

Translating home: Dance, cities and moments

Alys Longley

The University of Auckland

Abstract

Creative practices emerge in relationship with ecologies, spaces and sites, where culture meets geography, where the terrain of the city meets the behaviours of its streets. This article translates the way one dancer has made her home in dance. It is structured around a series of narratives and employs practices of experimental writing in an attempt to capture affective moments. The paradigms that interconnect and inform this writing include practice-led research, contemporary dance, inter-disciplinary studio practices, somatic methodology and dance in tertiary education. Relationships between practices of dancing and writing are at the heart of this paper, which explores how affective spaces created by processes and ecologies of dance might be translated to the page. These auto-ethnographic narratives do not claim to speak for any communities of practice or to map relationships between cities and dancers. Instead, they concentrate on a few specific moments out of many, in the hope that these moments may illuminate a sense of how ecologies of dance, place and community interweave, creating all manner of different kinds of dance-homes, bringing sensoriums of proprioception, touch, connection and listening to the worlds of our cities.

Keywords

Dance ethnography; auto ethnography; narrative research; ecologies of dance; experimental writing; practice-led research

Introduction

A creative practice might be considered a kind of home. The routines and rituals of artistic processes become places of return, forms that ground us and spaces where we bring experiences back in order to make sense of them. Creative practices emerge in relationship with ecologies, spaces and sites, where culture meets geography, where the terrain of the city meets the behaviours of its streets. This article translates the way one dancer, based mostly in Auckland, New Zealand (but also in Dunedin, New Zealand and Melbourne, Australia) has made her home in dance. It is structured around a series of narratives, and employs practices of experimental writing in an attempt to capture affective moments. In employing experimental writing practices, this article occasionally switches authorial points of view and moves from standard to italic font to shift a change of perspective.

Narratives are formatted with alignment to right margin and italicisation to signal a switch in the authorial point of view.

Is she even really a dancer? If anyone ever asks, it's still difficult for her not to qualify her reply—to say that she's not a *real* dancer, she choreographs and occasionally performs, she teaches dance and her professional life is based in a dance studies department, but she's not *actually* a dancer. Dancing is just something she loves and something she does. Aren't 'real' dancers like Olympic athletes—muscular, coordinated, extraordinary and elite? She, on the other hand, has more of a mother's body and rushes home at the end of the day to be with her two young daughters, rather than to daily Pilates or yoga. The problem is that she passionately believes that dance is something that comes with being human, rather than something that specific humans do. She's designed first-year university courses in which inclusivity is the primary philosophy. She thinks that dance is about finding home in our moving, thinking, feeling bodies, and from there dance creates space for ideas to move and to travel, that the limitations of dance are what we perceive dance to be. She, of all people, should be able to proudly stand up as a dancer, so what stops her?

She's previously written about workshopping with dancers on somatic approaches to choreography, outlining priorities of practice that underpin a process of somatic dance making. These included 1) sustainability, 2) release of ambition/doing less 3) organic development and 4) process orientation. In the conclusion to their article on somatic processes, she and her co-author, Katherine Tate, wrote, "The principle of doing less is articulated in a wide range of dance environments. And yet, when there is dance work to be made, our conditioning to work over the top of pain or to let rest take a backseat seems almost irresistible" (Longley & Tate, 2012, p. 241). In the contemporary dance communities in which she works, expectations and practices of dance as a kind of superhuman activity have extraordinary power and authority. Disrupting these to advocate for dance as a form that is available for any/body, in a cultural space when the perfection of bodies is an increasing preoccupation, can be quite a challenge. The narratives in this article, in their small ways, all attempt to open space for recognition of non-Olympian, ordinary bodies choosing to move as a way to experience and extend their living and knowing.

The paradigms that interconnect and inform this writing include practice-led research, contemporary dance, interdisciplinary studio practices, somatic methodology, performance improvisation, dance in education and community

dance. Relationships between practices of dancing and writing are at the heart of this paper, which explores how affective spaces created by processes and ecologies of dance might be translated to the page. The narratives on which this writing rests respond to thorny issues that have motivated her through years of dance research: 1) How to write the somatic; 2) How to have writing emerge out of the logic of dance practice, in a language that carries the felt affect of movement; 3) What might choreographic ethnography entail. A series of auto-ethnographic narratives form the structure of this paper, as one dance maker grapples with researching dance in relation to embodied thinking, writing and ecology.

