioning the role of performance in a changing global landscape:

> Now I feel I'm more politicised, slowly, slowly… and it's time to speak out more. And yeah, those changes of perception are themselves political. I have asked myself, is performance going to be relevant? And if so, what kind of performance? I don't have an answer. I'm surprising myself, by how radical I'm sounding. But maybe that is a change of view. I mean, I have grandchildren.

A year later, stated in her newsletter, Sandra seems to have resolved herself of 'the relevance of movement, embodiment and imagination within our collapsing world'. Her testimony is indicative both of growing public awareness of the effects of climate change as well as the popular reproductive futurism in climate change discourse (Kverndokk 2020).

Later I was able to speak with Charlotte Spencer, choreographer of *Is This a Wasteland,* who was also questioning what her skills might bring to the climate justice movement. During our conversation Charlotte expressed a desire to combine activist and performance work and felt that dance artists have a relevant and effective skillset to offer activist movements:

> People who work as choreographers and dance artists [might] be sort of instrumental in mass gatherings of people, because our whole realm is in this sort of orchestration and organisations of bodies in space and time.
>
> So, I started to build a group of people: Katye Coe, and Thomas Goodwin and Ben McEwen and various other people starting to coalesce and meet kind of regularly just before the pandemic kind of hit - thinking about what we might do at COP 26.

Charlotte had begun to build a network of dance artists who were interested in and passionate about environmental activism. For example, activism is an important facet of the Kinship Workshops run by Katye and Tom. Each year they donate 10% of workshop facilitation fees to a different animal rights or environmental charity, and as evidenced below, their website makes this activist messaging clear from the start:

> We focus on how somatic and embodied practice can support and resource nature connection, activism and active responses to the concerns of our time including biodiversity loss, social justice and climate emergency.

However, in our interview Charlotte described how the pandemic and urgency of the Black Lives Matter movement had disrupted the organising efforts and deeply affected her perspective, causing her to question the relevance of planned, choreographed action. When discussing protest movements, she said:

> It's not something that can be premeditated or overly organised. It's just this outpouring of emotion or something that becomes physical. It's not something that's micromanaged, it just pours out of people and comes into the public realm.
>
> And I just was like, I'm not sure that this is the right thing. I'm not sure that this is what will kind of galvanise people or gather momentum… What difference would it make? If I got 2000 people to like, sit in a circle or something?

While Sandra felt determined that movement and performance are crucial to a collapsing world, Charlotte, in this moment, began to question the relevance of choreographic skills in achieving social and environmental justice. Perhaps dance and planned movement is better left outside the realm of direct activism, an unsuitable tool that might cheapen outbursts of rage and demands for change.

One of Charlotte's dancers, Ben McEwen, was also hesitant of the capacity of performance to contribute to activist causes. He felt that performance isn't naturally activistic or revolutionary and could just as well promote a more conservative view that doesn't 'provoke any form of change or reflection or understanding'. He also had reservations about the activist reach of his work as a performer. For Ben there was an awareness that the changes he observed and knowledge he gained from his movement practice might be solipsistic and have limited repercussions:

> I think in a way for me, it always feels like there's an activism in [my performance work]. But sometimes it might only extend as far as me, and then maybe there's little ripples from that. But it's a practice that I think helps me to understand better what I want to be in the world.

Ben may have been more confident about the activistic potential of performance, but it was tempered by a realism that considered both its reach and motivation.

Simone Kenyon, choreographer of *Into the Mountain* (2019) agreed that her artistic practice could be described as activism but had a caveat:

> I would say, yes, but I wouldn't say that publicly. And I wouldn't name it as "activist" activism. It's a quiet activism. I'm quite happy to sort of sit with the activism in a sort of stealth kind of way.
>
> When I talk about the wider context of it, there is a form of activism in there because of the frustration with just dealing with these hegemonic tropes that I'm just so tired of living in and experiencing. So yeah, I would say it is, but I wouldn't publicly talk about it in that way. Because the term activism kind of creates an expectation… maybe it's all relative, isn't it? Like, maybe for me, it feels like activism, but to like, a full-on kind of you know, "ecological activist", it's not… you're just getting people to connect to a place. But I think it's within the spectrum. Yeah, the soft edge of the spectrum.

This softer frame was common among artists I interviewed. Simone felt comfortable privately claiming her work as a form of activism, but her hesitation reveals another confrontation with power. For Simone, activism comes with a series of 'expectations' that she is not confident her work meets. As described later in this chapter, a sort of judgemental hierarchy can emerge in environmental activism whereby individuals may be judged harshly for personal choices around high carbon footprint travel or diet.[57] Further, in the contemporary digital age claims of activist intentions may be faced with accusations of 'performative activism' if deemed as 'shallow, artificial, [or] ineffective' (Thimsen 2022: 85). With critical judgement potentially coming from both detractors and supporters it is of little surprise artists are hesitant to use this label. Similar terminology and hesitation arose when I interviewed Simon Whitehead about his artistic practice and its relationship to activism:

> I think it's an interesting question in terms of activism, because particularly at the moment, we perhaps have particular perceptions of what activism is; something that's performed constantly and that we're very aware of. I don't think my work sits necessarily in that frame. But I think, I hope the experience of it creates opportunities for thinking and ways of being with the earth and each other. And in in that way, perhaps it's quietly activist.

From these testimonies we can see that if claims of activism are made, they are made with stipulations and specific parameters. There is the perception of a "traditional" form of activism that is not identified with; the estrangement potentially arising from feelings of inadequacy, anticipated inappropriateness of the form, or for protection from structures of power both from the state and within activist circles. However, artists also acknowledged that their performance and workshop facilitation practices meaningfully affected how they perceive and interact with the world, embodying a sense of hope in positive change.

In Summary

The testimonies of these dancers, choreographers, performance-makers, and facilitators demonstrate the contested relationship between movement artists and environmental activism in the UK. There is a general denial of their work relating to the forms of activism seen in popular media, but a simultaneously fervent belief in the relevance and potential of their work in terms of cultivating an ecological sensibility. There is a felt growing urgency to advocating for the environment and the artists interviewed feel morally compelled to contribute. Some artists try to implement activist principles directly into their facilitation, others are wary of being labelled activists or overtly political. Most acknowledge there is

[57] Diana Stuart (2022) provides a good overview on the complicated relationships between prioritizing individual choices and systems change in environmental activist movement.

some form of activism present in their work but one that exists distinct from what they perceive as a “mainstream” activism composed of disruption, angst, and protest.

The remainder of this chapter examines the use of performance and choreography present in an activist organisation that is in direct confrontation with state power. This could be understood as a ‘hard’ activism in contrast to the ‘soft’ activism the artists above promote in their work. To craft a clearer picture of these antagonisms, I present an ethnography of protests, marches, and actions of environmental activist group Extinction Rebellion in London between 2018 and 2022. This ethnography demonstrates how activists utilise choreographic principles in their protests and actions; preconceived notions of protest as spontaneous bursts of tumultuous passion are tempered with evidence of careful planning and consideration. In the following chapter, this evidence will be complemented by an analysis of a softer, quieter form of activism promoted by the artists above that relies on cultivating ecological sensitivity and attention; ultimately arriving at a snapshot of contemporary ecological activism in the UK that relies on both essential forms of collective action. It is important to note that this separation of hard and soft activism may be, to some extent, a product of the harsh policing of protest and demonstrations in the UK, as artist-activist attempt less risky forms of resistance. As this chapter will come to demonstrate, this ideological separation could be attributed to opposing responses to a government increasingly hostile towards critique and direct action rather true ideological or ontological differences. While this increased policing may have pushed some off the streets and into a subtle periphery, other authors and activists are calling for more aggressive tactics (Malm 2021). With increasingly frequent extreme weather events across the globe, it is likely that new, or old, tactics of resistance will continue to proliferate and resurface.

Hard Activism

Figure 20 Painted text which reads 'THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE' on occupied Lambeth Bridge during the 2019 Extinction Rebellion protests.

ANDREW SANGER: *What brought you here today?*

EXTINCTION REBELLION SAMBA BAND DRUMMER: *The need to act – and the need to engage my body in the form of acting.*

This section will first provide a brief historical context of Extinction Rebellion and the development of the movement as well as an overview of the organisation's tactics, goals, and recent adaptations to shifting public and government responses. Additionally, I will outline my ethnographic involvement as a participatory activist, artist and marcher focusing more deeply on my contributions to the Greenwich chapter in South-West London. The history and ethnography serve as an example of what could be described as a 'hard' form of activism which includes marches, protests, and public, high-risk actions. I will first provide specific ethnographic examples of more explicitly performative action-events utilised by Extinction Rebellion to demonstrate how dancing might be understood as protest and activism. I will then articulate how protests, marches, and demonstrations can and have been framed as choreographies themselves and demonstrate how protests might be understood through the lens of dance studies (cf. Foellmer 2016; Kedhar 2016; Martin 2006). This dynamic between protest and performance knowledge helps to demonstrate

the symbiotic relationship between art and activism present in contemporary British approaches to environmental activist movements. This section also serves to describe the type of activism some artists interviewed above position themselves apart from. These descriptions and analyses of hard activism may in turn demonstrate some of the same characteristics of softer activisms, reinforcing their complimentary nature and the necessity of a holistic approach to activism.[58]

Extinction Rebellion: A Brief History and Critique

In the last few years North America and Europe have seen rapid growth in grassroots activism around numerous social justice issues including racial justice, income inequality, and environmental concerns (Fotaki and Foroughi 2022; Gieseler 2019; Jakobsson and Korolczuk 2019). Social media has played a crucial role in the broad reach and participatory elements of these movements, reframing and decentralising individual activist agency (Lievrouw 2011). Decentralised movements offer particular strengths: their informal and mass communication networks supported by non-violent action make them difficult to subdue; they are flexible and adaptable to change and circumstance; they are less vulnerable to the loss of individual leaders; and they contain a spontaneity that enables rapid and expansive occupation of streets and public locations (Fotaki and Foroughi 2022). However, these tentacular forms of collective action have also led to the expansion of aggressive and repressive police policy (Tarrow 2011). Extinction Rebellion is one group demonstrative of these trends and describes itself as a completely decentralised and autonomous organisation composed of hundreds of local chapters. As of February 2023, there are 1070 groups active in 86 countries around the world.[59] Extinction Rebellion, or 'XR', is an environmental activist group founded in Stroud, UK in 2018 by Gail Bradbrook, Roger Hallam, and their collaborators. XR's website lists the organisation's three demands: (1) to 'Tell the Truth', calling on governments and institutions to speak plainly and truthfully about the severity and scale of the threat of the climate crisis; (2) to 'Act Now' and immediately accelerate work being done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025; and (3) to 'Decide Together' calling on governments to form and be led by 'citizen's assemblies' to guide climate and ecological transition.[60] The organisation's decentralised structure has been credited by supporters as a large contributor to its explosive growth.

Anyone is welcome to join and act as part of XR as long as they adhere to the ten founding principles and advocate for the three demands. Their website includes various

[58] This is explained in more detail in Chapter 5.
[59] See https://rebellion.global/ for up to date statistics.
[60] In late 2020 Extinction Rebellion faced calls from different factions to adopt a Fourth Demand that called for Climate Justice and a 'Just Transition' that acknowledged the unequal and racialized aspects of the climate crisis. As of reviewing XR's promotional material and website in 2023, this specific demand is not listed. However, many local chapters, and the one I conducted my fieldwork in, voted to add this fourth demand to their own local constitutions.

structures of support for locating your nearest local chapter or resources to assist with founding and operation of a new chapter. For example, XR provides a Self-Organising System (SOS) structure to promote decentralised authority and transparency amongst its members.[61] XR, while predominately located in industrialised western nations, also has chapters in the global south, many of which have received financial support from XR UK (Richardson 2020). Local chapters initiate new members, host regular meetings, and facilitate the creation of various activity groups to develop actions or political strategies. Members will often be encouraged to form smaller affinity groups (AGs) of eight to twelve individuals that might live nearby, have trained together, have similar desires, or be interested in collaborating to develop new actions. Despite this idealised autonomous and diffusion of power, Marianna Fotaki and Hamid Foroughi (2022) have critiqued what they call Extinction Rebellion's 'fantasy of leaderlessness' and how this fantasy might impede a 'more thorough re-evaluation of the ideals of the leaderless organization and realization of inclusive forms of leading/organizing a movement' (2022: 241). Their research highlights the specific difficulties of achieving a non-hierarchical social movement, the controversies associated with Extinction Rebellion founders and their depiction in the media, and an explicit crisis of leadership and messaging that occurred after an action in 2019 when demonstrators climbed on top of a commuter train in Canning Town. Perhaps due in part to these crises of leadership, Extinction Rebellion has also inspired and spawned similar groups across the UK with their own demands and nuanced strategies including Animal Rebellion, Science Rebellion, Just Stop Oil, and Insulate Britain. The organisation of XR, its affiliates, and its controversy-rife history is rich site for academic analysis which has yet to be thoroughly studied but is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, this chapter more narrowly focuses on Rebellions that took place in London between 2018-2022, and involvement with specific actions in a local chapter.

Extinction Rebellion's first official action began on the 31st of October in 2018 when activists gathered at Parliament Square to 'announce a Declaration of Rebellion' (extinctionrebellion.uk). Over the next few weeks in November over 6000 activists occupied bridges and prominent locations in central London (Taylor and Gayle 2018). Actions taken as part of this Rebellion included the planting of trees in Parliament Square and activists supergluing themselves to the gates outside Buckingham palace. These practices of disruption and occupation would come to be signature tactics. In 2019 XR held two large Rebellions in April and October collectively involving over 60 cities across the globe and 2,800 arrests in London (Dodd 2019; Parroudin 2019). The core of Extinction Rebellion's philosophy is one of nonviolent civil disobedience, or nonviolent direct action (NVDA). Their choice of tactics and language is inspired by the successes of previous activist work from the civil rights movements of the 1960s, the suffragettes, and Occupy. They argue that civil disobedience and rebellion are necessary actions in the face of mass extinction and systems collapse and contend that mobilising as little as 3.5% of the population can achieve mass

[61] An overview can be found here: https://extinctionrebellion.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Self-Organising-System-One-Pager.pdf

system change. XR's specific tactics of nonviolent civil disobedience have historically included high-risk actions such as major disruption to roads and mass arrests as ways to "clog up the system" to demand public and governmental attention. One could argue that these tactics have worked dramatically, helping to lift the climate crisis into public consciousness, but has also led to controversy and critique.

Extinction Rebellion has faced major hurdles and criticisms as it pursues its objectives. Rupert Reed, a spokesperson for XR England, described XR's main objectives as such: 'We direct our campaigning towards pressuring governments into adopting radical ecological policies, while also seeking to engage in consciousness raising among the general public and through the media' (Rupert Read in Richardson 2020). There is evidence to suggest it has achieved progress towards these goals. At the very least, XR has enabled dramatic closures and transformations of public, urban spaces from busy intersections to highlighter-themed dance parties. Read argues that their tactics of NVDA have 'proved *extremely* effective in generating media coverage and provoking political discussion' (2020: 172). He cites mass arrests as a particularly effective method of garnering media attention with relatively little resources. Further, on 1st May 2019, shortly after the April XR Rebellion the UK Parliament declared an 'environment and climate change emergency' (Cowburn 2019). However, this was a symbolic political declaration, and four years later it is difficult to trace direct policy influence in the UK from these actions beyond the introduction of repressive policing bills designed to proactively prevent future demonstrations. It is even less clear and harder to determine if any environmental policy enacted in the recent years will have positive environmental impacts. Both limitations are worthy of further academic inquiry. Perhaps the difficulty of these tasks is partly indicative of XR's position that contemporary politics are ill-suited to face the challenge of the climate crisis. XR claims to be 'Beyond Politics' and takes an apolitical stance as a key strategy to attempt to appeal to a broad demographic of individuals. This discomfort with engaging with party politics may in fact damage their ability to form coalitions and exacerbate their vulnerability to opponents (Westwell and Bunting 2020). This neutrality may also worsen persistent neoliberal critique from within the system they wish to change, and radical questioning of accessibility by other activist groups.

