

**Title:** Gaga and Naming as Eco-Somatic Practices of Enchantment

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**Abstract**

This article will trace theories of enchantment and disenchantment in the social sciences to craft a theoretical framework of enchantment as a form of ecological relationality. The framework will be supported by examples drawn from fieldwork completed between 2017-2021 in the UK and Israel of the contemporary somatic practice Gaga, a workshop on blessing and cursing facilitated by Claire MacDonald, and a week-long workshop with Sandra Reeve. These examples, expanded by sections of ethnographic reflection denoted in italics, demonstrate how a contemporary theory of enchantment, through somatic inquiry, may re-instil agency in the cold, mechanized world of modernity, and open up channels of possibility to reimagine kinship.

‘Labour is blossoming or dancing where  
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,  
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,  
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.  
O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,  
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?  
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?’

## **Introduction**

This article collates heuristic observations from previous projects to develop an artistic, phenomenological, and ethical framework of enchantment which offers a somatic approach to reimbuing landscape with forgotten agency. The observations will be expanded and animated by sections of ethnographic reflection, denoted in italics throughout the writing. I will begin by tracing notions of enchantment in social and anthropological theory, then briefly outline Gaga as a somatic practice and suggest how it might offer opportunities for enchantment. Finally, I will demonstrate how practices of naming can provide a secondary avenue to access enchantment alongside the embodied phenomenology of somatics. The framework draws from movement and creative workshops between 2017-2021 in the UK and Israel to demonstrate how eco-somatic enchantment might remind us of what is possible beyond the horizon of a rational capitalist ontology.

Within an ontology of capitalist realism, carefully calculated reason and profit act as both motivators and progenitors of knowledge (Weber 2005; Fisher, 2009). In this tale of a disenchanted modernity, subjective experience, magic and wonder are explained away (Bennett, 2001). The world is left defined as a mechanistic system populated by various resources available for exploitation and accumulation (Federici, 2004). 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. Eco-somatic 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<sup>1</sup>.

*18 July, 2017 Tel Aviv: Our bodies quake, no longer knowing whether the vibrations in our flesh came from ourselves or a force outside of ourselves. The earthquake bottled within tests the elasticity of ligament and tendon and limb. We stand scattered across the studio as intensity builds and orientation fails. We collapse to the floor; writhing, rising, shaking, learning to love our sweat and the sweat of those around us... we buzz and hum in liquid exhaustion. We are alive.*

This reflection comes from fieldwork completed in Tel Aviv, Israel after a Gaga class with Ohad Naharin. Returning to these reflections now, I am reminded of dancer Olu Taiwo's *Dance of the Return Beat*, 'The ground state of the universe is movement. It is a verb, an animated-ness, a becoming that is an unfinished performance and although we are mere fragments of fragments, we are all making reality as we live and become' (2013: 495). Taiwo offers movement as the primary connective tissue between body and world. My own experiences of collective somatic inquiry resonate with this image of a symphonic dialogue, questioning and forming veins of relationship through dance. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> For some perspectives on Covid 19 and failure of global systems see (Khosrawipour 2020, Liu 2021, Gavin & Brands 2020, Boyd & Wilson 2021)

## **Dis/Re-Enchantment**

*29 August, 2020 Epping Forest: 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. We are given a few minutes to land in the space. 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 for the next two days 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.*

The above 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 theorist Jane Bennett (2001:13). Emerging from five 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' (ibid). Enchantment, if considered as an interplay between perception, agency, and the environment as outlined below, has many possible iterations and interpretations. Multiple 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 (2008) and Aboriginal 'shimmer', Chris Cuomo (1998) and ecofeminist 'flourishing', and Jane Bennett (2011) and the political ecology of 'vibrancy'. Each of these theorists, in their own fields and subjects, suggest

alternative methods for perceiving agency in the more-than-human world. For the purpose of this article, if a simple stroll can radically alter communal mood and perception, how might somatic practices instil a sense of wonder in a modern world described as disenchanted, silent, and mechanised? This section will describe 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 artistic and somatic practices may offer avenues for altering our perception of a disconnected modern world, generating a sense of kinship and belonging through eco-somatic enchantment.