Critically engaging with the practice of writing movement

Narrative and affect

Narrative research provides a methodology for practising writing as a means of understanding and analysing experience. In the case of this paper, her intention is to open a space in writing that provides insight into specific fragments of experience grounded in dance communities in Dunedin and Auckland, New Zealand, and Melbourne, Australia. An important value of narrative research as a means to explore complex and layered meanings of arts practice within communities lies in the way it can allow researchers to integrate multiple voices and perspectives within a single text. Music researcher Wayne Bowman writes that

Narrative work can show us the multiplicity and diversity behind apparent uniformity; it can highlight the temporality of musical engagement; it can give us vivid accounts of the processes of rupture and change that are music's life blood; it can help recover the processual and ethical qualities in musical action that theory so often neglects or obscures. (Bowman, 2006, p. 11)

Bowman also emphasises narrative inquiry's inherent "plurality and complexity" (Bowman, 2006, p. 11) as a methodology which demands some understanding of and ability to meld multiple modes of address within a single text: academic, philosophical, evocative, poetic, storied and situated voices are often interwoven to provide detailed insight into complex interactions. For this reason it is common for narrative and ethnographic methodologies to be interwoven.

Laurel Richardson (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005) is a sociologist and ethnographer who has developed practices and methodologies for articulating research using creative writing techniques, including poetry and storytelling. Her discussion of writing as a method through which ethnographers come to better understand themselves, their work and what it is they know “displays the writing process and the writing product as deeply intertwined; both are privileged. The product cannot be separated from the producer, the mode of production or the method of knowing” (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 962). Narrative research insists that one’s writing must explore a diversity of approaches, to allow researchers to question and work outside of the strict parameters of an academic model, as well as confidently making use of it. Writing forms, such as fragments, stories, poems, abstract prose or film scripts, are chosen in order to best extend and develop the logic of one’s line of inquiry. Working specifically with style, voice, narrative and character also emphasises the vital role of the reader in constructing meaning. Richardson and St Pierre emphasise the post-modern context framing narrative research. They cite Deleuze and Guattari’s point that “writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come” (Deleuze & Guattari, cited in Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 270). This paper emphasises narrative writing as a practice that not only occurs through writing *about* something, but also as a practice of invention that emerges as the body moves to the blank page, pen in hand.

Ethnographies of smaller moments

Ethnographer Manda V. Hicks’ methodology for attending to ‘unconventional articulations’ in ethnographic fieldwork and writing is also influential in this article. Hicks describes such articulations as “vignettes through which my experiences are represented. Things that I didn’t laugh at; moments that felt degrading; transformative situations; they were all marked by—made real by—my difference” (2011, p. 52). Reading Hicks’ ethnographic account of being a female officer in the US military, one is moved by her account of boredom, rather than heroism; of ordinary everyday practices, rather than dramatic scenes. Hicks writes against the grain to restage the world of military work through a series of conversations, auto-ethnographic accounts and fragments of interview transcripts through a female point of view. It is exactly the *everydayness* of her accounts, her attention to detail and to the specificity of military life that makes her account so intriguing and unusual. The everydayness of life in specific dance environments in

New Zealand and Australia are also a focus of this article. It presents a series of vignettes that aim to conjure a sense of how cities, communities and dance practices feed and form each other, creating possibilities for living, thinking and moving. Instead of writing on a particular choreographic approach or series of performances, it instead evokes the daily labour and human exchanges of studio practice and research process.