To demonstrate this, we can examine one of XR's ten guiding principles: 'We Avoid Blaming and Shaming'. This principle acknowledges that we live in a 'toxic system' and no individuals are specifically to blame. The principle highlights the movement's attempt to focus on 'system change' over individual choices in addressing the climate crisis and presents a clear distinction away from a neoliberal individualist accountability towards advocating for dramatic and systemic change. The application of this principle is far from perfect and occasionally results in impassioned disagreements between activists for not making more effort towards leading carbon-neutral lifestyles (Stuart 2022). Further, XR activists are frequently targeted by media accusations of hypocrisy from using plastic cups

at a rally to buying food at a McDonald's.[62] In addition to media claims of hypocrisy to discount activists and their actions, the disruptive nature of the actions themselves is controversial and has received rigorous critiques from opponents and supporters alike (Fotaki and Foroughi 2022). For example, a coalition of aligned groups calling themselves the 'Wretched of the Earth' signed an open letter to Extinction Rebellion in 2019 critiquing their methods and ignorance of colonial legacies in their demands (2019).[63] In their research with XR Manchester political scientists Emily Westwell and Josh Bunting noted a distinct lack of ideas for alternative futures (2020). They wrote that 'This is not a challenge unique to XR, it is a challenge faced by social movements more generally, of balancing effective collective action in the present with mapping out an alternative for the future' (ibid: 549). Sociologist Diana Stuart (2022) suggests that these critiques and visionary weaknesses could be allayed by taking a more political stance and demanding a move towards degrowth and eco-socialist politics. She cites a growing body of scientific work that demonstrates that if we are to avoid a 2 degrees Celsius rise in global temperatures, we must end economic growth in wealthy nations (Hickel and Kallis 2019; Stuart *et al.* 2021). Stuart's critique of XR and similar movements argues that their 'systemic focus remains too general and fails to pinpoint the driver of the crisis' (2022: 817). With these criticisms coming from both establishment and anti-establishment aligned bodies, Extinction Rebellion is facing its own crisis of how to move forward to achieve its aims.

On 31st December 2022 Extinction Rebellion made a dramatic announcement titled 'We Quit' where they announced a "new year's resolution" to end their campaign of public disruption. In the announcement they acknowledge that the tactics of disruption have been successful in escalating the climate crisis into public debate but have achieved little in terms of change. So, in response to the looming Public Order Bill and increasing government hostility to dissent or protest they pledged to 'prioritise attendance over arrest, relationships over roadblocks'. [64] XR is due to plan 'The Big One' for April 2023 where they hope to achieve a critical mass of attendees in Parliament Square so they 'can leave the locks, glue and paint behind and instead demonstrate faith' in a movement too big and too important to ignore. It remains to be seen what this shift in tactics will bring for the organisation and their ability to promote environmental policy action. With this history in mind, the following section describes my personal involvement with Extinction Rebellion between 2018-2022 and the prominence of performance art as part of their tactical repertoire.

[62] However, a 2020 study of over 500 UK activists found that over 90% had also made individual behaviour changes including 'boycotting, changing their diet, consuming less, reusing products, reducing energy use, and buying used or second-hand goods' (Stuart 2022: 810).

[63] The open letter is available here: https://www.redpepper.org.uk/an-open-letter-to-extinction-rebellion/

[64] Current Home Secretary Suella Braverman's new Public Order Bill as of Winter 2023 currently going through parliamentary discussion would give police officers in the UK severely expanded powers to end this type of action 'proactively'.

Extinction Rebellion: Fieldwork and Methodology

My involvement with Extinction Rebellion began independently and peripherally in 2018 and continued throughout the fieldwork period ending in 2022. My first live experience of Extinction Rebellion's spectacle-like actions occurred when I stumbled across their second major action in 2019 while attempting to cross Waterloo Bridge. The bridge had become completely overrun by unlikely companions: a makeshift forest of saplings and young trees; tents and their chatting occupants; activists manning food carts, carrying banners, and distributing leaflets; and police officers interspersed among the crowd. It was startlingly emotional, and I was fully enchanted. The enchantment compelled me to search for other locations seized by this glamour and I spent the next two days exploring Oxford Circus, Piccadilly Circus, and Marble Arch. I remember being particularly struck by the community that had entrenched itself around Marble Arch with communal food stations, portable toilets, dozens of tents and even two large open-air tents with a posted schedule of various trainings and classes including de-escalation training, NVDA training, yoga classes, and grief circles. As an anti-establishment occupation, the camp had appeared closer to a spontaneous village than the 'anarchic disruption' portrayed by the media and originally expected. I decided then and there I needed to learn more and get involved. As a fellow rambler I met on the Pilgrimage for Nature and friend of Gail Bradbrook said, 'She knew XR was going to work when she saw all the artists getting involved'. The unexpected, bubbling art and community I encountered on Waterloo bridge had truly made the revolution irresistible.

Extinction rebellion has over a dozen separate chapters in Greater London, with dozens more across the country and hundreds around the world. Following my experience on Waterloo Bridge, I reached out and joined XR Greenwich, which is one of the smaller London chapters. XR Hackney and XR Lewisham, which are much larger groups, were also nearby and considered as part of the fieldwork. As of the writing of this chapter, the XR Greenwich Facebook 'public group' has almost 400 members, XR Lewisham has over 750 and XR Hackney has over 3,400.[65] In the early stage of my involvement the group met in-person in a pub near Greenwich Park. However, with the arrival of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, the gatherings became less frequent and went online. Later, as I got more involved with specific actions it became necessary to collaborate in-person and with indoor meetings still banned under pandemic restriction, we took to meeting outdoors in Charlton Park. In addition to weekly meetings and involvement with local actions I also attended the larger London Rebellions in 2019, 2020, and 2021. In 2020 I attended a digital People's Assembly Facilitator training and was later commissioned by the Citizens Assembly Working Group (CAWG) to choreograph a performance for an action in Trafalgar Square that summer. The data analysed in this chapter includes fieldnotes from participating in the

[65] It is worth noting that these numbers are almost twice as large now in 2023 as they were in 2019 when first recorded during the writing of the upgrade proposal for this research.

above discussions, marches, and trainings, interviews with activists and organisers, and perhaps most significantly, my involvement with the XR Greenwich Banshees.

Performance as Protest: The Silvertown Tunnel Banshees

In late 2019 XR Greenwich organised a performance outside of the O2 Arena dressed in full white costume which referenced the Red Brigade whose vibrant and emotive performances have become an iconic image of Extinction Rebellion.[66] These white-clad performers call themselves the Banshees and use song, wailing, props, and carefully crafted movement textures to mourn the deaths of 26 lives lost daily due to poor air quality in London.[67] The live performance was supplemented with volunteers passing out flyers protesting the construction of the Silvertown Tunnel which would bring thousands of additional HGV's driving through the residential areas of Silvertown and North Greenwich severely impacting their air quality. As part of the fieldwork, after joining Extinction Rebellion Greenwich I found myself a member of the Banshees affinity group as a performer and provided movement direction in rehearsals. I undertook site visits with other rebels, coordinated indoor and outdoor rehearsals and participated in two major performances of the Banshees in 2020: one near the proposed site of the Silvertown Tunnel in North Greenwich, and another that began in Woolwich and travelled via the DLR to Transport for London's office in Stratford.

One late evening in Greenwich, I met with three other rebels to discuss the Banshees. We sat on cushions on the floor, shared vegan treats home-baked by the activists and reminisced about the inception of the Banshees, our performances together, and our involvement with Extinction Rebellion more generally. Over the course of the evening, the co-creators of the Banshees, who I had met in 2019 and had become friends and collaborators as part of the multi-year protest-endeavour, reflected on the process. Coincidentally, each of us independently first encountered XR during the April Rebellion in 2019. They all stated they had prior interest in environmentalism beforehand but had not had a community to discuss and act on those interests with. Sarah recounted that after witnessing 'a theatrical performance of a judge and jury' by XR activists in central London she knew that this was 'something for her'. John also pointed out that it was 'the flags and

[66] The Red Brigade was originally created by Doug Francisco and Justine Squire, members of Bristol's Invisible Circus, who premiered the performance art as part of the April 2019 Rebellion. The red is designed to symbolize 'blood, danger, passion, stop signs' (redrebelbrigade.com). The performance is characterized by a group of performers draped in red fabric costumes with their faces painted white. They use slow, deliberate movements and create emotive tableaus. Their website lists resources for how to create your own costumes and guidelines for the movement direction. There are now Red Rebel inspired performance groups around the globe. They performances serve multiple functions, one is the manifestation of spectacle to draw in audiences, and another is to act as a force of de-escalation and may form circles or barriers around vulnerable rebels performing more risky actions.

[67] A recent study published by the Environment Research Group of Imperial College London (Dajnak *et al.*, 2021) found between 3,600-4,100 estimated attributed deaths in 2019 due to anthropogenic air pollution. I was unable to locate where the original 26 daily deaths were cited from.

the colours and the samba band' on Waterloo Bridge that originally drew him in. He said that there was something 'ritualistic' about the actions he witnessed where rebels wouldn't smash things and run away; instead, they would stand there patiently and wait to be arrested. For Heather, the communal aspect and decentralised power structure was especially important. On her second general meeting she was already being given 'action points' to present on for the next meeting and was making friends with other locals. Myself included, each of us had been drawn into Extinction Rebellion by the music, theatre, and art objects created by other rebels. Sarah, one of the more mature activists, was particularly inspired by this aspect of XR and said:

> Throughout my life, I've been to loads of different demonstrations for various kinds of political things or environmental things. But for me, seeing the way XR did it, the visuals, the performance, I thought this is going to annoy a lot less people and entice a lot more people and hopefully change more opinion.

As we will come to see, the changing of opinion, rather than more concrete achievement in policy, is something the activists chose to focus on when describing their activist work. Sarah, John, and Heather all contributed their own skillsets to the creation of the Banshees including voice coaching and writing of songs, sewing of costumes, and coordination of performers. This section supported with interviews and participation in the performances, outlines the creation of the Silvertown Tunnel Banshees, the inspiration and symbolism which shaped the performance, and the intended goals of the work.

The Banshees were created as a visual metaphor to accompany the 'Stop the Silvertown Tunnel' protests. The costumes were adapted Red Brigade costumes, who share their costume making guides publicly, but made instead with all-white fabric. The white of the fabric and the spray-painted shoes was originally chosen to represent death, much like how all-white painted cycles are sometimes left in locations to mark where a cyclist has died. However, after an early performance they had received feedback that the all-white robes too closely resembled the apparel of racist groups in the US. Therefore, in order to avoid controversy and misunderstanding, the all-white costumes were later torn up and dirtied to appear as if spoiled by smog or pollution. As seen in popular imagery, the Red Brigade paints their face white, and this was considered at first but was rejected by the Banshees when some multi-racial members of the activist group expressed discomfort painting their face white. Instead, red was chosen with black eyebrows as an inverse of the Red Brigade colours while still concealing identity and creating a sense of otherworldliness. Heather described the importance and effect the costumes had on her:

> When I'm in the costume as well, I'm very much in the zone, I feel there's something about being in a costume that is really transformative. I think the idea of being a dancer or performer just as myself – I would have found that really quite hard. But I felt basically protected. And also the anonymity… when we see photographs of us, sometimes we can't work out who's who! We are all one which I really like.

My own experiences as a performer supported Heather's observations. Walking amongst a crowd of similarly dressed individuals with full body coverings, masks and face paint created an obscuring of identity which engendered a sense of safety. In his theorising of masking drawing from ethnography on Ebira masquerade John Picton writes that masks enable a 'dramatic distance' that separates not only the performer and the audience, but also the performer from their everyday self; the mask in effect mediating the relationship between a performer and their identity (1990: 192). Through the act of masking, the performer 'is both himself and not himself' enabling a form of re-definition, or transformation, of identity (ibid:182). The masks and costume of the Banshees permit a sort of performative distance from one's sense of self and instead, through a shared cultural imagery connects the performers to the global movement of silent performances inspired by the Red Brigade. This dramatic distance enabled me to lead a symbolic funeral procession through bustling Westfield Shopping Centre surrounded by police and mallgoers, cameras flashing and recording from supporters and detractors alike. There was fear and apprehension certainly, but the anonymity helped to overcome those emotions. The costume performed layers of symbolic protection with affectual qualities for the performers underneath.

The name of the performance group was also symbolic. They did not originally call themselves Banshees, but 'Mourners'; 'Wailers' was considered as another alternative name but was determined to be too familiar, referencing the music group Bob Marley and the Wailers.[68] During the creative process, the term Banshees was ultimately chosen instead of Mourners to reference the spirits from Irish mythology that wail to foretell death. For John, this symbolism served to connect with a relatively local mythology and a sense of 'spirit and rising up'. Collectively, the symbolism of the performance was one of a prophetic funeral; empty pairs of shoes tied to a pole representing individual deaths and the Banshees wailing to mourn their foretelling if nothing was done to combat air pollution in London.

The performance itself had a simple structure that was adapted to each location. We would process carrying banners and 27 pairs of shoes tied to two poles from one location to another, silently, to draw a crowd. The Banshees don't speak at all while processing and don't break character once the costumes are on. Once we reach our location the performance would begin with a song written by John. While the other banshees sang, I would improvise movement while holding a gong and mallet. This dance served to mark out space between the performers and the crowd. At the end of the song, I would stop dancing, hit the gong, and return to the line of Banshees. Then, cumulatively, the Banshees would begin to wail, holding a single pair of shoes. They would walk forward, place the shoes in the space I had cleared, and then return to collect more shoes. Once all the shoes were placed, the wailing would cease, and we would collapse next to a pair of shoes. While we lay on the ground, the scheduled speaker would deliver their talk about the proposed Silvertown Tunnel. Speakers generally provided additional context about the action, arguing that the tunnel would contribute to pollution in a primarily residential area and was an unnecessary

[68] There was appreciation that many of the Wailer's most famous songs are popular at protests and have historical political significance, but the group ultimately decided they needed their own identity.

development that ran counter to London Mayor Sadiq Khan's environmental pledges (Pirani and Anning 2021).

In the face of climate disaster, why have a performance at all and to what end? Originally Sarah, John, and Heather simply wanted to create something to draw a crowd, attract attention, and form a sort of 'creative spectacle' which would then direct an audience's attention to speakers giving talks about the Silvertown Tunnel. The goal of these events was to drum up public opposition to the tunnel to try and block its construction. While this was the primary inceptive goal of the Banshees, Sarah was also adamant that as a performance through the creative process it had developed other essential characteristics:

> …performances touch or communicate with people in a different kind of way. Sometimes they're moved, or it resonates with them in a way that people can't quite articulate. People can't look away… With the wail, we wanted something, a noise – it was wordless, that could be understood. That grief, that pain, that sort of terrible, kind of primal noise, we thought was really powerful.

John, who wrote the words to the song the Banshees sang, agreed saying:

> I think we just wanted to connect with people in a way that you can't with words, or statistics anyway, I mean, I guess with the song words, we wanted the words to communicate, but as poetry not as arguing.

John explained further that the desire of the protest and the performance was more complicated than just "stopping the tunnel":

> It's expressing grief. It's connecting with people. So, from a point of view of we wanted to stop the tunnel. We hoped that it would connect with people in a way which would create a kind of understanding that wasn't there before, about what this actually means.
> It was said before about connection, and connection with the earth, just to kind of get that message across. The problem with [the tunnel] is that it's cutting us away from reality and away from life. The tunnel itself is almost symbolic. It's an instance of this thing that's happening everywhere, all over the world, all the time. So, it's like, actually we want to stop the tunnel, but also, we want to stop the destruction and disconnection.

From this discussion it becomes apparent that while they do indeed care deeply about trying to stop a development they view as unwarranted and harmful, the performance, and its goals, are expanded beyond the shoreline of the Thames, geographically and metaphysically. Elucidating the discussion of multifaceted purpose from the perspective of the performers, Heather shared a particularly poignant memory of the first performance they did outside the O2. Heather did not personally identify as a performer or artist before joining the Banshees but felt inclined to participate and the experience was new to her. She was nervous but had an experience that validated her sense of belonging. The memory she chose to share was also indicative of the expanded sense of purpose and acts as an essential balm to remedy activist burnout.

When the Banshees arrived at the O2, they couldn't find the musicians they were supposed to meet, so they continued to walk around the area with volunteers handing out informational flyers and acting as support.[69] While walking Heather overheard some of the conversations the volunteers were having with other people in the area. She said, 'some people thought we were loopy, but others were quite interested.' It was rush hour, and the area was very busy. She recounted:

> The children were asking their parents "what's happening? Why are those people dressed in sheets?" and I just remember one mother picking up the leaflet and saying, "They're taking a stand. It's very important."
>
> She said something like, "we all need to learn a lesson about people who can take a stand for what they believe in" explaining this to a six-or-seven-year-old and I thought, well, if that's one thing we've achieved, that's great.

Heather's story, years after it occurred, was still a very meaningful moment for her and the other performers. While far from their only engagement with XR, the experience of being in the Banshees was an essential aspect of their participation in the activist movement.

Sarah was passionate about what her involvement in XR has brought to her life in terms of creativity and community engagement. She viewed XR's focus on artistic expression in its actions a strong strategic choice:

> I think that's the power of art generally. It allows people to communicate really difficult ideas in a way that's not immediately palatable. It draws people over and allows them to feel things, it resonates, and it connects sometimes wordlessly. I think XR has always done that really well.

However, John expressed some reservations about the future of the movement.

> I sort of wonder where it will go as well. At the last rebellion, we're still seeing the same people, which was great. But I kind of wonder what the purpose of other Rebellions are because everybody has now heard of us. In the first time, it was kind of you know, people were getting involved.
>
> I think they did some incredible things. But you can't keep doing the same thing. I think there's a lot of people who think we have to go further, because it hasn't worked. And I'm not sure I agree.
>
> The thing about the performances is that actually, the Banshees was something new. And it's not on the scale of Waterloo Bridge, or on the scale of Insulate Britain, in a way, but it was something that was new. I mean, we sort of feel like in a way it's run its course.