In his 1918 lecture at Munich University, Max Weber described chief features of modernity, namely intellectualization, secularization, rationalization, and bureaucracy, as disenchanting the world. He used disenchantment to define the loss of magic, mystery, and the inability of science to answer the universal question ‘What shall we do and how shall we live?’ (Weber, 1918:11). 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. Weber’s lecture continues to be a source of academic dispute and inspiration. Feminist scholar Silvia Federici argues that Weber’s disenchantment describes the particular systems of value and utility hegemonic in capitalist ideology (2018). Sociologist Richard Jenkins interrogates Weber’s claim of disenchantment by modernity, instead offering both enchantment and re-enchantment as traits also distinctively modern (Jenkins, 2000).

Jenkins begins by demonstrating that more 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.<sup>2</sup> 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. He argues 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 re-enchantment, some of which will be explored in more detail later in this article. Jenkins 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’ (Jenkins 2000, 29).

Weberian disenchantment and the sociological inquiries that followed, inspired a discourse that examines the role of enchantment as a feature of, or counterculture to, modernity and rationalism. For Federici, re-enchantment is rooted in the commons<sup>3</sup>; through their ability to present the possibility of alternatives to capitalist societies (2018).

Within anthropology, enchantment takes another form in the work of Alfred Gell. Gell (1998) 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. Gell’s seminal work *Art and Agency*

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<sup>2</sup> However, in the twenty years following the publication of Jenkins work, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has shown that although nationalism and globalization are strong forces, modernity has brought opposite movements as well increasing heterogeneity as much as homogeneity. Some theorists call this phenomenon glocalisation (Robertson 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Additional information on the contemporary politics of the commons can be found in the UK based journal [www.thecommoner.org.uk](http://www.thecommoner.org.uk).

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? 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<sup>4</sup>) such as ecologist and philosopher Timothy Morton would propose a vastly different approach.

Morton very briefly engages with a theory of enchantment while interrogating the Kantian experience of beauty. Morton summarises Kant's definition of beauty as a human universal that requires an experience bereft of concepts, emotions, or desires. Allowing these sensational experiences of emotion and desire would tarnish the beauty experience 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' (Morton 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. 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,

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<sup>4</sup> OOO is a philosophical movement that explores what agency objects: living, nonliving, micro, macro, natural and synthetic, might possess. For an overview see: [https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews\\_features/the\\_big\\_idea/a-guide-to-object-oriented-ontology-art-53690](https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/the_big_idea/a-guide-to-object-oriented-ontology-art-53690)

under a spell, things could get out of control, but they won't, at least for now' (Morton 2018: 80). Morton, and OOO, postulate that the object itself possesses agency in this experience.

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. 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.

Starting from Weber's theory of the disenchanted modern and Jenkins' argument for potentialities of re-enchantment, we are presented with a complex contemporary zeitgeist in which 'we were never truly modern' and magic was never really dispelled. Jane Bennett writes at length on the sometimes opposing, sometimes complimentary, disenchanting and reenchanting forces of modern life (2001). 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 image of the "self-made-man" propagated during the enlightenment that has since dominated the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Federici 2004). 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).

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 possible theory of enchantment, empowering 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 form deep relations, to being asked out by the



moon (Morton 2018:80). These entangled interpretations of enchantment support an understanding of modern life as deeply complex and as enchanting as it is disenchanting. They demonstrate how somatic practices can deeply affect our experience of, and relationship to, the world around us. My current research, of which this article only establishes a groundwork for, proposes eco-somatic enchantment as an epistemological framework to examine how performance and artistic practice may transform relational modes of being between more-than-human actors and through which ecological awareness is second nature.

### **Gaga As Eco-Somatic Practice**

*19 April 2017, London, U.K.: In Gaga, the instructor may often give prompts that are physically impossible. I've been asked to separate my pelvis from my ribcage, to become weightless and float in space, to pull my bones out of thick flesh, and then pull them out of soft flesh, and then allow my bones to float inside my flesh. I have been told to separate my scapula from my ribs, to twist the ropes of my arms in opposite directions, and to collapse upwards against gravity. As a participant, I, nor others involved in the practice during my fieldwork, ever stopped to say, 'This is impossible, I will not attempt this'. The question of possibility did not appear; rather, I witnessed bodies in intense configurations grappling with metaphor, working to go beyond their familiar limits on a daily basis.*

The remainder of the article will use fieldwork examples to further develop the framework of an eco-somatic form of enchantment beginning with Gaga, a style of contemporary dance. Gaga is an improvisational training methodology rife with metaphor; impossible tasks are commonplace and shifted between with nuance and deep attention.