Writing practices for thinking with transition and mobility

In his book *Parables for the Virtual* (Massumi, 2002) philosopher Brian Massumi asks how poststructural discourse might open up spaces for consideration of the sensorial implications of the body. He discusses the philosophical implications of allowing meaning to be unstable and proposes a practice of writing emphasising transition and mobility. In order to create space for transition, sensation and movement, Massumi proposes that writing must entail risk:

The writing tries not only to accept the risk of sprouting deviant, but also to invite it. Take joy in your digressions. Because that is where the unexpected arises. That is the experimental aspect. If you know where you will end up when you begin, nothing has happened in the meantime. You have to be willing to surprise yourself writing things you didn't think you thought. (Massumi, 2002, p. 18)

Massumi's discussion of writing as an exercise in movement highlights the position of the writer as one who follows, who digresses, who experiments, who opens space for the unpredictable to occur. Such movement can be spurred by the way writers' position and frame the relationship between text and reader. In the book *Certain Fragments*, Tim Etchells describes how, in writing, the choice of pronoun strongly affects the nature, quality and tone of his writing:

Perhaps the most useful discovery was in the writing I did describing our work at a distance—referring always to 'they', writing as if *Forced Entertainment* were some distant, semi-fictional group of people in a country far away. The distance was useful—a fictionalizing manoeuvre that nodded to the versional nature of all history. Along with the distance came other discoveries—a way of intercutting different voices, different layers, eschewing a single line in favor of fragments arranged around a centre that is only ever implied. (Etchells, 1999, p. 16)

In previous research she has employed methodologies for approaching writing through dance practices through experimentation with imagery, translation of somatic sensations, rhythm, page layout, authorial position (as described above in Etchells' account), voice, vocabulary, the texture and surfaces of pages, relationships to atmosphere or space and how different writing styles (narrative, fictional, poetic, academic) might interweave (Longley 2011; Longley & Tate, 2012). A Deleuzian conception of style emphasises the active way in which ideas come alive through the style of language writers evolve. Deleuze (1995) writes, "Style in philosophy is the movement of concepts. This movement's only present, of course, in the sentences, but the sole point of the sentences is to give it life, a life of its own" (p. 140). This emphasis on style highlights the processual nature of writing as opposed to conceptualisations of writing that assume knowledge is transferred to the page through a neutral language.

One's always writing to bring something to life, to free life from where it's trapped, to trace lines of flight. The language for doing that can't be a homogeneous system, it's something unstable, always heterogeneous, in which style carves differences of potential between which things can pass, come to pass, a spark can flash and break out of language itself, to make us see and think what was lying in the shadow around the words, things we were hardly aware existed. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 141)

Deleuze highlights the *practice* through which ideas are brought into being. In *The Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes writes that writing is drawn out of "multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue" (Barthes, 1977, p. 148). This conceptualisation of practice highlights the potential co-extensiveness of dancing, writing and everyday life: the specific approach the writer takes to the page, the way she deals with events at the periphery of her attention as she takes pen to paper, whether her expectations are ambitious or exploratory—variables that relate to the life of the practice have a strong bearing on the development and growth of written ideas. Barthes discusses "the set of those 'rules' which predetermine the work—and it is important to distinguish the different coordinates: working time, working space, and the action of writing itself—the 'protocols' of work" (Barthes, 1985, p. 178).

It is everyday tactics that generate a practice of attention to the way written words play against each other to create affective conceptual spaces. Barthes'

notion of the ‘grain of the voice’ links to Deleuze’s conception of style and emphasises an affective dimension or ‘grain’ that “works at the language—not what it says, but the voluptuousness of its sounds—signifiers, of its letters” (Barthes, 1977, p. 182). Philosophers Melissa Greig and Gregory Seigworth define the term affect in *The Affect Theory Reader*:

Affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, non-human, part-body, and otherwise) in those resonances that circulate about, between and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force relations. (Greig & Seigworth, 2010, p. 1)

If, as Greig and Seigworth attest, affect is that felt sense that evades conscious knowledge, how are researchers to translate and communicate the affect of dance experiences? Section two of this writing attempts to do so through moving between different registers of narrative writing style. In attending to specific places, modes of travel, forms of dancing and contexts for dance making and research, this article employs poetic, imagistic and descriptive modes of language in order to connect places with the worlds of creative exchange they are home to.