This interview took place almost a year before Extinction Rebellion made its big April 2023 announcement regarding their change in tactics mentioned previously in this chapter.

[69] It is very common practice for performative XR actions to have volunteers there for public engagement to speak with anyone who has questions. There is also usually someone wearing a high-vis 'Welfare' or 'Wellbeing' vest to offer any medical or emergency support as well as someone in a high-vis 'Police Liaison' vest who has undergone additional training in communicating effectively and safely with police.

Already, seasoned members like John were sensing that change was needed if the movement was going to achieve its goals. As this thesis is written amid these fundamental changes, it remains to be seen what this adjustment in tactics will bring. Will it welcome in new activists, or isolate veterans? Will a less disruptive method sway policy makers and defang detractors or is it simply a submission to power, a crippled movement's desperate attempt to appease to authoritarianism?

Protest as Performance: Marches, Samba Bands, and Choreographies of Protest

In this section I will contextualise the choreographic and embodied tactics of Extinction Rebellion protest more closely. To clarify my stance, I follow Susan Foster in her influential analysis of the choreographic nature of protests, in that, 'I do not contend to read these events as dances for that would radically decontextualise their motivation and intent' (2003: 397). Instead, I argue that a performative and embodied lens provides a crucial perspective on the inherent politicality of dissenting bodies in public spaces. While Prarthana Purkayastha writes that 'arguably any form of activism… is embodied, the result of human corporeal labour' (2022: 3). I aim to establish the prominence and efficacy of the specific embodied tactics employed by Extinction Rebellion. These actions include: the deliberate and symbolic use of blockage, stillness and passivity; tactics of dispersal and occupation; practicing 'regenerative culture' through music and dance; and the choreographic foresight demonstrated through training and complex planning by both police and protestors. Ultimately, I aim to provide choreographic evidence of how political gatherings are opportunities to 'shape and reshape the social, the aesthetic, and the political' (Gerecke and Levin 2018: 5).

Tactics of Blockage, Stillness and Passivity

Susan Foster is critical of previous theories of protest which, from her perspective, fail to recognise the capacity of the body. They either 'envision the body as an agitated irrationality' where 'the body succumbs to the unpredictable whims of the masses' (2003: 395) or conceptualise protest 'as the calculated pursuit of narrowly defined interests' which emerge when an 'opportunity to leverage a complain presents itself' (ibid: 396). These approaches, Foster argues, either suppose an inefficaciousness to spontaneity or focus solely on a movement's failures or successes regarding their agenda. For Foster, both of these approaches fail to acknowledge the 'body as an articulate signifying agent' (ibid). In her analysis of the Civil Rights Movement and ACT UP protests in the US, Foster attempts to highlight the 'collective connectivity' amongst protesting bodies and the 'violence of the encounter between their bodies and those defending the status quo' (ibid: 397). Her analysis is particularly relevant and useful in this thesis as her work examines some of the historical

protest movements Extinction Rebellion attempts to emulate. Foster's seminal work underscored the importance of examining the embodied aspects of protest. Starting from the body as a political agent, choreography then, understood here as the organisation of bodies in space over time, can also be understood as political.

Randy Martin's analysis of dance and politics offers useful context for one of XR's most common choreographic tactics, the blockage and occupation of roads and public spaces:

> Consider the duality between motion and stillness. Holding stillness is a point of power. This is implicit in the relationship between being obliged to move and holding the capacity to move… the counter intuitive part of dance is stillness. The political can be posed around the refusal to be moved by people. (Martin in Kowal et al., 2017:7)

For Martin, dance is politicised culture (1995: 4-15). He does not endow dance with a transcendent capacity to enact social change, but instead writes that performance and performance viewing, may be 'the means through which mobilization is accomplished' (1995: 6). In this way, according to Stacey Prickett, 'Martin's work helps reveal how political mobilization can inspire social mobilization to occur beyond the artistic practice' (2016: 54). Stillness, blockage, and refusal are essential to XR's strategic employment of bodies in space. When understood as a deliberate, choreographic choice, putting "bodies in the way", halting traffic, and demanding immobility, produces specific symbolic meaning:

> The realness of the body is there for all to see, but the momentary stillness of what typically resides in motion offers the condensation of an ideal. The jaunty tension between is and ought, being and becoming, allows an aesthetic gaze to slip undetected into a political one. (Martin 2006: 791)

The choreographic choices of Extinction Rebellion activists that utilise blockage and stillness are symbolic of a politics that argues 'business as usual' cannot continue; so they block the roads and occupy public spaces to demand alternatives. These gatherings, particularly the "sudden villages" which emerged on Waterloo Bridge and in Marble Arch in 2019 and populated Trafalgar Square and Blackheath Common in 2021 are indicative of 'moments when principles for living together among strangers are put on display' (ibid:792). The standard use of these public spaces is disrupted and summarily populated by alternatives. Extinction Rebellion actions are pre-planned, collaboratively consulted and decisive, much like the action they argue needs to be taken by governments to counter the climate crises. The occupation of these spaces is filled with the sharing of vegan food, educational workshops and talks, performance events and music. As a protest, each occupation is 'a gesture of arrest that unleashes its own kinaesthetic' one that privileges slowness, collaboration, artistic expression, and non-compliance with oppressive forces (ibid: 800).

Extinction Rebellion's approach is not unprecedented. Foster outlined how the lunch counter sit-ins of the 1960s, the ACT-UP die-ins of the 1980s, and World Trade Organisation

protests in 1999,[70] each 'aspired to meet all threats and acts of violence towards them with a stoic, non-compliant non-action' (2003:400). XR acknowledges this ancestry and attempts to emulates their successes, holding their open NVDA trainings. Moreover, non-compliance and non-violence are not only a theoretical stance but also an embodied tactic. Foster offers this poignant example from ACT-UP:

> ACT-UPers further complicated access to individual bodies by exerting a passive noncompliance. Even as they shouted chants and slogans, they maintained a determined listlessness, thereby increasing their weightiness and requiring police to fumble for handholds and to jockey for leverage as they coordinated the removal of each body. (ibid: 404)

In embodying lifeless corpses, these activists simultaneously symbolise the deaths of the lives they are urgently advocating for and counter the institutional urgency of their removal and dismissal. XR provides similar advice for rebels willing to be arrested: rebels are advised to be unresponsive and non-compliant as they are being arrested. A passive and slack body is far harder to lift and remove, causing further delay and difficulty for police to remove obstructors. These acts of blockage and resistance, Martin argues, do far more than simply disrupt regular patterns. He writes that 'the civil rights marches on public highways, like that outside Selma Alabama in 1965, blocked traffic to allow a movement to flow' (2006: 798). This balance of blockage, stillness, passivity and non-compliance combined with the imaginative events and actions that revitalise these spaces 'is a spectacle that in giving others pause also deepen a view of what can be done' (ibid).

Tactics of Dispersal

Complementary to tactics of blockage and passivity are the use of tactics which demand swift and sudden movement. It is this complementary relationship between stillness and motion that makes occupation possible. Sevi Bayraktar in her research of LGBTQI+ protests in Turkey outlines what she identifies as a 'tactics of dispersal' (2019). She argues that urban activists employ these tactics 'to make use of the transformative capacity of choreography and tactically resist the strategic maneuvers of the state apparatus' (ibid: 101). Bayraktar describes dispersion as a choreographic action which counters state attempts to corral and control:

> Dispersed protesters, in constant motion, improvise new forms of interaction – which may or may not be decipherable to the police, as they similarly study the route, maneuvers, and engagement of resistant bodies in order to anticipate their next movement. (Ibid: 105)

[70] The 1999 Seattle protest against WTO labour policies were organized by a Direct Action Network (DAN). Foster writes how the DAN utilized the affinity group model that had been used by ACT-UP and anti-nuclear activist groups and advised interested to groups to design their methods of blockage which included 'sit down blockades, lockdowns, street parties, mobile blockades, creative use of objects, theatre performances, die-ins, etc' (DAN 1999 in Foster 2003: 409). It is relevant to note that each of these recommendations are common tactics utilized by Extinction Rebellion.

Police responses to Extinction Rebellion protests have escalated dramatically since the first rebellion in 2019. For example, UK police employ 'kettling' as a strategy to limit large protests. This strategy requires large numbers of police officers which cordon off areas which contain protestors. The officers form lines which gradually reduce the size of the cordoned areas, potentially arresting anyone who remains within. In 2021 this strategy was used to contain a protest in Covent Garden (Harris 2021). In this occasion, officers would allow people to exit the cordoned area, but they could not re-enter. Dispersal tactics have been employed to resist and counter state attempts to limit where protests and occupations occur. I will now describe two fieldwork examples where prominent locations were occupied in this way.

Parliament Square is an open lawn in Westminster where legal demonstrations are often held by various political and activist groups. During the Impossible Rebellion in 2021 I attended an action organised here by XR Cymru. It was relatively quiet with isolated groups of activists holding discussions and flags. There was a small samba band playing but it was not very loud or impassioned. The officers nearby seemed equally relaxed. I found a place to sit and listened to the speakers. Suddenly, a distinct pattern of car horns blared from the nearby streets. A passive and lethargic action reactively transformed into a crowd with a purpose. There were activists grabbing gear, flags being raised, music growing in intensity and crowds rushing to the street. I followed the group as they surged into the road. Empty oil barrels had been pushed out of vehicles that drove past the HMRC office on Parliament St and activists rushed to lock their arms inside the barrels. Hidden banners were unfurled and blocked traffic, food carts on bicycles appeared from side streets and a podium was set up. Activists arrived from multiple directions and converged, occupying a busy street in a matter of minutes with police unable to react quickly enough to prevent it.

A few days later, I was at another gathering at Piccadilly Circus. This one was organised by FINT (Female, Intersex, Nonbinary and Trans). The event included a samba band, a podium with speakers, and led singing. The group stayed near the fountain in the centre of the pedestrian area and caused relatively little disruption to local footfall and traffic. As I was talking with some friends from CAWG, suddenly the crowd leapt into action. Akin to my experience earlier in the week, I assume there was a signal of some kind, but I did not catch it. Hundreds of people, banners, flags, and drums surged into the street and began to march up Shaftesbury Avenue, walking past stopped cars with pedestrians either stopping and watching or choosing to join in. I was near the middle of the march when I heard a voice shout "They're taking Oxford Circus! Turn around!". Half the crowd immediately changed direction walking past a line of stunned and confused officers who had been following the march. I noticed a few officers smiling as we appeared to outmanoeuvre them; it was difficult to ascertain if the smirks were born of frustration, amusement, or respect. As the crowd walked up Denman Street towards Oxford Circus, I noticed a woman struggling to carry a speaker. I offered her help and carried it up Regent Street. When we arrived, a group of women had set up a structure in the centre of Oxford Circus and glued themselves inside of it. Speakers all around the square began to blare

music and a street party began to unfold. Police officers began to surround the structure. A group of women formed a circle around those police officers and glued their hands together. Police then surrounded the captured areas of Oxford Circus and rebels made another ring around them. A few other rebels silently held mirrors in front of the police officer's faces. Circles upon circles upon circles.

Both examples began as publicly advertised actions that were relatively quiet, tame, and nondisruptive. Unbeknownst to many of the attendees, underneath these plans were other more disruptive choreographies that coordinated disparate groups through subversive tactics of dispersal. Multiple crowds of activists moving in different directions, with only selected individuals knowing the true aims or directions. These individuals also must be able to improvise and direct crowds to different strategic locations as more numbers are needed to hold a location. Beyraktar argues these choreopolitical tactics 'not only disclose dominant political structures and violent manoeuvres of the state apparatus but also contest and defy those forces while fostering solidarity among dissenters' (2019: 105). Maintaining and bolstering this sense of solidarity is the focus of the next section.

Tactics of Regenerative Culture: Samba Bands and Discobedience

In my conversation with the Banshees, we discussed the role performance played more generally in Extinction Rebellion and immediately the conversation shifted to XR's signature Samba bands. Sarah recounted:

> A couple of day marches I went on, I just got absolutely soaked to the bone. But the music and the drumming… they have such an important role in keeping everybody's spirits up. As long as you're behind the Samba band, you know you have to keep moving forward.

Heather and John mumbled agreement, acknowledging their own shared experiences of walking behind an XR Samba band. The Samba bands I encountered in the London Rebellions and in Glasgow for COP26 were hugely influential in maintaining morale and enthusiasm. The Samba bands are an essential element of what XR calls 'regenerative culture'. In their article, Westwell and Bunting describe XR's regenerative culture as a 'a foundation of self-care, people care and planet care' (2020: 546). There is a deliberate attempt by Extinction Rebellion to cultivate a 'cohesive internal culture' that centres an 'ethics of care'. This philosophy draws heavily from the work of Joanna Macy on 'active hope and sustainable activism' (Macy and Johnstone 2012). Westwell and Bunting describe it as a concept that attempts to counter 'the "fundamentally uncaring and destructive" relations of modern western society' (2020: 546). In practice, regenerative culture is also an attempt to reduce the impact of activist burnout. Westwell and Bunting's ethnography with XR Manchester found that regenerative culture is perhaps more an organisational ideal than a practice in effect. With this is mind, I acknowledge the utopian pining of the movement and that there are many failures in all utopian projects. However, this section aims to

provide two examples of how XR rebels attempt to maintain a regenerative culture through performance of music and dance.

Most large Extinction Rebellion actions are accompanied by a marching Samba band; volunteer professional and amateur musicians playing high-energy percussive music. During the Impossible Rebellion I interviewed a few of the musicians during breaks. One activist had never played an instrument before but joined her local group. When I asked her why she joined she said:

> It's a way of expressing what's inside, getting it out, to being connected with people and getting your voice out there so what's inside comes out. And if no one listens, if nothing happens, it doesn't matter at the end of the day.
>
> It's kind of our regenerative action because it gives us energy, it gives us motivation, and it makes us happy.

Her sentiment as a musician was reaffirmed by other activists, the music of the samba band keeps them energized during day long marches, contributing towards individual and communal regenerative practice. The Samba also act regeneratively regarding their relationship to risk and escalation:

> if we notice something's getting edgy, we'll do a cheerful happy tune. and we'll instantly start playing so we very rarely sit down. As soon as we stop playing something edgy will happen and we have to start playing again.

The music, like the Red Brigade, are attempts at de-escalation. During multi-week or even day-long actions, there are bound to be confrontations between individuals: police and protestors, or even protestor and protestor. During the occupation of Parliament St outside HMRC, an altercation started between a police officer and an activist. Immediately two XR ‘de-escalation officers’ rushed over to separate the two individuals, and the samba band started playing again. The musician discussed how the band and the police have a complicated relationship:

> They seem to think we know what's going on. But in reality, we don't, we're just told where to go and what to play. And we do that and we follow what's happening. So they expect us to know what's going on. And we worry them because if the samba's there, it's going to be successful.
>
> I also think they're happy that we're there because we do de-escalate. And we're not there to cause trouble and most of us don't want to be arrested.

The samba band attempts, via music, to indirectly mediate the relationships between individuals and between the state and dissenters. It also simultaneously galvanises and inspires activists to persevere during long marches or occupations. This connective potential was especially important to the musician I interviewed:

> It's almost like a spiritual thing. It connects us to the ground through the resonance of your drums, to yourself, to your body, to each other in the group. And then when we come to an action, we realise it's connecting us to the wider community.

Alongside music, movement can also play a role in regenerative action. It is often hard to decouple these activities, as activists will often dance along to the samba band. However, I would like to briefly mention a popular action created by XR Australia, which they originally called a 'Disco Disruption'. In October 2019 XR Australia activists in took to the streets of Melbourne and blocked several busy intersections performing a flash-mob style routine to the song 'Staying Alive' by the Bees Gees. They have since uploaded an instructional video of their 'Discobedience' and in December of that year the dance was performed in over 20 countries simultaneously (Strong 2020).[71] There have since been multiple 'Discobedience' flash mob events in London, including a Digital Discobedience event in May of 2020 organised by XR Global Support Arts Team who released their own 'discobedience kit'. During the FINT action part of the Impossible Rebellion in 2021, there was also a small group of dancers performing their own repeatable dance to the Samba. These dancers combined simple steps from the macarena with simples of protest and power including stomping and raising a closed fist. They were teaching the dance to whoever wished to learn and when asked, said it was they were inspired by the Discobedience dance and this was the first time they were performing in-person; all of the rehearsals had taken place online. Even in the isolated phases of coronavirus related lockdowns, Extinction Rebellion in the UK and Torino used dance, through Discobedience and similarly inspired actions, to maintain a sense of regenerative culture that extended into the home and beyond the standard idea of protest.