Described as a movement language by its creator, Ohad Naharin, Gaga began as a movement practice Naharin devised while recovering from an injury (Heymann 2016). This practice, originally called ‘Ohad’s class’ replaced ballet as part of the daily training for dancers in Batsheva, a contemporary dance company based in Tel Aviv, Israel. After an explosive increase in popularity, Batsheva dancers and movement artists trained by Naharin now deliver Gaga classes worldwide.

There are structural rules that define a Gaga class from other dance practices. A Gaga class has no mirrors. Observation is forbidden; if you are in the room you are participating. Despite the deeply internal somatic investigations that are crucial to the format of the class, dancers do not close their eyes. The facilitator typically takes the centre of the room surrounded by the students and participates fully in the class. Movement is nonstop for the duration of the class; students are taught ways of resting while moving, the most common of which is called floating. Gaga can take two forms, Gaga/People and Gaga/Dancer, but both are open to trained and untrained bodies of various backgrounds.

Gaga is primarily a somatic practice, concerned more with individual sensation rather than precise form. Sylvie Fortin defines somatics as the diverse and multifarious bodily practices that privilege subjective and internal experiences (2002:128). The language of instructors urges students to go beyond their familiar limits, to explore sensations, and to sustain this through somatic attention. Discussing Gaga in her book *Embodied Philosophy* (2017) Einav Katan writes, ‘somatic attention is the core of the practice. Hence the individual body is the origin of knowledge and its subject of inquiry’ (2017:25). Katan’s writing is heavily influenced by the work of phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1962) who defines somatic attention as the primary driver and source of knowledge. Gaga teaches dancers to approach their movement practice as an embodied form of research. The studio becomes a laboratory for thorough somatic inquiry where dancers investigate their bodies and their

relationship to each other and the world through movement, generating new, felt knowledge. Gaga dancers utilise this somatic inquiry to explore performance textures and may spend a great deal of time exploring a single sensation such as shaking or quaking.

*20 July 2017, Tel Aviv, Israel: We spend a great deal of time exploring shaking and quaking in the pelvis. Shaking is something you do to yourself, it is purposeful and a form of release (or build-up). Quaking originates in the pelvis, and it happens to you. Movement echoes that come from quaking are more impulsive, with much less intent. Now, yes, both quaking and shaking are performed by the body researching the ideas. However, in quaking the participants attempt to connect with the sensation of an earthquake in the body, that the quick back and forth vibrations are not of their own accord. We spent almost twenty minutes exploring a quaking in the lower body while simultaneously maintaining a sense of floating in the head and arms, attempting to compartmentalize the voluntary and involuntary impulses. Eventually the quaking built into a full body experience as it built up. Suddenly we were commanded to stop. The vibrations of the bodies in the space came to a halt, but the sensation of vibrating remained. We were instructed to follow the echoes of these vibrations as they lingered and used them as a guide to reconnect to this sensation without needing to shake. In the same practice, we lay still on the ground for five minutes yielding into the floor. We were instructed to come to standing by connecting to explosive power at the clap of her hands. In one powerful clap, a room full of bodies rose nearly instantaneously, as the bodies rose so too did a uniform sensation of dizziness become apparent in everyone's faces. We listened to the echoes of this dizziness and allowed it to transform into movement.*

The epistemologies of somatics and phenomenology share much common ground.

Sondra Fraleigh claims that 'somatic movement practices may even be called

phenomenology in action' (2015:19). In an earlier article I describe how Gaga provides an opportunity for students to experience embodied research and promote a radical, anti-dualist pedagogy (\*anonymised\* 2019). I would like to go one step deeper and argue that Gaga can be representative of another trend in somatic practices, one that expands our perceptions of self, other, and world. 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 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 (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. Bingham's somatic attention ensconces his subjective experience directly in and with the environment, offering relationality between canonically animate and inanimate substance. The movement research offers a real-world observation of Merleau-Ponty's position that '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' (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 235). Bingham enchants the stone with his dance, slicing through millennia to experience the symbiosis of mineral and organic material.