Metaphor as a technology of intimacy

Dance ethnographer Judith Hamera’s book *Dancing Communities; Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City* (Hamera, 2007) discusses the role of dance as an everyday practice in creating vital, lively, dynamic cities. While Hamera recognises the importance of the professional dance economy, her book focuses on the intimacy of the human experience of studio life—the way that this fosters specific kinds of human relationships and experiences and the contributions such relationships make to the lives of their cities;

real, desiring, emotional subjects come together across multiple dimensions of difference to produce and consume dance because doing so offers real, emotional pleasures. Intimacy is foremost among these.

It is both a condition for, and a by-product of, the sustained arrangements in dance. Real and vicarious intimacies create and expand possibilities for community within the global city through the accumulation and deepening of inter-personal exchanges. (p. 18)

Following Hamera, the three narratives that form this article attend to the practice of dance in relation to the cities that home dance communities, the networks of people for whom dance occupies an important social, aesthetic and cultural place and the ways of knowing that are facilitated by different kinds of dance. For Hamera, the language employed in dance communities and then used to evoke them in her ethnographic research is key in bringing to life the subtle, felt details and somatic experiences that define specific and diverse worlds of dance. “Metaphor is a technology of intimacy, an in-group discourse that creates coherent, if diverse, communities in the here and now, and a set of protocols designed to make images communicable over time” (Hamera, 2007, p. 32). The narratives that follow fold writing around place, dance practice, people and somatic perception together in order to evoke three auto-ethnographic accounts of three of her homes in dance.

Section three: Narratives of dance-place

Dunedin

Dunedin is a small university town at the bottom of the world. You will find Dunedin in the south of New Zealand’s South Island, on the east coast, not too far from Antarctica. It is an intimate city where one can easily travel by foot, without the need for buses or cars, through a geography of hills and valleys. Albatrosses ride ocean swells to coastal cliffs, and southerly winds from inland mountains make the air alive and crisp, and in winter, bitterly cold, sending everyone indoors. Perhaps this is why Dunedin produces, or provides, a home for an inordinate number of artists—there is a sense here of rural life, of the intensity of landscape and the majesty of weather, the simplicity of travelling and the spaciousness of being in a place relatively free from the demands of urban density.

She winds her way down the hill, noticing the early blooming of magnolias, to a workshop in contact improvisation led by Nancy Stark-Smith. A friend has persuaded her to go, describing Steve Paxton as the Picasso of contemporary dance and Nancy as his partner in developing a dance form that, apparently, would be unlike anything she’d ever done before. So, despite her having next to no dance

experience at all, she enters through the heavy doors of the University of Otago's school of Physical Education, barely aware of what an extraordinary occurrence it is for Nancy Stark-Smith to be touring New Zealand and Australia. The next three days change the course of her life. Weeks later she's studying choreography and contemporary technique. The dance community in Dunedin is small and the community of contemporary dancers engaged in performance making there welcome her into the fold—her experience in theatre direction, play writing, dramaturgy and performance makes up (some distance) for her lack of technical ability. There is ample space for beginning dancers to explore diverse forms of creative practice within the teaching style of the University of Otago Dance Studies Programme, with its emphasis on somatic methodologies, improvisation frameworks, community dance, dance in education, and choreography as research. Many of her classes are shared with dancer Caroline Plummer, who shares her interest in performance, somatics and community arts. As she struggles with the complexities of contemporary technique, she plants herself behind Caroline, turning just a fraction after her, finding the memory of phrases in her body through the slightest shift of weight and direction in Caroline's frame.

Skip forward a couple of years and she's in the Brazilian city of Salvador, at the Dance and the Child international conference, speaking on the inclusive methods of teaching dance she developed through her master's research. She speaks of touch, of our basic experience of embodiment, of how dancing with eyes closed can allow alternative spaces for kinesthetic sensing, of improvisation frameworks that disrupt the expectation that to be a dancer one must correctly embody the movement of another. Instead, what she's interested in is how diverse bodies of movement can communicate and extend what movement can be, as a process of discovery, a technique of listening and appreciating difference.

And now fast forward once more, to 2003, and she's returning to Dunedin. Aged only 23, a rare strain of lung cancer was taking Caroline's breath right away.