Tactics of Choreopolitics and Choreopolicing

The final choreographic and embodied element of Extinction Rebellion I would like to introduce places particular significance on choreography as planned action. I acknowledge that this is a simplistic flattening of 'choreography' as a concept but use it here to stress the relevance of planning, practice, and rehearsal as they relate to the organisation of protesting bodies. This fourth tactic contains and critically extends the first three; blockage, dispersion, and regeneration, into a political whole. To begin, Foster argues against a view of protest that describes it as purely impulsive and unstructured events (2003). In support of her argument, she provides historical evidence of the rehearsals, trainings, and technical strategies activists developed as part of lunch counter sit-ins and ACT-UP die-ins to counter the narrative of chaotic spontaneity. XR activists, beyond the previously mentioned performers of the Red Brigade and the Banshees, also train and rehearse for their actions, emphasising the cultivation of certain postures and physical responses. As the samba drummer in the

[71] The video can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glptEWXscpQ

Impossible Rebellion said, 'We do it every week, we practice, it's just what we do'. Extinction Rebellion hosts regular trainings in de-escalation, non-violent direct action, how to facilitate 'people's assemblies' as a strategy in and outside of protests, [72] and how to safely respond to police during actions. Training and rehearsing are a regular part of involvement with XR. In this section I argue that practicing patterns and strategies of movement itself contains political significance and urgency.

Hannah Arendt wrote that 'we have arrived in a situation where we do not know – at least not yet – how to move politically' (1993: 13). In his translation of her work, Andre Lepecki argues that for Arendt, 'politics' could also be understand as a 'general orientation towards freedom' (Leecki 2013: 14). Therefore, for Lepecki, Arendt's statement could also be understood to mean that we do not yet know 'how to move freely'. He examines the movement that occurs in protests and specific pieces of choreography, such as *Tatlin's Whisper #5 (2008),* to describe the presence or absence of free movement.[73] In this way the choreographic negotiations between the rehearsed actions of XR rebels and the equally rehearsed responses of police forces demonstrate a contemporary conflict between 'political demonstrations as expressions of freedom, and police counter-moves as implementations of obedience' (Lepecki 2013: 17). This chapter has already provided examples and evidence of the drastically increased police response to Extinction Rebellion protests since its inception and my experiences in the field echo Lepecki's acknowledgement of a 'highly skilled, and mostly invariable, choreographed police presence' (ibid). The navigation of this relationship between power and resistance, between "allowed" and "forbidden" movement of people is a dynamic he identifies as 'choreopolitics' and 'choreopolicing'.

According to Lepecki, choreopolicing is a process by which 'the police guarantees that as long as everyone moves and circulates in accord with a general conformity of being in-circulation, this movement will produce nothing other than a mere spectacle of its own consensual mobility' (ibid: 20). Further, he argues that 'movements can only take place in spaces preassigned for "proper" circulation. Choreography is introjected as a policed dance of quotidian consensus' (ibid: 21). The ways in which XR rebels march in spaces made for cars instead of pedestrians, occupy intersections transforming places for going into places for staying, and refuse to be contained by the restricted and limited pathways "official" protests are given by police, are denials of this choreography with their own. It is important to acknowledge that these are not new strategies of resistance, nor are they unique to Extinction Rebellion.

Human bodies "taking a stand" be it through movement or stillness, like Heather does in her participation in Banshees performances, represent demonstrations, refusals, and negations of hegemonic attempts of choreographic control. Furthering the Arendtian

[72] People's Assemblies (PA's) are a specific format of discussion with the goal of reaching democratic consensus on a topic quickly which is less formal than Citizen's Assemblies which are designed towards larger and often governmental purposes.

[73] *Tatlin's Whisper #5* is a piece of performance art by Cuban artist Tania Bruguera which took place in the Tate Modern in London where two mounted police officers walked around the Turbine Hall and attempted to move museum goers around the space utilizing crowd control tactics.

perspective, Bayraktar argues that Arendt 'highlights the necessity of praxis, of collective action against the devastating impacts of those dividing, isolating and encapsulating power of hegemony' (2019: 99). Extinction Rebellion activists begin from a place of local, collaborative praxis in the development of their actions. The fieldwork with XR Greenwich and interviews with rebels demonstrated how individuals discover the environmental movement, access decentralised materials and resources to form local chapters, and through regularly occurring meetings, design and rehearse their own choreographic actions under the wider XR aegis.

Collective action is an essential component to this form of activism and Foster acknowledges the potent phenomenological impact of participating in these moments: 'when we filled the streets of Seattle, there was a power in our bodies that we didn't know we had. In this city, for this moment, our lives were our own' (2003:411). This sensation was mirrored by the XR rebels. Sarah mentioned that her involvement in Extinction Rebellion acted as a form of therapy against climate grief: 'It doesn't give me hope, but it gives me the next best thing… that things might not be as bad as they could be, *that people together can do things*.' For Heather it is about 'being connected to other people who also have that same feeling of wanting to be connected to the earth and hope for a different kind of world.' She said that Extinction Rebellion had very personal meaning for her, that involvement with the group had given her opportunities to meet people and do things she never would have done otherwise. However, this idyllic fondness is tempered by a stoic realism. Heather reflected:

> When you think of the [Silvertown] tunnel actually being built, and when you think of so much carrying on the same as it ever was, I still have faith in XR, but I don't think it's achieving its objectives… I've got three grandchildren now, could I do something? For them to know that we made a noise about it, even if we didn't achieve our goals, I think that feels quite important to me.[74]

Foster, like the XR rebels interviewed in this chapter similarly avoids a fervent romanticism when describing her involvement in protest action:

> We do not believe that we are overthrowing power. We are not throwing power off or away in order to be free. Nor do we believe, cynically, that nothing can be done. Our very presence as protestors is evidence of our belief in the possibility of instigating change. (2003: 412)

Dreaming must be balanced with cynicism; and action, movement, *doing something,* liberates the activist from paralysis.

To conclude, elements of the choreographic play an essential role in the activism of Extinction Rebellion encountered in the fieldwork. This was evident both from the perspective of more "traditional" performances and in the planning of marches, protests and occupations. UK activist-artists in the twenty-first century concerned with the climate crisis are operating from a lived experience of economic, environmental, and social instability exhibited by global pandemics, heat waves, Brexit, war in Eastern Europe, and

[74] Construction of the tunnel appears to be moving on schedule as of January 2023: (Moore, 2023).

rampant inflation. It would be naive to try and decouple the social from the environmental, and the XR rebels I collaborated with acknowledge their interrelatedness. Resisting a many-headed hydra of oppressive, destructive hegemony is defining a generation (Lautrop 2022). This thesis attempts to demonstrate dance, choreography, human movement, is far from foolish. If we are to ever learn to 'move freely' then:

> choreographic planning is crucial… the political is not a given to the subject, it is not even a given of the human species. Rather, it is a social and personal force and a promise that must be built with others, must be set into relation, and must be dared, collectively, into existence. Once in existence, it has to be learned, sustained, and experimented with. Again and again. Lest it disappear from the world (Lepecki 2013:23)

Conclusion

This chapter, through interviewing UK dance artists and ethnography with Extinction Rebellion in London, has demonstrated the contentious relationship between dance artists and contemporary environmental activism while also describing the highly choreographic nature of environmental protest movements. On one hand there are scores of UK-based movement artists advocating for and producing work explicitly about human-nature connection and environmental sensibility, while simultaneously resisting or even outright rejecting describing their work or themselves as activistic. On the other hand, Extinction Rebellion purposefully mimics the choreographic tactics of Euro-American performative activism recalling the tactics of the Civil Rights Movement, ACT-UP, and Occupy in the United States, and the Suffragettes and Greenham Common women in the United Kingdom. In this chapter, I have documented some of the explicitly performative actions of XR rebels including the Silvertown Tunnel Banshees and the Red Brigade, alongside a choreographic analysis of XR protest behaviour which includes tactics of blockage and stillness, dispersal, regeneration, practice, and foresight. This ethnography demonstrates how essential performance and the body are to contemporary environmental activism in the UK. Events beyond the research period of this thesis with the ongoing and increasingly dramatic events of splinter groups Insulate Britain and Just Stop Oil demonstrate that performative spectacle remains an important tactic despite a hostile government. The efficacy of these acts remains to be seen or analysed.

What I have been able to demonstrate with the ethnography in this chapter is that some the work of artists resisting activist labels and some of the work of activists co-opting performance strategies achieve similar outcomes as they seek to generate or cultivate a sense of nature connection and environmental sensibility. According to the interviews discussed earlier in this chapter, many UK dance artists argue that activism is an inappropriate framework from which to understand or contextualise their work. However, when pressed further, some acknowledged a subtler, softer, activistic capacity of their practices. This "soft" activism provides a lens through which we might examine the similarities in the intentions and outcomes, if not the strategies, of Extinction Rebellion

performances and the work of artists discussed previously. In order to articulate this shared ground, the next chapter examines ethnography with a 500-mile pilgrimage from London to Glasgow to present a performance to the delegates of COP26 to articulate what this soft activism might entail.

Chapter Five: Soft Activism, or an Activism of Attention

Listening to the Land: The Pilgrimage for Nature

I exited Tower Hill Station in London with a 60L rucksack strapped to my back filled with carefully packed kit in individual waterproof dry bags. I had followed the kit list provided by the pilgrimage organisers to the letter: one-person bivy, trekking mat, two-season sleeping bag, dry bags, camelback, waterproof trousers and jacket, two changes of clothes, toiletry kit, emergency kit, a few other essentials, and a recently broken-in pair of walking boots.[75] I was painfully nervous. Since moving to the UK in 2016 I had joyfully embraced the quintessentially British past-time of rambling and had grown into an avid walker, often walking for 3-4 hours at a time during pandemic lockdowns. However, I hadn't camped since I was a child and even then, we always stayed at campsites with running water and facilities. Trying to find the group I had come to meet; I did not want to think too hard about where and when I would next have access to indoor plumbing.[76] Eventually myself and all my equally inexperienced equipment made it to an open grassy area where I saw dozens of other individuals each with their own bulky, distended rucksacks. Awkward conversations sparked and fizzled in small circles as strangers introduced themselves. I later learned that there was a core group of pilgrims who had been having regular zoom meetings get to know each other, source funds, and organise the pilgrimage over the last year which helped to explain the sense of imperfect familiarity I felt apart from. I had joined the digitally organised group relatively late, stumbling across an old call-out on Facebook and had not been involved with the preliminary meetings.

The fledgling conversations were eventually interrupted by two women who introduced themselves as Jolie and Anna, familiar names of people I had been emailing over the last month in preparation for the walk. Before we set out, curator Adelaide Bannerman read a letter written to the Pilgrims by author and painter Jackie Morris.[77] After a brief send-off, the pilgrims and their supporters walked from Tower Hill to Paddington station. Along the way we were led by a guide to sites of watery significance including the London Stone on Cannon Street and a statue of a mermaid alongside the river Thames. We also took part in a druidic ceremony at St Dunstan in the East to bless the pilgrimage. Finally, following a day rich with greetings, farewells, and ceremony, we took a short train ride to Henley-on-

[75] This was my first crucial mistake. Although I had been wearing the shoes for a few weeks beforehand to try and break them in, the cheap pair of hiking boots I purchased would, over the next few weeks, nearly cripple me with half a dozen blisters on each foot.

[76] I am grateful that I soon learned that digging latrines and showering from a bag tied to a tree branch was far less humiliating that I previously imagined.

[77] The full reading, as well as interviews with each of the pilgrims is available in a short video documentary here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5aVFUxpwNU

Thames; it was from here our walk would truly begin. We set up our tents amongst the apple trees of Three Oaks Orchard and prepared for a 8 week and 500 mile walk to Glasgow.

Figure 14: Pilgrims setting up their tents for their first night at Three Oaks Orchard.

I walked with the pilgrims for twelve days from Henley-on-Thames to Moreton-in-Marsh. Lack of research funding unfortunately limited the extent to which I could afford to walk with the pilgrims. Over those twelve days we joined well-trodden chalk paths of the Ridgeway, stopping at organic farms, hemp growers, stone circles, and the Uffington White Horse. Each day we walked between 8 and 15 miles, through sweltering heat, foggy mornings, and rainy afternoons. As we gradually developed our skill in plotting daily trails, during those early days we often took wrong turns following poorly marked footpaths which meant we walked plenty of 'bonus miles'. The time we spent walking, navigating, and renavigating was filled with communal sharing: songs, stories, foraging skills, aspirations, and plasters.

Figure 15: Pilgrim expresses her joy at discovering the free-roaming piglets at one of the organic farms who offered to host us. I remember when we approached this farm as dusk was setting the rustling grass and squeals initially sparked apprehension!

I fondly remember the particularly cold and rainy day one of the pilgrims, Lisa, shared a song in her native Swedish which she had translated into English for us.

Oh yes, the world is weary.
Oh yes, the world is grey.
The little robin is singing anyway.
We should keep on singing too,
When sorrow comes our way.
Joy will then be greater,
And sadness kept away.

Over the course of the day, Elise developed a series of gestures to accompany the lines of the song and to help her remember the words. Approaching our destination, we found ourselves walking in a single file line following a narrow trail in long grass as we veered from the chalk ridgeway. Singing and sodden we crested a sheep-dropping covered hill and began to slowly descend from the top of the White Horse of Uffington down to Dragon Hill. Our voices never faltering, we clambered up the steps to Dragon Hill where a large circle of waiting people made space for us to join them. Our song gradually faded, and silence fell over the group – many holding hands and sharing warm smiles despite the cold, wet September mist. Over the next few hours, we took part in a collaborative ritual led by members of the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids.[78] The ritual included more song,

[78] The Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids (OBOD) is a global neopagan group formed in the UK that practices contemporary Druidry.

chanting, offerings of tobacco, herbs, and flowers, a marking of the four cardinal directions, and ended in dance and celebration. The glow of that day reignited our weary feet.

Figure 16: Ritual offerings made at Dragon Hill and tips of walking sticks left in the centre of the ceremonial space to be blessed by the ritual.

Ritual was an unexpectedly large part of the pilgrimage and as a multi-religious group, a site for much discussion and debate.[79] Eventually the pilgrims devised their own form of ritual; combining fooling, theatre, improvisation, song, dance, music, and storytelling as a medium to transmute their experiences and the experiences of others. These rituals became opportunities to practice collaboration and the generation of material which would develop into the performance event in Glasgow. Over the course of the pilgrimage ritual, ceremony, performance, and rehearsal merged into one joyous and quirky event. Instead of analysing the performance created by the pilgrims, I purposefully choose to focus on the creative process they utilised. This chapter examines how attending, through the simple acts of walking and listening, might form a distinct method of environmental activism.

[79] From here on, I try to delineate between ceremony and ritual in this ritual as described to me by a pilgrim. For her, a ceremony is a larger event which may include other smaller rituals such as casting circles, ancestor work, reflection, or manifestation.

Pilgrimage for Nature: Background and Context

In 2021 Sark-based performance artist Jolie Booth of Kriya Arts and climate policy director and organic fruit farmer Anna Lehmann initiated a project called '*Listening to the Land: Pilgrimage for Nature'* where 28 individuals from England, Wales and Sweden set out from Tower Hill in London to walk the approximately 500 miles to Glasgow. In Glasgow they would attend the 26th iteration of the annual Conference of the Parties, or COP26. COP is a global gathering of world leaders and experts who convene to discuss approaches to mitigating climate change. The *Pilgrimage for Nature* was not the only self-described pilgrimage walking to Glasgow.[80] Many groups of activists, artists, and concerned individuals made the long and difficult journey to be present at this significant conference. The intended goal of the *Pilgrimage for Nature* was to, over the duration of the walk, create a performance devised from stories collected along the way which would then be presented to the conference delegates in the Green Zone of COP.[81] Fortuitously, Jolie and Anna were able to secure Arts Council Funding for a year of preparation and logistics planning for the project. During this period, they held an open call for participants, contacted farmers to seek permission to camp on their land, planned the route, and had regular digital meetings.[82]

While many of pilgrims had no prior connections to each other, Jolie and a few others are experienced fools in the tradition of theatre artist Johnathon Kay.[83] During the pilgrimage Jolie stressed the "the fool" and "the pilgrim" as essential, Jungian archetypes to describe her artistic approach to the project. For Jolie, embodying these archetypes would affect how members of the public would interact with the project participants. She believed identifying yourself as a pilgrim on a purposeful journey would inspire spontaneous acts of kindness and generosity from others.[84] Jolie also believed the archetype of the fool, or jester, would fortify the pilgrim's ability to share others' stories "as they are" instead of through the lens of a particular political agenda. Her faith in this archetype reflects the potent image of jesters, pilgrims, and artists described by Turner as:

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[80] The Guardian (Weston 2021) reports on some of the other pilgrimages to COP26, particularly the Extinction Rebellion group which called themselves 'Camino to COP'.

[81] The outer Green Zone was a space inside the conference where organizations and groups were allowed to apply to present and share testimonies and projects to the public and conference delegates. This is in contrast to the inner Blue Zone which had strict security and was where the international negotiations took place.

[82] However, their bid to fund the actual pilgrimage was denied and created much unexpected logistical and financial hardship during the walk. Luckily the pilgrimage was able to complete with successful fundraising initiatives and hard work from the core team.