Gaga instructors occasionally ask participants to 'awaken all the dead flesh in your body' (\*anonymised\* 2019). If we consider Merleau-Ponty's definition of flesh as an adhesion to being or form of relationality, awakening our flesh also awakens the flesh of the world and opens up these channels of relating to bodies swirling around us and the environment we are composed of: 'At some level, the mind/body/place matrix is "one indivisible totality"' (Harris 2013, p. 415; Ingold 2000, p.9). In this relational ontology the practice of keeping the eyes open during a Gaga session has increased metaphor and importance to the practice and positionality of the participants. As each mover must maintain

their vision of the space, of the instructor, and of the other participants, they must constantly see and be seen, strengthening the fleshiness of the space, the thickness of the instruction, and constantly affirming and reaffirming each individuals' part of the greater whole; all whilst being intensely involved in subjective movement research. This fleshy, entangled existence is channelled through each student and the studio, enabling an exploratory relationship with natural forces such as gravity. This animation of and play with gravity, described in the reflection below, offers a potentiality for eco-somatic enchantment.

*19 July 2017, Tel Aviv, Israel: (recollection of instructors prompts during class) Try not to think so much, but to feel. Use your eyes not to see the space but to feel and to listen. But don't hold all of this information in, let it out through the body. Gather the information and then let it out. Channel 'dolphi', like the dolphin, the availability for movement throughout the body anywhere at any time. Being fully available and open. Experience gravity slicing through your skin. Slicing is a violent word, I do not like it, but it is slicing. Think slice like rain or a shower, soft. Do you feel it? Now, don't grab your flesh to resist gravity but instead move through it, feel it slicing through your flesh but also enacting all throughout the space. Using soft flesh, move through gravity noticing how it affects your body differently if your arms are raised, or turned inward, or horizontal.*

Sandra 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 me, of my own shifting tonality and moods, of patterns of time and of my own rhythm and feeling how they interrelate' (2018:76). Her statement evokes what 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' (2003:262). I would argue that Gaga is one such possible training methodology that allows participants to access this form of awareness. Naharin himself said of his dance practice, '[I am] more connected to the animal that I am' (Heymann 2017).

### **Naming As Eco-Somatic Practice**

**22 September 2019, London:** *Sat around a long table, performers and artists of varied media gather to discuss. We rise and hold hands. Close our eyes. Eventually, someone begins to hum. The gentle voice reverberates through the acoustics of the hollowed-out church, softened perhaps by the thousands of books now lining its walls. More voices join in, attempting to harmonise. A dissident voice joins the symphony and others defect. A playful tug of war. Notes rise and fall, sometimes through tight lips, sometimes mouths open wide. Silence visits the space a few times, lingers softly and lets the memory of the vibrations echo. The pauses feel necessary. Eventually one of the pauses continues long enough that it feels safe to open our eyes. There is a tenderness in the air and between the spaces of the fingers slotted into my palm. This place has been blessed. We enter it together, bonds formed wordless and blind, but I am seen.*

In early 2019 I spent a weekend in a workshop with Revd Dr Claire Macdonald called 'Curse Bless me Now' at the Live Art Development Agency (LADA) in London. In this workshop participants discussed the deep multicultural histories of blessings and curses. We sang together, we ate together, we debated, we went for walks and researched independently. During one of the days, Macdonald invited Bob Gilbert, author of *Ghost Trees: Nature and People in a London Parish* (2018) to give us a micro-walk around the premise of LADA. During this brief excursion he introduced us to different tiny plants growing in the cracks of

the pavement and between buildings: greater plantain, ribwort plantain, herb-robert, yarrow, St. John's wort. He pointed out larger tree species growing around the church: London plane, lime, horse chestnut, beech. He told us their names, he gave us histories and myths, and folk remedies. The building itself, a church whose repurposed interior now held a library of performance literature and provided various community resources, now upon its façade also supported a litany of creatures, food, and medicines. Tiny green plants, previously glanced over were re-imbued with names and those names carried histories forgotten.