Dancing can be infinite, it leaves traces, it becomes new with every dancer, every new body, every new movement, every new reason for moving. As Caroline's life slips away, Caroline is planning her funeral. There is choreography flooding through her bones, which a bunch of old friends have gathered to materialize. It is autumn and the song they choose conjures falling leaves. Caroline asks her and Val to add more contact to the piece—it's the one thing that is missing—touch. There is something about being able to mark the end of a life with something so physically tangible. There is a

stitching of past and future, of celebration and grief, of life, hope and loss, in movement gestures carefully tuned. A year later, she and Val dance at Christina's wedding, they weave a short phrase of this dance into their duet. Right up to the day of writing this, she still often feels like she's turning just a fraction behind the inspiration Caroline left in her wake, a sense of momentum out of nowhere, out of the initiation pathways left in her body from this dancing.

Melbourne

After Caroline's funeral, it was time for a change, and she found herself snaking the lock of her borrowed bike around the gate of Melbourne's Cecil Street Studio, home of a weekly contact improvisation jam as well as a wide range of dance classes. Walking through downtown Melbourne, Australia, it's hard not to come across universities, art galleries, theatres, cafes and restaurants. Trams and trains churn through the streets, bicycles flutter down laneways—it's usually either freezing cold or blindingly hot but there is always good food and coffee nearby, which, it turns out, can make up for pretty much anything. Melbourne is the artistic capital of Australia with an endless palette of creative practices circulating through the veins of this place—a core part of the oxygen keeping the city alive. She's arrived here a stranger and finds her home through dancing—arriving at a contact jam in a new country for the first time, one is an intimate stranger.

Within a few minutes of entering the studio she's had people undressing and redressing in the close space beside her, she's been welcomed in, she's found a place among the patterns of dancers into a familiar and personal movement ritual—roll to press to rise to soften to lift to fall to sink to connect to locate the tension in muscles to roll it out as if dough—attention sits in kinesthetic sensation but awareness extends to the body of the room, every dancer a connected part of one body so that a movement here ricochets its affect throughout, there's a kind of open attention to space and dynamic, their bodies enter into a space of becoming together. Many dances occur simultaneously, spilling into the space's wide arms.

She is at once familiar and foreign. She finds herself dancing with strangers, skin the place of meeting, weight the point of connection, gravity the focus of attention. Together engaged in discovery of the infinitely complex play between movement dynamics, momentum and space—a process

of not knowing but following. It's research in what it is to have a body, achieved through connecting with others—at once intimate and impersonal, incredibly close and not so. She at once feels that she knows this language and is intensely vulnerable, afraid that the world of practice she knows will not be good enough here. She keeps moving, through the gruelling self-judgment of being rubbed raw by one's newness, and through the glimpses of spacious delight in finding new possibilities of travel.

After the jam ends (it runs relatively strictly from 6pm to 8pm) there's an open invitation to go for a beer in the pub across the road on Brunswick Street—it isn't hard to get to know people when you have moved with them, although you've barely spoken you are no longer strangers, you've already been listening to each other for hours.

This is how she finds her home in Melbourne, she meets people first by moving, by working at the edges of what she knows of movement, space and performance, in an expansive space that invites imagination, touch, unpredictability, challenge, aesthetics, a sense of flow, (for her) an intensified sense of life. After class, after warming down, there's often a chance to hang out and socialise. She finds her first apartment through an email sent through the dance community and pretty soon another dancer has turned up in need of a place to stay. She invites him in and soon her house has visitors. She soon moves from being a stranger in a strange city to being part of a community, and to being an active part of that community, enrolled as a PhD student in performance research.

To get to Victoria University, which sits on the edges of Melbourne City, you pass through the suburb of Footscray. This place is home to many South East Asian communities, and English feels very much like a second language. As she crosses the suburb to the university for the first time, she's slightly bewildered by a texture of affects. She feels lost although the route is relatively simple, and when she asks people for directions, mostly they do not understand her. This setting matches her sense of what it is to begin a practice-led PhD in dance, with a clear sense of direction and a sense of the route, but each attempt to clarify particular meanings seeming to confuse more and more.