[83] More information on contemporary fooling and Kay can be found on his website here: https://www.jonathankay.co.uk.

[84] Jolie had plenty of her own stories where she was offered tea, biscuits, food, and a warm place to rest from strangers on this project and other pilgrimages she's organized. I also was shocked at the level of generosity our various hosts offered us, a few even organized massive feasts inviting friends and musicians, all at no cost to the pilgrims.

> liminal and marginal people, "edgemen," who strive with a passionate sincerity to rid themselves of the cliches associated with status incumbency and role-playing and to enter into vital relations with other men in fact or imagination. In their productions we may catch glimpses of that unused evolutionary potential in mankind which has not yet been externalized and fixed in structure. (1969: 128)

The pilgrims collected stories and testimonies from individuals and communities they encountered along the way. To do so they organised “moots” where pilgrims would meet with and speak with members of the public. These moots were free, advertised events hosted in pubs, community centres, churches, and farms. The pilgrims recorded stories from people they met at these moots and interviewed people they met along the way. Some of their interview questions included:

> In an ideal world if you turned on the radio or TV after COP, what would be the best result?
> What green space do you have? How is your green space used?
> What do you grieve for? What do you hope for?

These interviews and other informal chats, as well as the pilgrims’ own experiences while walking, contributed to the creation of their collaborative ritual-performance. It is true that the stories the pilgrims collected were multifaceted and contained testimonies from various political perspectives. However, developing an unbiased expression of these stories via performance would later bring its own extensive complications and controversies.

While there were the occasional clearly demarcated rehearsal times, it is impossible to separate the journeying itself from the devising process. Alongside the gradual development of the performance via the collection of stories, the pilgrims also developed skills to complete required daily tasks over the eight-week walk: co-navigating between campsites, efficiently setting up communal kitchen tents, preparing packed lunches and cooking vegetarian dinners for nearly thirty people, digging community latrines, locating halfway points to rest, and finding innovative ways to stay dry. Alongside these more mundane tasks the pilgrims also wrote songs and poems, shared diverse interests and skills, and developed deep, long-lasting friendships.[85] In this way the performance truly was devised by ‘listening to the land’ through transmuting personal observations and experiences of walking across England into moments of theatre and music.

‘Land’ for these pilgrims held multiple meanings. Land included the hard-packed ground they walked and the flora and fauna they encountered along the way. Land was synonymous with the earth on both planetary and local scales. Jolie passionately argued that ‘falling in love with the land’ included loving herself and every other person as intricately inseparable from land. Her description of land closely resembles Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis (2009) of an interconnected planet, and she would occasionally refer to Gaia in our talks. To elaborate, Jolie described herself as a very selfish and self-centred person, however she capitulated that her selfishness includes the earth, and it must then also

[85] To this day the Pilgrimage WhatsApp group remains active and the pilgrims have reconvened to celebrate holidays together, attend each other’s weddings, and even organize additional pilgrimages and performances.

include every living thing. Arriving in Scotland, someone Jolie was asked how it felt having walked the entire length of England and she said, 'my heart is the size of England, if not the entire world'. How might we act differently with such an expanded sense of selfishness? This idealism was present in philosophical discussions between pilgrims; embedding utopian intentions to a listening practice that was both centrifugal and centripetal. The pilgrimage-cum-performance contained an ingrained desire to blend self, other, and land while also blurring the lines between activism and art.

Activism or Art?

The previous chapter demonstrated how many artists were uncomfortable claiming an activist label for their choreographic work. In the case of the pilgrimage, at least preliminarily, even a performance with clear environmentally focused goals adamantly avoided framing itself as activistic. Jolie insisted that she and the others were there as artists, *not* as activists:

> I feel like if we hadn't had theatre at the centre of this, and listening, it would have been a campaign and it would have been a protest and an activism thing. I personally didn't want to spend seven weeks ranting my way up the country with a bunch of activists. I wouldn't be up for doing that personally, where I am at in my life… People mentioned about maybe having banners… no, that's not listening that shouting.

The rejection of banners directly contrasts the other, more public pilgrimage 'Camino to COP' whose walkers carried the standard array of highlighter coloured XR banners. However, nearly seven weeks of walking and listening later at Kelburn Castle near Fairlie in Scotland, I asked Jolie if the pilgrimage might be considered a different type of activism.

> I think listening is an act of revolutionary activism. So it is, and I totally think that if your name is not on a government list, then you're not trying hard enough. But we wouldn't have got through into the green zone if it had been political. Also, I don't have any answers, and I also don't think anyone listens if you shout. So yeah, it's a different type of activism.

Here it becomes apparent how state power, deciding which groups were selected to present in front of conference delegates, restricted and shaped what forms of resistance were accessible. Jolie felt that if the performance had been clearly, or loudly, activist, she and the pilgrims would not have been allowed to deliver their message to the eyes and ears of those they felt had the power to enact true change. A softer frame of activism would be able to infiltrate the panopticon filtering for dissidence and extremism. This softer frame allowed Jolie and the pilgrims to share movement, theatre, music, and dance with stories of environmental justice in a public forum that they might have been otherwise excluded from.

Currently, on her website, Jolie retrospectively describes the pilgrimage as 'a uniquely hopeful, creative and reverential kind of activism'.[86]

This approach was shared by other artists interviewed. In a coffee shop in South London, dancer Sophie Arstall, a performer in Vanessa Grasse's *The Land We Are* project, shared her own complicated relationship with activism and art. Sophie said that she personally struggled with an 'explicit, extrovert' form of activism that involved protest and marches. However, for Sophie, *The Land We Are* might be activistic in a different way: *'*it's about nature, it's about ecosystems, it's about community. It's about learning, and essentially, it's about empathy, actually.' Sophie continued to say that the cultivation of empathy was essential to developing an environmental sensibility.

> How do I cultivate this sense of empathy in a meaningful way? I think, through dance, and through movement is a really authentic way to do it. And then from there, we can begin to drop and connect around us and begin to have an empathy for, and sensitivity for what's around us.

This idea of 'dropping' is connected to a feeling of being low to the ground and connected to the earth. It might be understood as an oppositional sensation to having 'your head lost in the clouds'. Sophie felt that this sensation could be cultivated from participating in dance itself or watching Grasse's performance work. For both Jolie and Sophie, the development of empathy via listening, walking, dancing, and theatre could have monumental ramifications for how we engage with and respond to the natural world.

These choreographies, workshops, and performances are taking part in what Anthony Wallace might call cultural revitalisation, or 'a deliberate, organized conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture' (1956: 265). Wallace's cultural revitalization theory was originally developed to describe indigenous peoples' attempts to recover or stabilise following colonial devastation (Fenelon and Hall 2008). However, Wallace later called for revitalization studies to turn their gaze inwards towards industrialised nations as 'revitalization does not merely occur upon fringe peoples of the world but, in fact, happens in the belly of the beast as well' (2004: ix).[87] In her ethnography of Transition, an environmental movement in the United States, Anna Willow argues that revitalization is itself an act of resistance and that activism could also be understood as a desire 'to make positive change' rather than be exclusively limited to describing behaviour that might be categorised as 'extreme' (2021: 29). Willow writes that for one Transitioner organising a "watershed walk" following a local river and 'wading, walking, and getting wet' *can* be directly about climate

[86] More information on Jolie's projects can be found here: http://kriyaarts.co.uk/#/pilgrimage/

[87] It is worth mentioning that a few of the activist events I attended in Glasgow during COP26 mentioned the term 're-indigenization' as a potential ontological goal. In one event this idea was spearheaded by Alistair Macintosh author of Soul and Soil (2004). He argued that rampant consumerism is driven by a disconnection to place that can only be cured through developing community. He described re-indigenization as a process whereby a person re-learns how to belong to a place and quoted Scottish Poet Robert Burns saying: 'A person belongs in as much as they are willing to cherish and be cherished by this land and its people.' This idea, and its applicability to white Europeans, is a controversial take and unfortunately beyond the particular scope of this chapter.

change (ibid: 32). For this individual, 'knowing place [is] a way to put the brake on'; slowness and slowing down being allusions to reducing consumptive practices. Slowing down, dropping, or listening are all common phrases used to denote a less consumptive, more ecologically and relational mode of living.

If walking a river is about climate change, perhaps then despite the ocean between these fieldsites, it is no coincidence that over the 18 months of workshops in the UK, I waded, walked and swam in many rivers: the river Dart in southwest England, the river Thames at multiple points from source to mouth, Crimsworth Dean Beck in northern England, and afon Teifi and afon Cych in north Wales. As someone deeply apprehensive of rivers this was immensely difficult but also acutely and intimately embedded me in each of those places. Willow makes the case that walking rivers could be described as a form of 'everyday activism' (Mansbridge 2013). However, there is something particular about walking along a river as part of a movement workshop or pilgrimage that simultaneously lifts the experience out of the "everyday" while also attempting to re-signify the everyday as astonishing. In this way the term everyday activism is inadequate for the purpose of this research. However, Sophie and Jolie describe an activistic element or environmental sensibility to their work accessible via dropping, slowing down, or listening. The next section introduces soft activism to identify a subtle, indirect, and anti-capitalist form of activist work. For American poet and journalist Walt Whitman, 'the indirect is always as great and real as the direct' (Whitman in Bennett 2020: 71). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Extinction Rebellion activists engage with both direct and indirect forms of activist work. This chapter argues that the indirect work does not simply support direct action but also contributes in its own right towards developing a more sustainable world.

Soft Activism

In *Influx and Efflux* (2020), Jane Bennett writes of 'moods other than outrage, revulsion and even agonism' as prodemocratic praxis. She presents these alternative moods, inspired by the writing of Walt Whitman, as "affections" and "sympathies". However, and this is critical to this chapter, she makes it clear that she is not attempting to replace rage or fury as activist tactics, but rather complement and supplement them with 'the ways in which a (vague, protean, ahuman) tendency for bodies to lean, make connection, and form attachments can be harnessed on behalf of a more generous, egalitarian, and ecological public culture' (2020: xix-xx). She calls this balancing 'calling out' with 'calling in'. We might also call this balancing hard activism with soft activism, rage with love, confrontation with regeneration. This section constructs a definition of soft activism primarily through the lens of pleasure and attention. I argue that the *Pilgrimage for Nature*, and indeed, the work of nearly all the artists mentioned in this thesis, contain seeds of soft activism that seek to develop empathetic relationships to place. First, I will introduce adrienne maree brown's (2019) pleasure activism and connect it to Sandra Reeve's autobiographical movement. Then, in more depth, I argue that cultivating

attention is the primary method to developing a soft activism via the work of Ian McGilchrist(2018), Thomas Csordas (1993) and Tim Ingold (2000).

Pleasure as Soft Activism

Evoking the fieldwork experiences with Sandra outlined in Chapter 3 on storytelling; how might laying amongst overgrown hummocks concealing a collapsed cliffside, sharing a duet with a nettle weevil, or covering your body in cold, wet, clay be described as an activist response to the climate crisis? To help us understand how UK performance artists are grappling with this question and with how UK environmental activists utilize performance in their work I turn to Detroit activist and writer, adrienne maree brown. I am choosing to include brown's work for a couple significant reasons. The first reason is that her writing has been recommended to me by multiple participants, so it feels apropos to further frame their artistic practices through brown's work. Second, brown's book *Emergent Strategy* (2017) describes itself as a 'self-help, society-help, and planet-help' book with strategies for collaboration and resistance that embrace change. The metaphors and principles of brown's *Emergent Strategy* are synthesized directly from more-than-human muses: mycelium, ants, ferns, wavicles, starlings and dandelions. In a thesis about environmental activism, these are powerful figures with formidable footsteps to follow. Third and finally, I lived in Detroit before moving to the UK and the synchronicity of writing from my own home and its popularity in the field feels important to acknowledge in bridging my own relationships as ethnographer and participant, immigrant and native, student and educator, artist and activist.

Emergent Strategy acts as the gateway to brown's thinking on organizing and collaboration. However, her more recent book, *Pleasure Activism* (2019), further elucidates her positionality on activist thought. Pleasure Activism is described by brown as:

> …a space to love what we love and explore why we love it, to increase the pleasure we feel when we are doing things that are good for the species and the planet, to cultivate our interest in radical love and pleasure, and to nourish the orgasmic yes in each of us. (2019: 7)

Sandra has already advocated for 'falling in love' with a place and the Extinction Rebellion activists I have worked with sign off communication with 'Love and Rage'. While I don't intend to equate love and pleasure, what I do recognize is that for all the groups I worked with, the work itself is meant to be enjoyable. Despite overwhelming climate grief, my experiences of marching the streets of London and Glasgow, hiking some of the 500 miles in-between, and deep in Epping Forest emerging from a pandemic lockdown were coloured far more by joy and celebration than by distress. This is not to say that there were no moments of grief, loss, disparagement, or frustration, but instead that they were not the focus of the work. I am reminded of Maya's, a participant from Sandra Reeve's workshop *STRATA*, attachment to the Japanese saying, *mono no aware.* Maya used this phrase to describe the simultaneous joy and

sadness felt from experiences of beauty through awareness of its transience. This feeling and term was essential to her experience during Sandra's workshop. Maya's performance at the end was joyous, raucous, and exuberant despite dealing with difficult themes of transition. Allison too, brought the landscape into her experiences of pleasure when after washing off the clay said, 'I think the clay liked that, I think the waterfall liked that'.

For brown, pleasure activism is about 'learning to make justice and liberation the most pleasurable experience we can have on this planet' (ibid: 7). However, this pleasure should not be interpreted as defeatist nihilism or rampant consumerism as she explains here:

> Pleasure is not one of the spoils of capitalism. It is what our bodies, our human systems, our structures are for; it is the aliveness and awakening, the gratitude and humility, the joy and celebration of being miraculous. (ibid: 8)

Some (but not all) of the guiding principles of Emergent Strategy and Pleasure Activism are outlined below; there are some repeats. I noticed many of these principles in the work of artists and activists engaged with as part of this research.

Emergent Strategy: Principles	**Pleasure Activism: Principles**
Small is good, small is all.	What you pay attention to grows.
Change is constant, be like water.	We become what we practice.
Trust the people.	When I am happy it is good for the world.
Less prep, more presence.	Make justice and liberation feel good.
What you pay attention to grows.	Moderation is key.

If 'small is all' and 'moderation is key', soft activism also values the slow and the small as methods for reducing consumptive lifestyles. As demonstrated by artists' testimonies, living smaller or slower in no way reduces capacity for joy or happiness. Soft activism acknowledges the potential for living joyfully and attending thoroughly to enact change in how you perceive and move through the world. Most relevant to this research are the ideas that 'what you pay attention to grows' and 'we become what we practice'. Soft activism is often something that requires practice, it needs to be repeated and returned to as there is nothing concrete to "achieve" or that signifies a "win". Kinship participants mentioned that the benefits they felt after a workshop faded over time, they needed to return to practice renewing their perceived changes. Soft activism teaches us to 'notice what we notice' and how to direct our attention. It also acknowledges that attending is a generative, world-building practice and how one attends to the world determines what is constructed. There are many similarities between brown's principles and elements of the fieldwork already discussed, as may be familiar to the reader. Soft activism may be a pleasurable experience, but it is not a prerequisite, so like 'everyday activism' brown's 'pleasure activism' contributes to the understanding of soft activism but is not fully apropos. To further illustrate and demarcate a soft approach to activism, I turn towards literature on attention

as a crucial aspect to this concept. First however, I will describe fragments of the pilgrim's creative and performative process which may then be understood as the development of an epistemology of attention.

A Performance in Process

After leaving the Uffington White Horse, a few days of walking later we arrived at the Rollright Stones in the northeast of the Cotswolds. The Rollright Stones is a megalithic site containing three different ancient stone monuments spanning over 2000 years of cumulative history between circa 3,800 BC and 1,500 BC; the Whispering Knights dolmen, the King's Men stone circle, and the King's Stone. We were scheduled to hold a ceremony in the King's Men stone circle which would, although unbeknownst to us at the time, be the first attempt of the performance-to-be. Counter to the highly structured ceremony led by the Wisdom Keepers the pilgrims encountered at the Uffington White Horse days earlier, the pilgrims themselves would be leading this ceremony. During the discussion of how to run the ceremony, some pilgrims stated their desire to eschew the traditional Wiccan structure as the group was multireligious and secular. In response, Jolie offered instead to loosen the format of the ceremony.

Many neopagan ceremonies commence with 'casting the circle' followed by 'calling to the four directions'. During the ceremony on the White Horse, individuals were then invited to call in any powers, beings, or ideas by stepping forward inside the circle and stating their intention. As most of us were new to this form of communal practice and the event had been publicly advertised as such, this rough structure was maintained. However, the formalised, ritual-like presence of the previous day's ceremony was abandoned. It was this religiosity that had made some other pilgrims uncomfortable. So, the stoic ethos of 'The Magician' was traded for the joyful spontaneity of 'The Fool'.