Contemplating key themes of the weekend including the power of naming, and the sacredness of the everyday, I was reminded of Robert Macfarlane's and Jackie Morris' *The Lost Words* (2017). This book of spell-poems was written in response to words such as kingfisher, bluebell, and acorn being removed from a popular children's dictionary due to their infrequent use. Forgetting names of natural beings and phenomenon act as a blindfold, crippling the intensity and agency of the relationships around us and leaving us with the inert world of modernity. 'Magic is the world seen in all its creativity and self-movement. It is around us, but we do not recognise it. We have lost the capacity to relate to it.' (Federici 2020:38) Gilbert's walks, and Macfarlanes spell-songs act as reminders of wonder, repopulating our natural world with persons and myth.

There is inherent value in being able to recognize and ascertain the varied voices of the polyphony of organisms in our environment. This is made apparent by the prevalence of classification systems in modern science including the taxonomic system devised by Carl Linnaeus in 1735 still in use today. Gaga also uses names to aid in its movement research. True to form, these names are typically associated with nebulous sensations whose exact nature are difficult to describe. 'Biba' means to pull your body away from your seat bones. 'Lena' is the main engine of the body between the belly button and pubis. 'Luna' is used to describe the pads of the feet and hands as soft moons. 'Tashi' is to move with your feet glued

to the floor. 'Pika' is to activate the area between the genitals and the anus. These are just a few of the lexicon regularly used by instructors to guide participants into locating sensations of movement research. These names provide familiar landmarks to arrive at and diverge from.

Naming also played a key role in a workshop I attended in 2021 facilitated by dance artist and psychotherapist Sandra Reeve called STRATA: An Autobiographical Movement Workshop. During this workshop we spent a day in different locations along the Jurassic Coast near Wootton-Fitzpaine. We worked together and alone, guided by scores. In each location I had an encounter with different beings, a beetle, a flock of skylarks, a curved tree, a puddle of clay at the bottom of a small waterfall. Learning the names of the beings I shared time with was guided by identification, photos, and internet sleuthing on one hand, and extended somatic inquiry on another. Identifying and being able to name plants and animals assists with perceiving personhood in nature, something Rob Efird identifies as essential to generating active environmental care (2016). I learned how to identify nettle weevils while one crawled over my body and between my fingers, guiding me through an improvised duet in a field atop a cliff. Each encounter and name, human and non-human, fed into the creation of poetry and movement textures that culminated in a performance on the final day. The naming was a somatic encounter embedding deeper relationships between myself, other participants, and the beings I danced with. It was an eco-somatic experience of enchantment.

## **Conclusion**

The research completed for this article acts as tentative, preliminary groundwork for a much larger project; inspiring and laying down the foundation for my PhD research which is



currently in process. The years of embodied practice dictated above act as the first few steps of this ongoing journey. Enchantment can take many forms, but I have found somatic movement practices as the gateway most efficacious for me as an artist and researcher. The qualities I describe are not inherent to Gaga or practices of naming but are subjective experiences that helped to change the way I and others engage with the living world. They continue to shape my practice and the way I teach, while guiding the path of future enquiry.

Marx (1988:75-76) describes nature as our inorganic body. We are intricately intertwined. If nature dies, we die with it. Our relationship to nature needs to be reimagined; we cannot continue with the neoliberal telos of eternal economic growth. Practices of enchantment restore agency to a muted landscape. They inspire us to imagine different possibilities. Adrienne Maree Brown (2017) reminds us how radical the simple act of imagination can be, when stifled by capitalist conceptions of the world, 'I think it is healing behavior, to look at something so broken and see the possibility and wholeness in it' (24). Somatics and the dancing body can act as a portal to accessing this perspective, to accessing a form of eco-somatic enchantment. Federici describes the effect the dancing body has had on her recent research: '...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' (Federici 2020:123-124). This article presents a variety of experiences that contain potential for eco-somatic enchantment: naming the innumerable critters and forces that cohabit our towns and cities, turning a short stroll to the supermarket into a somatic litany of greetings, harnessing far-away engines and moving with thick flesh through a dance studio, or allowing the perspiration of others to permeate our lungs and falling in love with the sensation. 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 next to red-tailed fox, common yarrow, elder, house sparrow and mugwort.

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