When the time of our ceremony arrived, we stood inside the King's Men stone circle and formed our own, inner circle with members of the public joining in. Jolie and another pilgrim led the traditional opening sequence and then welcomed anyone else to contribute. During this part of the ceremony, the pilgrims made their offerings. A few pilgrims shared songs they had written: a song about a little robin persevering despite gloomy weather, and another written specifically from our time walking the ridgeway.[88] Then, bravely, one pilgrim decided to 'call in' Mother Nature. However, instead of calling her in by standing and stating her intention, she crept down low the ground, manoeuvring into the centre of the space on all fours. As she made her entrance, she glared at each of us mumbling as she went, taking on the voice and demeanour of a cantankerous old woman. She then playfully admonished us for our inconsiderate behaviour and self-interested greed making life difficult for her. However, she also reminded us of her love for each of us despite our misbehaviour. It was riotously cheeky, sarcastic, and clever. Mother Nature scolded us, sure,

[88] The ridgeway is an ancient chalk path that runs across England for 87 miles. The song was written during 2021 but was then recorded in 2022 and available to listen or download here.

but she did not turn her back on us. Eventually another pilgrim entered the space and asked, 'But what can we do?'. Through these interactions the pilgrims form of ceremony morphed into improvised theatre performance. One pilgrim later described their performance work as a 'deconstructed, accessible ceremony'.

This practice of taking on characters would later be rehearsed under the direction of Jolie and other experts in fooling. While Mother Nature was the first, she was not the last to join our motley crew. Following that day, in some ceremonies three or four pilgrims would gather in a clump to generate an embodied illusion of the shape and sound of a campfire with other pilgrims slowly approaching to mimic drying their socks, warming their hands, or cooking food. Sometimes a pilgrim would run out and others would follow to grab their coat and hood, vigorously shaking them to imitate a strong, blustery wind. During each of these scenic creations someone would speak about an experience they had on the pilgrimage that related to the scene playing out in the centre of the circle. Other times Ruby would sit and play her wooden drone flute, while I would improvise movement in response to her melodies. While some scenes reoccurred, the format of the final performance was always improvised. Almost nothing was set; stories, songs, dances, and poems would spontaneously emerge as and when felt necessary. However, each of these scenes, songs, and movements were drawn directly from experiences while walking or camping; drawn from the land itself.

Anthropology has well documented the intimate connections between landscape and memory (Ingold 2000; Stewart and Strathern 2003), how memories can be embedded in a place and then that landscape read by others bringing the past into the present moment (Sarró 2023). The pilgrim's ceremony-cum-performance attempts to condense the essence of formative and potent land-sculpted memories, altering them into a transmissible, mobile form. Perhaps the potency of these acts was made more efficacious through their repeated re-enactments in ancient ritually charged places. Some pilgrims doubtlessly felt so, others constructed their own narratives of intention and importance. Stewart and Strathern write that landscape 'becomes a codification of history itself, seen from the viewpoint of personal expression and experience' (2003:1). In this way, each pilgrim brought their own 'internal landscape' (4) while also contributing to the construction of larger narrative of pilgrimage, Britishness, and care for the environment. Further, Stewart and Strathern also note through their ethnography of the Duna of Papua New Guinea that singing in certain places, or naming places in song and performance participates in an 'embodiment of landscape' through which community is formed via emplacement (5). The pilgrims' crafting of their performance indisputably cemented feelings of community and emplacement, as they were constructed directly from paying attention or 'listening' to the land. Watching their performance, I was immediately brought back to those sweltering days we spent together on the ridgeway, but also equally transported to the cold, wet Scottish heaths they traversed when I was not present. While my own experiences of the places definitely heightened my experience of those sections of the performance, it was not required. Likewise, some pilgrims hoped that by watching their performance spectators

would receive a small taste of what it is like to walk for 500 miles, what it is like to listen, to deeply attend to land, and share in their memories.

Despite these dreams, the performance was intended to exist without an explicit "message"; there were no calls to improve air quality, protect healthy soil, or reduce national carbon emissions. Instead, it was meant to be an expression of experience from 'listening to the land'. This lack of a clear activist goal might sound counterintuitive for a performance work I am describing as activistic. However, for Suzanne Langer the meaning of art, be it story, performance, or painting, arrives from the art object itself rather than its representation; meaning arises from a 'morphology of feeling' (1957: 38). Langer argues this might be difficult to apprehend for Western audiences trained to read a performance booklet or a plaque in a museum that describes what the work is "about". Further, the form of an art object is shaped by our perception of the world and cannot be separated from it, '*There is no sound that is broken away from the tree of life* (Janáček, 1986: 99, original emphasis in Ingold 2000: 24). Therefore, according to Ingold, the Cree hunter uses narration of his hunt not to 'portray the animal as a self-contained, rational agent' but instead the story, like performance, 'gives form to human feeling' (2000: 24-25). This particular feeling being the moment of arrest occurring after locking eyes with a powerful animal. Likewise, the pilgrim, via improvised theatre, song, and storytelling, attempts to convey the deep feeling of walking their country for eight weeks. The meaning of which is highly subjective and dependent on individual perception. From these perspectives we can understand the pilgrimage as a generative epistemological experience through which a highly specific and enculturated performance piece arose; the performance then being an attempt to influence others through an education of attention.

Attention as Epistemology

The listening that Jolie asked the pilgrims to do as part of their daily walks could be described a form of heightened attention. Ian McGilchrist, a scholar whose writings were suggested to me by Sandra Reeve, argues that attention is more than just a cognitive function but 'is actually nothing less than the way in which we relate to the world' (2018: 15). For McGilchrist, attention determines not only the form of our relationships with the world but *what we are able to have relationships with*. McGilChrist argues that in contemporary Western cultures a world has been created that privileges hyper-specialisation, information and data, virtualisation, polarisation, and materialism. He proposes that in this world:

> Knowledge that has come through experience, and the practical acquisition of embodied skill, would become suspect, appearing either a threat or simply incomprehensible. It would be replaced by tokens or representations – formal systems, to be evidenced by paper qualifications. (23)

In this construction of reality, knowledge gleaned through walking a forest path, wading a shallow river, or dancing in a field, would appear absurd and, ironically, groundless. The

Pilgrimage for Nature project attempts to counter this narrative. Jolie asks participants to broaden their awareness, tune into a different form of attention and, mirroring the improvisational tasks of Simon Whitehead, Katye Coe, and Thomas Goodwin, to 'notice what you notice'. Crucially then, we arrive at the position that purposefully directing the type of attention we pay to the world impacts what we are able to notice and mediates the expressions of our experiences. Ingold arrives at a similar argument describing opposing accounts of a mammalian phenomenon and the knowledge that emerges from these perspectives.

In *The Perception of the Environment* (2000) Ingold describes how a caribou pauses the moment it notices a predator. Cree hunters say that in this moment the caribou offers itself up to the hunter out of generosity, or even love, for the hunter (13). Modern natural science argues instead that this is a maladapted behaviour which, while advantageous to fleeing from wolves, instead leaves the caribou vulnerable to a hunter's firearm. Ingold questions the standpoint that "scientific" knowledge espouses a more "true" perspective of reality as opposed to the indigenous perspective. He does not attempt to discount natural science, instead agreeing that it may be crucial for the crises of our times, but also that the indigenous account constitutes an essential form of knowledge which arises from sensitivity and responsiveness; or intuition (25). For Ingold, the knowledge of the Cree hunter is obtained through attention; feeling and skills attained from prolonged living within a particular environment, or what he calls a poetics of dwelling (26).

To explain further, Ingold recalls a memory of his botanist father taking him on walks while he was a child. His father would point out plants and fungi along the way; this being his attempt to share his knowledge and experience:

> If I would but notice the things to which he directed my attention, and recognize the sights, smells and taste that he wanted me to experience because they were so dear to him, then I would discover for myself much of what he already knew. (20).

Ingold describes this process of information sharing as not dissimilar to the ways in which Aboriginal Australian societies pass along generational knowledge (Meggitt 1962). This is an educational process through which we develop knowledgeability via 'direct perceptual engagement with our environments'; this capacity being developed 'by having things *shown* to us' (Ingold 2000: 21). Therefore, Ingold argues, this generational contribution is an 'education of attention' (Gibson 1979: 254 in Ingold 2000:22). Through this education of attention, the learner is not taught to "decode" elements of the environment within which they find themselves, but instead to discover their meaning for themselves. We then return to the practice of listening: 'He is not just hearing, *he is listening*. That is to say, his perception is grounded in an act of attention' (Ingold 2000: 24). Ingold is advocating for an epistemology of attention; knowledge produced and attained through attending to the environment.

Framing the pilgrim's listening practice with the theoretical work of McGilchrist and Ingold provides insightful contextualisation. Call it 'right-brained thinking' or a 'poetics of dwelling', listening can be understood as an attentive, intuitive practice, through which the

pilgrims attempt to come to know a place, as well as their place within it. According to McGilchrist, knowledge gleaned in this way may be considered suspect by a hegemonic "rationality". Nonetheless, it can produce a profound, intimate form of knowing. In *The Pilgrimage for Nature* Jolie chose to invite others to participate in the cultivation of this knowledge through a prolonged walking practice. This knowledge would then ideally, be mediated and transmitted via song and storytelling in a performance.

While the pilgrimage and the following performance was a multi-modal collaborative event, this thesis focuses primarily on dance; therefore, it is crucial to return to the primacy of movement and the body when it comes to attending to the world (cf. Ingold, 2011; Sheets-Johnstone, 2011) and to the art objects and practices described herein. Firstly, phenomenologist Alfred Shutz describes attention as the 'full alertness and the sharpness of apperception connected with consciously turning toward an object combined with further considerations and anticipation of its characteristics and uses' (1970: 316). For Shutz, attention requires a physical 'turning toward' an object alongside a reflective acknowledgement of its affordances (Gibson 1979). Similarly, for Merleau-Ponty, attention participates in the 'constitution of a new object which makes explicit and articulate what was until then presented as no more than an indeterminate horizon' (1962: 30). From these starting points Thomas Csordas concludes that attending to, and with, the body inhabits a curious horizon where 'the act of constitution and object that is constituted meet' (1993: 138). He identifies these practices as somatic modes of attention or, 'culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others' (ibid). I find it curious, but not surprising, when Csordas claims that despite being bodies themselves, individuals do not necessarily always attend to or with their bodies, implying the existence of a disembodied attention. As demonstrated above by Ingold and McGilChrist, this perceived negation may be a cultural self-deception. Regardless, no matter how hard one may try to objectify or distance thought from the body, I take the stance that attending is an inherently embodied act, whether it is intently directed toward the body or not. Nevertheless, I agree that attention can be more or less embodied through practice. It may also be true that an individual's narrative construction of an experience may dictate how much value is placed on this embodied aspect of attention. However, and perhaps most importantly to this argument, Csordas does assert that attending to the body and bodily sensation is far from solipsistic and can reveal elements of the world and others:

> To attend to a bodily sensation is not to attend to the body as an isolated object, but to attend to the body's situation in the world. The sensation engages something in the world because the body is "always already in the world" (139).

Ultimately then, we arrive at the idea that somatic forms of attention, or attending to and with the body, are culturally constructed practices that have the potential to teach us more about ourselves, others, and the worlds around us. Attention, its form, and its direction may act as a curatorial epistemology.

McGilchrist prompts us to consider the shape and form of our attention; and consequentially what we attend to. McGilchrist's call is echoed by contemporary anthropological discourse with Morten Pederson, Kristoffer Albris, and Nick Seaver describing attention as an issue of 'intense political, economic, and moral concern' in recent years (2021). Much of this debate centres around digitisation and surveillance producing systems of 'attention theft' (Wu 2017) or 'attentional serfdom' (Williams 2018). Anthropological discourse also suggests countermeasures to these controversial crises. For example, Ingold advocates for an intuitive epistemology of attention and the sensitive, intimate knowledge that emerges from this practice (2000). In this way then, learning and practicing inherently ecological somatic modes of attention, be it through listening and pilgrimage, kinship workshops, or autobiographical movement, contains emergent potentiality to, subtly or dramatically, shift perception. Might directing attention and the accompanying epistemological or perceptual shifts constitute a form of activism? The artistic movement practices described thus far attempt to do exactly this; 'Folded back into life, art becomes a process of attending to the specific details of living, it becomes about caring and nourishing the relationships that make up the everyday' (Fremeaux and Jordan 2021: 72). The next section, returning to the work of Jane Bennett, attempts to help contextualise the potential efficacy and vulnerabilities of attention as a form of activist praxis.

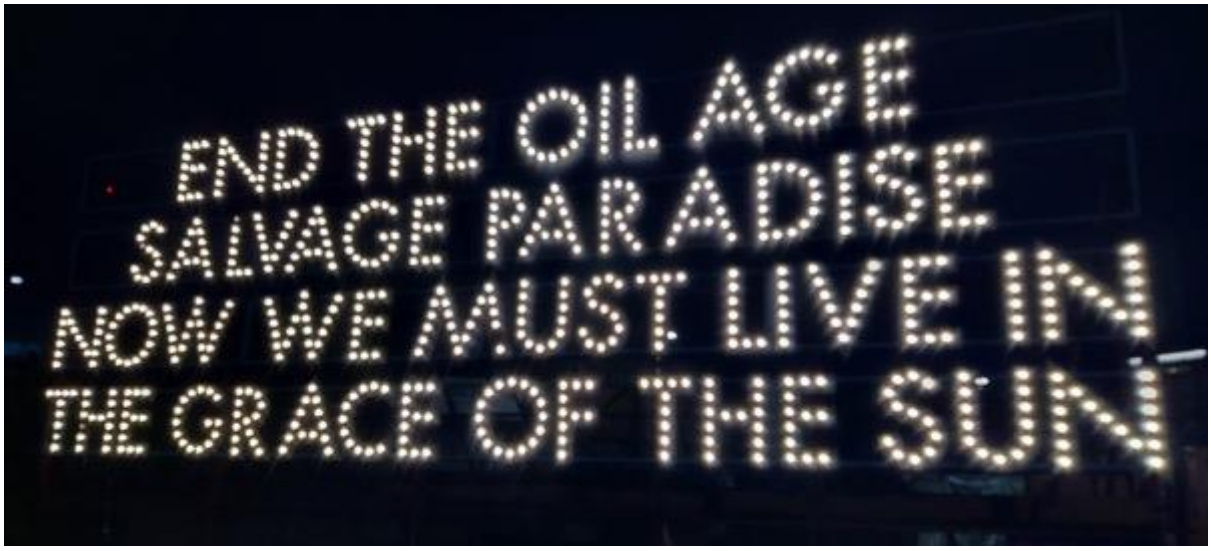

Figure 24: Sign made of lights outside one of the performance venues in Glasgow during COP 26

For Bennett, the simple act of paying attention may in turn inspire an egalitarian sensibility. Examining Whitman's poetry and writing, Bennett argues that one way we might accomplish this is through the act of doting; 'doting pays slow attention to ordinary things in ways that accentuate our existence as earthlings' (2020:65). Literary theorist Cristin Ellis (2016) places this Whitmanian form of doting alongside a particularly British form of romanticism, except that where romanticism humanises and moralises the individual, doting 'dismantles individuals into processual assemblages of material relations and historical forces' (627). This form of doting is reminiscent of the listening practices that occurred during the *Pilgrimage for Nature*. In order to facilitate the listening practice in a large group, Jolie provided badges that pilgrims could wear to signify to other pilgrims they wanted to "talk less and listen more" that day. Pilgrims wearing those badges would generally spend the majority of that day not speaking and focusing on what they saw, heard, smelled, and tasted along the route. This social boundary was respected by other pilgrims and those wearing the badges would sometimes reflect and share their observations with the group during the evening fire or the next day. According to Bennett doting opens us up, makes our bodies more porous, and generates a more sympathetic relationship with place. It makes us sensitive, and sensitivity can be dangerous.

Bennett writes that porous bodies are susceptible to experiencing a Whitmanian form of 'sympathy'; described as a sentiment of morality, an 'indeterminate eros', or the 'earth's utterly impartial acceptance of each and every one of its elements or inhabitants' (2020: xv). However, this availability also leaves a body more susceptible to experiencing anxiety: 'capitalism makes porosity feel more and more dangerous and exhausting' (2020: 64). To elaborate the dangerous sensation engendered by capitalist relations, Bennett turns to the Institute for Precarious Consciousness *'Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It is Preventing Militancy, and One Possible Strategy for Overcoming It'* published in 2014.[89] This manifesto was drafted primarily in response to British austerity policies of 2009. Policies which, despite Boris Johnson announcing "the end of austerity" in 2020 (McIlgorm 2020), have left the country particularly vulnerable to the current cost of living crisis amid rampant inflation, underfunded public services, and rising fuel costs. The Institute for Precarious Consciousness argues that anxiety might be a sort of contrived 'public neurosis…fuelled by and serving to intensify an unjust distribution of power and wealth' (Bennett 2020: 64). This neurosis, manufactured via mass media (Herman and Chomsky 1988) functions as a strategy of neoliberal, governmental control: 'Your job is on the line! Your health benefits are precarious! Terrorist attacks are on the rise! Immigrants are invading! Crime is up!' (Bennett 2020: 64). The constant stimulation of fear and anxiety produces a population of isolated individuals 'too fatigued, distracted, and demoralised to conjure up the considerable energy needed to object to policy' (ibid). Further, not only is this a metaphysical battlefield centred on anxiety

[89] The manifesto is accessible here: https://criticallegalthinking.com/2014/04/17/six-theses-anxiety-prevention-militancy/

and political willpower but as demonstrated in Chapter 4, it is also a legal one as those brave enough to object to policy find themselves facing harsher sentences and restricted rights to protest through the implementation of new laws.

Closing up, physically or metaphorically, and caring less, may serve as a form of self-protection. Capitalist relations then encourage a narrowing of attention, counter to a sympathetic dilation, reproducing passivity and disinterest which in turn serves the interests of the ruling class. Simply put, paying attention and opening yourself up to outside influence, can be overwhelming; particularly when one is focused on more immediate concerns of where their next meal is coming from or how to keep warm. Practicing a wide and receptive form of attention can be overpowering; be it from crises manufactured or real. The *Six Theses* acknowledges that strikes, disruption, marches, and protests can still be powerful tools of resistance, but it also calls for the development of strategies to resist and counteract anxiety. Resistance must cultivate methods to transmute anxiety into vitalising rather than paralysing energetics, dilating attention instead of narrowing it. Jolie asked the pilgrims to open themselves up to influence from the scents on the breeze, from conversing with strangers, from the taste of hawthorn, damson, and brambles. Below, interviews with the pilgrims help to provide some context for what sort of effects they noticed after eight weeks of listening and broadening their attention.

Ashley, 25, a bar manager and theatre maker from the south-west of England, said that the pilgrimage taught her about resilience. She felt this was the first time in her life she had ever been able to truly consider who she was and who she wanted to be:

> It gave me an opportunity to slow down for the first time. It was the first time where the only thing I had to do was walk 10 miles a day, like it was, compared to my normal life, nothing. Like it was the first time I'd really got to catch myself and think about what I wanted to do, what I wanted to be, what sort of person I wanted to be in the world.

Ashley was able to soften and step back from the anxious rush of her life to reflect on what was important to her. Similarly, Ruby, a 26-year-old who quit her job with the Soil Association to join the pilgrimage found a similar sort of freedom during the walk. She came face to face with her fears, anxieties, and self-doubt but also learned how better to live through and with them:

> I've found that I can't really listen to learn very much, because my internal environment is quite loud, but I've been able to listen to it more, and to honour what it needs. And I think that that makes me feel healthier and happier, and then allows me to engage externally a bit more.

The listening practice of the pilgrimage enabled Ashley and Ruby to confront their own anxieties. Gabriella, 59 and from Sweden, strongly felt an expansion of attention, or awareness she experienced on the pilgrimage was urgently needed:

> To open up the awareness for this [nature connection], and share that awareness with more people, because there's so much other pressures going on. In this world, we have all these

> demands to take a PhD or to make money or to get status in some ways, or just behave according to other people's wishes and demands. And there's a lot of fear, there's a lot of depression, a lot of tiredness among people, that I experienced.

The pilgrimage seemed to give space for these individuals to step back from the busy-ness and anxieties of their modern lives, for many approaching a therapeutic form of experience. Alice, a florist from London, realized that she did not know how afraid she was of leaving London, of being outside of the city and the relatively comfortable life she had constructed. The pilgrimage and the closeness of the group, despite not all agreeing philosophically made her feel more open and that she 'had more space for new relationships and new encounters'.

In addition to prompting them to question their fears and identities, the pilgrimage had direct effects on the ways pilgrims perceived their relationship to the environment. There was a shift from an intellectual acknowledgement of the importance of nature to a pleasurable, visceral relationship with place. Ashley said her relationship to the environment was 'way more bodily now' and that she 'can feel [her] connection to the earth'. Ruby commented on how she developed 'an emotional and overwhelming appreciation for every blade of grass and tree and just how magic and incredible it is'. Gabriella's relationship was decidedly reciprocal: 'I realised that the land feels if I love it. It actually feels love. If I love the trees, it can feel that I love it. And the tree can love me. I have not experienced that in such a strong way before.' Although not everyone felt changed from the experience, most of the pilgrims' acknowledged shifts in their thinking or perception. These quiet, internal changes were achieved through a practiced expansion of attention and prolonged experience of walking. Individual and internal change is an important facet of soft activism, but like Bennett argues in *Influx and Efflux* (2020) calling in does not replace calling out. Indeed, as the pilgrims experienced, calling in may inspire further action and ripples that expand beyond the individual.

Soft Activism and Calling Out

It is important to note that all of the pilgrims I interviewed independently acknowledged the immense privilege they had to be able to spend two months walking the country. Along the way, pilgrims also expressed witnessing how vastly unequal experiences of 'nature' are across the UK between wealthy and poorer districts. They listened to accounts of wealthy individuals buying up swathes of local land and removing public rights of way to 'rewild' meadows or redirecting bypasses they find unsightly. They listened to relatively poor communities fighting tooth and nail to save a brownfield site from being redeveloped into industrial land as it was a habitat for newts and bats. Faced with all these new perspectives and stories while being confronted with theirs and others privilege of varying degrees, the pilgrims felt both inspired and obliged to share their experience with others in whatever

way they could. While soft activism includes the subtle internal changes in perception and behaviour via somatic modes of attention, it also includes the successive ripple effects that these changes may then engender. The performance in Glasgow provides one possible avenue to examine.

According to Julie, the performance gave the pilgrimage a focus and an intention which helped to provide the pilgrims with a shared purpose during strenuous periods as well as assist in securing funding. This shared goal also resulted in the cocreation of something curated from shared experiences. The performance encouraged the participants to pay attention to intersections of ritual, art, storytelling, theatre and their relationships with each other as both a performance group and a travelling village. For Fremeaux and Jordan attention to these elements 'are more than theoretical; the combination of these things is constitutive of their radical success' (Fremeaux & Jordan 2021: 8). So, despite the struggles with swiftly depleting funds, exhaustion and burnout, the pilgrims decided to carry on and continue with the creation of the performance. When considering the purpose of the work, Ashley felt that the ideal audience would be those 'too busy just trying to survive life to slow down'. For Ashley the performance would not be about "telling" people what to do, but about curating an opportunity for others to experience slowness and connection to land, recalling the Arendtian notion of storytelling as a transformation of private experience into public expression (Arendt 1958). The final performance format left room for improvised story sharing – any pilgrim who felt compelled to share during the performance time was welcome to do so. It was performed at various locations including the Green Zone in COP and at Kelburn Castle for the delegates who were housed there.

However, even though the pilgrimage set out with the explicit goal to make a performance and present it at COP, Jolie admitted that, for her, this was actually subsidiary to the pilgrimage itself.

> I think it's about the ripples. I think it's about the stories we go back and tell people afterwards. I think it's about all the creative things that are going to come out of it and the journeys everyone's gonna go off on; and there's gonna be so many things that we'll never know about, which I love. And it's the connections people make between each other. The practical goals with COP and stuff, but that for me is not as relevant.
>
> I have no pressure or preciousness about what we achieve in COP. I know that we've already done it, we've already done it. Like it's the network of people we met, it's all of the lives we have touched. Even the people who don't know what we were doing, whose villages we walked through and who just saw us, and whose realities we disrupted.

The "show" at the end with audience members and a specific time and place may have just been an exercise that ticked the proper Arts Council boxes to ensure funding for the first phase of the project. It may have simply been a way to help the pilgrims process their eight weeks together, mark the end of one chapter and ease the transition back into "everyday life". It was all of these things, but also more.

I return to my original intention of this chapter where I purposefully focus on the creation process rather than the final performance. When questioned, Jolie and others described the entirety of the pilgrimage as containing an element of performativity that began in London and concluded in Glasgow. In *Making Dances That Matter* (2019) Anna Halprin argues that the performances that matter are the performances that transform the performers. Paying attention, or listening, 'with all your senses and your heart' as Jolie requested led to transformational experiences for many of the pilgrims. Some of them small and will most likely fade over time; but if this is the only requirement then without a doubt, as a durational multidisciplinary community-led performance project, the pilgrimage mattered.

From a perspective of soft activism, the effects of the pilgrimage continue to 'ripple' across the country. Some pilgrims have left old careers and started new ones, moved cities, or changed entire lifestyles following the end of the pilgrimage. Jolie and others have since completed additional pilgrimages with similar performative themes and goals. The pilgrimage group chat remains active two and a half years later with periodic reunions and updates of pilgrimage collaborations. For example, in 2022 I collaborated with Alice to create a performance in Omved Gardens in North London. Jolie was correct that the pilgrimage would continue to ripple out in the world. The small acts of world-building carried out by the pilgrims are also acts of soft activism; projects of hopeful dreaming, of imagining and attempting different ways of life. It is much more difficult to measure the types of change propagated by soft activism, but that does not mean their efficacy should be denied. Echoing adrienne maree brown, Jolie said to me 'the more people fall in love with the planet, the less they're going to screw her over. It's not a case of "I'm worried about the future generations". No, I am head over heels in love with this thing. This being that we are all a part of.'

Conclusion

Soft activism provides a lens through which we can recognise the subtle yet potentially transformative effects of paying attention. The previous chapter on the performative work of Extinction Rebellion and this chapter on the *Pilgrimage for Nature* do not set up hard and soft activism as opposite poles on a spectrum but as co-constitutive facets of activistic projects. The Banshees and the pilgrims achieved very similar things even though the motivations behind the creation of their performances were clearly different. For Extinction Rebellion, dance and movement, be it the samba bands or the Red Brigade, serve as regenerative actions to nourish louder, more blatant forms of resistance. The Banshees' performance is meant to be disruptive; it is meant to catch your attention, shock you, and encourage immediate action. In Kinship Workshops or Sandra's autobiographical movement, dance and movement serve as an education of somatic modes of attention. This education may inspire a more ecological sensibility, it may not. There are no demands, no

ultimatums. The performance of the pilgrims served many roles. Disruptive it was not, but it did express desires and concerns, stories of connection and loss. Hopefully it is clear how in the fieldwork dance and performance is neither explicitly disruptive nor recuperative and may serve multiple roles within environmental activism. What the distinction between hard and soft activism does do, is assist in acknowledging the different methods dance and performance artists in the UK are using to advocate for the environment in the face of a potentially existential crisis. I conclude with this passage of Jolie passionately recounting the simultaneous generosity and fear she encountered during her solitary pilgrimage in 2020. She said she felt like a walking confessional, as on that walk the pandemic was still transforming our lived experience, and everyone she met wanted to know who she was, what she was doing, and what she stood for. She listened to all kinds of 'absolutely barking mad' political rants from across the spectrum but,

> Once that kind of political rant had subsided, people were all so kind, and so generous, and so sad, and so scared, and full of all this stuff. We're just human, and they all looked after me, and they all took care of me. And it made me realise that listening is really vital, not trying to change someone's opinion, or have the political rant, but to just, you know, hear it, receive it, let it pass on, and then hear all their other stuff as well.

If attention is truly the beginning of devotion, perhaps cultivating somatic modes of attention might make us more caring listeners and through that listening and attending generate an environmental sensibility that extends to the human and non-human in all their spectacular messiness.

Conclusion

But Who Is This For?

Ten weeks after setting out from Tower Hill in London, the pilgrims of the *Listening to the Land* project delivered a performative sharing of what they learned and the stories they gathered to delegates of CoP 26 in Glasgow.[90] According to the funding bids, the stated intention of the work was to collect and share the diverse perspectives on access to green spaces and concerns for the future of the planet to delegates at CoP26. As described in Chapter 5, the felt purpose of this performance shifted and changed throughout the pilgrimage. At times the pilgrims even questioned whether they should go ahead with the final performance at all. Despite this doubt they carried on and devoted what little spare time they had to developing their performative work.

The creative process consisted primarily of a performative ceremony which gradually formed through repeated iterations. These ceremonies typically took place outdoors and in the round: sometimes in stone circles, sometimes around campfires. The ceremony was collaborative and immersive. Pilgrims would be scattered around the circle, intermingled amongst audience members. During the performance pilgrims would enter the middle of the space to contribute to scenes and then re-join the audience at the edges of the circle. The public ceremonies acted as ways of sharing and thanking local communities while also being generative and exploratory dress rehearsals. Outside of these informal 'rehearsals' some pilgrims offered occasional workshops in theatre, fooling, dance, and music sharing their individual performative skillsets. During the long days of walking small 'affinity groups' spontaneously emerged where musically inclined pilgrims composed songs and poems while they walked. Over time, the rehearsed sections of the performance became more consistent, settling into set forms including songs, scenes, and an adaptation of the mummer's play *Saint George and the Dragon*. Other parts remained wholly improvisational with pilgrims spontaneously deciding what and when to contribute. Even though I had seen or participated in the ceremony many times, there was always a sense of excitement bubbling in the group; you never quite knew what was going to happen. The improvisational, collaborative, and immersive quality of the performance was essential to the nature of the work and these qualities assisted the performers to effectively straddle the line between humour and poignancy when dealing with an emotionally charged topic like climate change. Over time the format was developed to assist in communicating the enchanting and affective experiences they encountered on their long pilgrimage.

However, on this final occasion in Glasgow when the time came to share these enchanting experiences with the individuals who might have the agency to *actually do something*, the space assigned to the pilgrims to present their work was inflexible and rigid, stifling potential for collaboration and immersion. They were led into a small, clinical, white box with harsh lights, heavy industrial columns, and a few sad-looking potted ferns. None of wind, rain, sun, or mud that inspired the work was present; layers of human labour went

[90] This final performance can be viewed in its entirety at this YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bm10PLpTMXg

into making this certain. There were rows of evenly spaced chairs meticulously placed for audience members and a small, raised platform for the pilgrims with most of the space taken up by wide, grey chairs and side tables topped with glass jugs of water. The choreography and architecture of the space immediately separated the sharers from the listeners, the performers from the audience. Any possible form of shared experience was scuttled from the start. In the introduction to this thesis, Ronald Grimes (2002) argued some liturgies may be completely unsuitable to certain places, describing the chaos that ensued when a Christian mass was taken outdoors on a windy day. What about the pilgrim's liturgy crafted in the open air and mucky fields; did it have the same efficacy when sanitised and anesthetized? Can one develop an environmental sensibility through the passive consumption of a seminar in a conference hall? Unfortunately there was little opportunity for discussion with the few delegates who attended; they had to move on to the next event.

I am grateful then that despite the imperfect conditions for the sharing of their work, by their own measures, if not those of the Arts Council or the CoP delegates, the *Pilgrimage for Nature* was a resounding success. The WhatsApp group of nearly 30 pilgrims remains active two years later. Pilgrims continue to plan additional walks, meetups, and skill-sharing. Pilgrims revisit the different farms and communities that hosted them to volunteer their time, contributing to the maintenance of organic orchards. As described in chapter 5, the experience itself influenced and supported dramatic lifestyle changes for some of the pilgrims. Personally, I continue to feel the effects of the experience. My knowledge of my body, my physical limits and possibilities, and my relationship to walking and subsisting communally are irrevocably changed. I recognise more plants and animals through encountering them daily, I know which species are edible and when and where to look for them. This knowledge did not come from books, it came from encounter and the directing of my attention from mentors, just as Tim Ingold (2000) described his relationship with his botanist father. This attention was not limited to sight, we touched, tasted, and listened.

This thesis supports the claims of other researchers that environmental sensibility is not something that can be isolated and engrained through rote and intensive study or forcibly implanted via factoid assault. It is instead a quality nurtured through experience, through the skin, ears, eyes, nose, and mouth, through the moving body as a unified whole contaminating and contaminated by landscape. As I have argued throughout this thesis, dance and movement artists in the UK are contributing valuable insight into how nature connection, and an environmental sensibility, might be cultivated through bodily practices even within an industrialised and metropolitan context. At the beginning of this research, I set out to answer how dance and performance might engender an environmental sensibility; what role they might play in establishing and transforming the relationship between people and their environments. Fieldwork across the UK both analogue and digital has provided some answers and additional context to these questions.

Figure 25: Still from one of the author's choreographies.

Findings and Contributions

In Chapter One I argued that movement practitioners facilitate sensorial and somatic exercises to generate rich experiences of the environment amongst workshop participants. These experiences may result in the perception of personhood in nature, described by Kay Milton (2002) as essential to cultivating an empathetic relationship with the environment. However, participant discussion also revealed that conversely, these experiences may instead result in perceiving the unfathomable complexity and 'non-personhood' of nature sparking wonder and astonishment. I introduced a framework of enchantment to help explain how pleasurable experiences of both the relatability and unrelatability of nature may inspire an environmental sensibility, or an active engagement with pro-environmental behaviour. This chapter also argued that movement practices, such as dance, provide a particularly potent medium through which to generate these types of experiences. Fieldwork with dance artists Katye Coe and Thomas Goodwin provided a robust case study of the type of exercises movement practitioners use to encourage nature connection and environmental sensibility via an ethos of enchantment.

In Chapter Two I argue that enchanting experiences may be expanded beyond the individual to the collective through acts of storytelling. Michael Jackson (2002), drawing from the work of Hannah Arendt, persuasively contends that stories and the act of storytelling can transform private experience into public expression. I proposed that this alchemy of experience broadens the reach and impact of an enchanting experience while also validating and reinforcing the affective quality of that experience for the perceiver. In this way, sharing stories compounds the efficacy of enchanting experiences. In this chapter, fieldwork with Sandra Reeve and Simon Whitehead provided poignant examples of how

workshop participants engaged with practices of storytelling to strengthen their relationship to landscape. The participants in Reeve's workshops directly encountered features of the landscape through the lens of autobiography and created place-based performance works to explore personal narrative themes. In Whitehead's workshops unspoken story emerged through witnessing a partner's noctographic improvisation practice. These artists and their students are directly meeting the contemporary call by activists and theorists for new stories, new myths, to shift our attention in ways that might generate an environmental sensibility.

In Chapter Three I emphasise the significance of participating in a community of practice when it comes to cultivating an environmental sensibility. Many of the practices mentioned in this thesis exist as an annual schedule of workshops with participants returning year after year. While artists may have their own solitary practice, this fieldwork focused on the workshops they facilitated and the impactful nature of 'making together'. Both performance works featured prominently in this thesis, *Is This a Wasteland?* and the *Pilgrimage for Nature* were also collaborative, participatory, and communally created works. This chapter also highlighted the significance of the fieldwork taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. The particularities of this moment may have impacted the strong need for community and emotionally charged experiences which occurred when people gathered to share practice after having been isolated for long periods of time. Turner describes artists as liminal persons who passionately seek to eschew cliches and role playing in their attempts to engender 'vital relations' with others via 'fact or imagination' (1969: 128). I posit that the potentiality of the COVID-19 moment contained liminal qualities which some artists tried to harness, both in their efforts to critique the structures of support that failed them, and in their attempts to dream alternatives modes of living and working together. This period where so much that was assumed to be stable collapsed so swiftly was a period of great suffering, loss of life and livelihood. Some individuals, like Hayley Matthews, in a deep place of despair dared to envision something different for her practice and community. These liminal critiques and creations may in turn inspire societal changes or slowly thicken back into the structures they sought to escape.

The focus of the second half of the thesis shifts from artistic practices that dwelled in the periphery of environmental activism to performative practices in the UK that claim more explicit activist intentions. In Chapter Four I describe the contentious relationship encountered between dance artists and contemporary environmental activism. Many artists felt uncomfortable describing themselves or their work as activistic. Some did not feel their performance work "accomplished enough" to be classified as activism, some felt claiming activist identity would open their practice to an unhelpful lens of critique, while others felt that activism simply was not the right framework to understand their work. Despite these refusals, underneath there was a subtle acknowledgement of a desire for their work to positively impact individuals' perceptions of and relationships with the world around them. To begin to untangle this thorny ground, I first introduced the work of UK environmental activist group Extinction Rebellion. Extinction Rebellion has a reputation for loud, disruptive action which they combine with vibrant artistic expression. They clearly demarcate themselves as both artists *and* activists. Fieldwork with a London chapter of Extinction Rebellion revealed performance works which not only sought to seize attention through spectacular disruptions, but also affect the public they encountered through emotive movement, costume, and song. These subtleties expressed different qualities of activism which I described as belonging to forms of hard or soft activism. The typical Extinction

Rebellion action exists primarily as an attempt to interrupt structures of power through disruption, blockade, and protest. This hard activism tries to get in the way; it is unabashed in its refusal of the status quo and demands your attention, forcibly grabbing focus through nonviolent direct action. Nonetheless, equally present in some actions a softer form of activism exists that attempts to cultivate attention in a wholly different manner which the next chapter defines as soft activism. This chapter concluded with a demonstration of how dance and performance theory can help us understand the tactics of hard activism and protest before shifting focus to a softer, gentler form of attention.

The final chapter of this thesis employs the *Pilgrimage for Nature* as a case study to demonstrate what soft activism through the subtle cultivation of attention looks like. This durational performance project contained the cultivation of an embedded and empathetic form of attention at its core. It was quiet, and it privileged listening over shouting with its subtitle, *Listening to the Land*. Soft activism presents a lens through which we might come to understand the subtle yet transformative power of paying attention. Many of the movement artists in this thesis cultivate somatic modes of attention which may then in turn inspire an environmental sensibility. These two final chapters demonstrate the breadth and complexity of the advocacy work movement artists in the UK create in their struggle to fight for the future of the planet. Sometimes it is subtle, soft, and slow in its directing of your attention; daring you to fall in love with the swifts' daring acrobatics overhead, the fungus mulching the ground beneath, and the animal that you are. Other times it is lurid, effusive, and unruly in its singular demand for your attention, refusing to be ignored in an eruption of love and rage. Neither mode of advocacy is superior or particularly more effective, instead I argued that they are complimentary and co-constitutive of the efforts of individuals who have fallen in love with the islands they are made of.

To summarise further, dance and performance in the UK provide a variety of methods through which they might cultivate an environmental sensibility in participants, performers, and audience members, transforming the relationships between them and their environments. One primary method to understand how this is achieved is through somatic and sensorial exercises which generate experiences of enchantment, a mix of wonder and astonishment of the complexity of life, perceiving nature as simultaneously relatable and unknowable. Storytelling, via performance, conversation, or other mediums, alchemises these enchanting experiences into a collective current vitalising positive reception. Communities of practice provide ideal circumstances for sharing of these stories, for the development of art and performance, and the cultivation of diverse skills and perspectives. In particular, the COVID-19 moment spurred critique of contemporary support, funding, and touring structures. This critique has since, if only anecdotally, led to an increase of artists exploring alternative modes of practice and performance to propagate ensconced in local places and communities. If these seedlings survive or boldly dare to flourish remains to be seen. Alongside these communities producing performances and practice-based workshops are artist-activists directly attempting to engage with environmental activism through their work. The methods they choose sometimes prioritise disruption and nonviolent direct action to force 'mass systems change', while others attempt to subtly encourage pro-environmental behaviour or an environmental sensibility through practicing somatic modes of attention.

While activists and artists may indeed seek systems change, whether cellular, perceptual, or societal, this thesis documents the cultivation of sensibility rather than specific behaviours. Recalling the introduction, according to Jane Bennett, sensibility

describes a disposition hospitable to and the will to live out a particular ethics (2001:48). While the findings of this research provide evidence of an environmental sensibility in participants, it does not measure nor provide evidence of whether sensibility directly translates into practices of environmental care. More holistic and intensive contact with research participants would have been needed to consider this implication, however the practicalities were made impossible due to the conditions of conducting research during a global pandemic. Further, different methodological considerations would have been needed to measure and document changes in behaviour. While this is a limitation, it also provides an ample opportunity for further research to consider whether soft activism or experiences of enchantment may in fact lead to the cultivation of practices of deep environmental care. When does the desire to act lead to meaningful action?

This research contributes to entangled discourses of dance, environmentalism, and activism. The fieldwork demonstrates how broadening our understanding of what dance is and can be, not just beyond western contexts but also inside western communities, can provide valuable insight into how and why humans move in ways which take them 'out of the ordinary world and… into a world of heightened sensitivity' (Boaz in Spencer, 1986: 2.). As demonstrated in the various case studies in each chapter, the contemporary expectations of music, audiences, stages, vision, or large emotive movements are not necessary for this transformation to take place. The research also provides context for what the 'heightened sensitivity' identified by Boas might contribute to contemporary environmental crises in the cultivation of nature connection and environmental sensibility. Analogously, the research demonstrates how essential and beneficial an embodied, somatic, and artistic relationship to the environment can be when it comes to studies of environmental behaviour. The research further supports claims that the rigid distinctions between humans and nature are muddy even within a metropolitan western context. Lastly, this research supports nuanced approaches to studying and conceiving of activism. Dance studies scholars have effectively demonstrated how choreographic tools are utilised to invigorate and coordinate protest movements; however this research reveals how the subtler, more somatic tools of performers, choreographers, and movement artists also contribute towards activist objectives. Ultimately, I would contend that the strength of these contributions lies less in the furtherance of isolated disciplines and instead in the innervation of multidisciplinary veins. On their own the findings may be relatively modest, but considered together they unveil a tapestry of somatic potential and reimbue simple experiences of the world around us with perception and worldview altering qualities.

Figure 26: Norwich Under the Water ©Winston Sanders Photography

Future Considerations

The findings of this project stimulate ample opportunities for further research and collaboration. The findings could be utilized in collaboration with artists of various disciplines in the cultivation of workshops or performances that attempt to navigate the complex crises instigated from climate change. Conversely, scientists could use this research as a starting point to further understand and appreciate the role performance and dance might play in communicating their findings with wider audiences. Further research could be undertaken to compare and identify environmentally dance practices with other forms of environmental activities such as hiking or gardening to determine if there are any isolated contributions a dance perspective provides or if simply moving and engaging with landscape and body is independently meaningful. Similarly, this project was limited in the types of performances that could be attended due to being undertaken during the pandemic. Further research into the effects of performances about climate change on audience members perception and behaviour would be welcome and helpful in crafting a more holistic picture of performance and environmental activism. It is my hope that this thesis highlights the contribution of artistic and embodied approaches to facing the climate crisis. Currently in the UK there is mounting governmental pressure to discount, if not eradicate, artistic and humanistic disciplines, painting them as non-productive, wasteful, or unnecessary. The findings of this research tell an alter-tale whereby these disciplines play subtle but transformative roles in how we perceive and act in the world, privileging adaptation, listening, and attention; qualities which may be essential in a swiftly changing and unstable landscape.

One way these future considerations are already in action is through an Arts Council England funded project I have recently joined in Norwich. Theatre-maker Sophie Utting is producing a piece titled *Norwich Under the Water* which includes collaborations with climate scientists at the University of East Anglia and the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research alongside workshops with local community groups YMCA, Age UK, and Get Me Out of These Four Walls. In these workshops, Sophie and her collaborators discuss the potential local impacts of a two-metre sea level rise while participants share stories, opinions and participate in the creation of collages and poems. The predicted sea level rise would cause the river Wensum to flood the prodigious Norwich Cathedral, the performance site of the project. In August 2023, an exhibition of the work created by the community groups will be presented in the Norwich Cathedral Cloisters alongside a dance theatre performance piece created in response to the research listened to and stories gathered. This ambitious project is an attempt by a new physical theatre company to bridge felt response and hard scientific research about climate change. Although beyond the research period of this thesis, I have been in conversation with some of the climate scientists about potential future research collaboration. This performance, and the process that went into its creation, provides another opportunity to consider the wider ramifications and effects of performance work. Just like the *Pilgrimage for Nature*, oftentimes the largest impacts may be seeded and nourished long before the premiere of any final products.

Figure27: Norwich Under the Water ©Winston Sanders Photography

A Parting Note

Before concluding, I would like to include a brief update on some of the things the artists and activists in this thesis are dreaming up next. This research would not exist without their deeply thoughtful practices and boundless generosity. I am filled with gratitude for all of the welcomes I received and hope that this thesis acts as advocacy for their work. Thomas Goodwin and Katye Coe are finishing up their residency as part of a program called Cultural Reforesting hosted by Orleans House Gallery in Richmond, London after finishing five years of leading Kinship Workshops. This experience will inform the next year's program. At the time of writing, Tom is currently leading a two-week 'Coastal Roaming Project' that includes nomadic wild camping and foraging alongside nature connection activities. Sandra Reeve continues to lead her 'Move into Life' annual program of trainings, workshops, and project groups along the Jurassic Coast. Simon Whitehead is working on his practice-as-research doctoral thesis on ecologies of touch at the University of Glasgow while continuing to run the Locator workshops in Pembrokeshire and the Practicing Places workshops in collaboration with Kirstie Simson. Hayley Matthews continues to share her practice of 'dancing on the faultline' through eight public performances a year marking the seasonal cycles, while scaling also offering scaled back workshops and teaching of her wild dancing practice. Extinction Rebellion remains active in London and across the UK, currently focusing their work on resisting Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's recent announcement of hundreds of new oil and gas licenses in the North Sea despite 2023 being the hottest year on record (Walker 2023), while also trying to drum up support for London Mayor Sadiq Khan's controversial ULEZ expansion (Rufo 2023). On Beltane, or 1st May 2024, Jolie will be wed to her partner and many pilgrims plan to attend. Jolie continues to plan annual pilgrimages, the next one is titled *Pilgrimage for Re-pair – Strolling Mummers* due to take place this autumn.

This thesis is merely an historically situated glimpse of these artists and their work. Their practices are cumulative and mutable and will doubtlessly continue to shift, meeting the mercurial demands and curiosities of contemporary life. Ultimately though, this research documents how some movement artists attempt to navigate the churning and perilous waters of a planet heating and transforming faster than ever before. If only we could learn to listen more deeply, to feel more intimately, to move more intent-fully, to dream in viridian and chartreuse… maybe we might also come to develop an attentive environmental sensibility to guide our footsteps into this unknown.

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Appendix 1

Interviews:

Name	Date	Location	Name	Date	Location
Haley Mathews	15-Oct-20	London	Maisie (Kinship)	16-Aug-21	Online
Sophie Arstall	13-Nov-20	London	XR Protester 1	24-Aug-21	London
Emma Zhangs	18-Nov-20	Online	XR Protester 2	27-Aug-21	London
Rosemary Lee	19-Nov-20	Online	XR Protester 3	27-Aug-21	London
Renate	20-Nov-20	Telephone	Petra	21-Sep-21	London
Kathy	4-Dec-20	Telephone	Arun (Kinship)	22-Sep-21	Online
Faultlines Lab (Group)	8-Jan-21	Great Yarmouth	Hayley+Rachel	22-Sep-21	London
Sandra Reeve	28-Jan-21	Online	Flora (Kinship)	15-Oct-21	London
Penny Chivas	11-Feb-21	Online	Pilgrim 1 (Ashley)	28-Oct-21	Fairlie
Carolyn Deby	18-Feb-21	Online	Pilgrim 2 (Jolie)	28-Oct-21	Fairlie
Luca Silivestrini	25-Feb-21	Online	Pilgrim 3 (Ruby)	29-Oct-21	Fairlie
Katye+Tom	25-Feb-21	Online	Pilgrim 4 (Howard)	3-Nov-21	Fairlie
Malaika Sarco-Thomas	27-Feb-21	Online	Pilgrim 5 (Alice)	3-Nov-21	Fairlie
Jennifer Monson	11-Mar-21	Online	Pilgrim 6 (Gabriella)	3-Nov-21	Fairlie
Lynn Neuman	16-Apr-21	Online	Pilgrim 7 (Dennis)	4-Nov-21	Fairlie
Natalie Garrett-Brown	16-Apr-21	Online	Pilgrim 8 (Heather)	4-Nov-21	Fairlie
Nigel Stewart	16-Apr-21	Online	Kasia Witek	20-Jan-22	Online
Maya (Sandra's Workshop)	28-Jun-21	Charmouth	Charlotte Spencer	2-Feb-22	Online
Helena (Kinship)	26-Jul-21	Online	Ben McEwen	2-Feb-22	Online
Chrys (Kinship)	27-Jul-21	Online	Simon Whitehead	11-Feb-22	Online
Rachel (Kinship)	28-Jul-21	Online	Banshees	13-Feb-22	London
Alexina (Kinship)	13-Aug-21	Online	Simone Kenyon	11-Mar-22	Online
Mary (Kinship)	16-Aug-21	Online			

Workshops, Protests, and Performances Attended:

Name	Date	Location
XR Banshees Performance	Jul-Aug 2020	London
XR Impossible Rebellion	31 Aug-5 Sep 2020	London
XR CAWG Performance	4 Sep 2020	London
Workshop with Sophie Arstall	26 Sep-20	London
SotF Performances	7 Nov 2020, 6 Mar & 3 Aug 2021	London and Norwich
SotF LAB 1	6-8 Jan 21	Great Yarmouth
Kinship Online	10 Mar & 1 May 2021	Online
Kinship: Epping	15-16 May 2021	London
The Place Outdoor Dance Fest	9 Jun 2021	Online
Kinship: Bristol	12-13 Jun 2021	Bristol
STRATA	25 Jun- 1 Jul 21	Charmouth
Yorkshire Dance Climate Encounters	2-4 Jul 2021	Yorkshire
Workshop with Helen Poynor	23-25 Jul-21	London
Kinship: Hebden Bridge	6-8 Aug 2021	Hebden Bridge
Pilgrimage For Nature	4-13 Sep 21	England
Is This A Wasteland?	15-19 Sep-21	London
Kinship: Pembrokeshire	27 Sep-1 Oct 21	Pembrokeshire
Pilgrimage for Nature	27 Oct-8 Nov 21	Scotland
Becoming Fungi, Becoming Forest	13-14 Nov-21 1-4 Dec 2021	Coventry