Let's imagine each person in Footscray is a book and you want to know what Footscray is—each person you consult provides a slightly or stupendously different account of this place. Suddenly the meaning of this place multiplies beyond belief. That's what visiting the library is like as she starts her study with Elizabeth Dempster in the School of Human Movement Research and Performance at Victoria

University—simple terms become infinitely complex—terms taken for granted become hives of dissent. There is a world of affects that contextualise her experience of PhD-ness, the trip from the Footscray train station to Libby’s office, Libby’s supervision, supporting her to allow her research to emerge through practice. She sends Libby an extensive literature review and Libby’s replies, “Great work, this is very useful. Now put it to the side and keep making things in the studio, and let’s see what happens from there ...” She loves this department of performance, the fact that this is the *only* university she knows of *anywhere* that allows a PhD to be submitted without any accompanying written material (although for her PhD she ends up writing a full-length thesis alongside an extensive creative folio). There is a valuing of embodied knowledge and critical thinking through practice that seems almost taken for granted—a kind of freedom to follow, to find out in the doing ... and then she’s rehearsing and writing and developing practices for writing experimentally, folding the kinesthetic into the page.

PERFORMANCE TEXTS: INTERWEAVING THE PRACTICES OF WRITING AND DANCING

PhD Provisional Year Proposal

Alys Longley

Entrance

What is the game that we enter into, as you begin to read the crisp white sheets of this newly photocopied PhD candidature proposal? I am entering into a game with you, and yet, for now, I am invisible. You are entering into a game with me, and yet, for now, you are invisible. I am imagining you reading these sheets, and imagining myself dancing in some unfamiliar academic space to bring dance into the bounds of all this. This attempt to open up a space that considers how language might begin with movement, the live relationship between 'performer' and 'audience', the performance of text as it slips off a page space through the eyes of a stranger and into a body. Your body.

I want to lead you down streets and into open spaces so that you are breathing the experience these letters concoct. There are colours, scents, textures and emotions.

The orange of oranges and the brightness in the air as you pierce orange skin with the nail of your thumb. Through surface to flesh, the world within. You notice with your nose.

I've been asking myself questions about how I might use words to portray, engage with, or articulate some sense of the world beneath the skin of dance—the processes, complexities, practices, negotiation, forms of provocation beneath the smooth outer surface of dance performance. In dance performance we are often presented with a considered articulation of an idea, but in rehearsal, what we have is endless questions, problems to solve as we create something that even slightly disrupts the everyday.

Between the 'y' of that 'everyday' and this sentence, I get up, walk around my kitchen where I sit at the table, by an open window outside which I can see my basil plant. I touch its green leaves and sniff my fingertips, the top of my head tingles and my whole upper body expands with breath, with this indescribable scent: try this:

- green sand;
- pepper of your throat;
- stands;
- a series of straight lines;
- adorned by leaves;
- adorn my hands;
- invisible, this scent as;
- strong as consonants;
- aligned in strands of;
- biting memory;
- the land of nerve and more than this.

Walking round I notice the back of my neck; I shake my head. I notice the top of my head. I release into yoga stretches. I shake out my right hand. All of this enables me to write. The heat of coffee, the closed eyes and the taste. The tips of my fingers like basil. All this enables me to write.

Now listening to PJ Harvey: "When I watch you/ move / I can't think straight" (Harvey 2000).

I said to you, before, I said, "I want to lead you down streets and into open spaces so that you are breathing the experience these letters concoct."

Entering a rehearsal is like entering a bedroom. The space is so delicate, infinitely private. You would never know how aromatic the flesh beneath the skin of an orange is until you pierce the outer layer of its skin.

And how might I describe that private world of the dance rehearsal?
And why should I?

As a writer, it is a wonderful ask, so complicated—opening up space. Writing about dance extends what words can do. The rehearsal process is a largely silent space within dance research; it is often written about in shorter pieces of writing, in fragments or in terms of the performance, the end product. However, little attention has been paid to models for writing out of dance—how to invent vocabulary, how dance and writing interrelate and shift each other’s potentials for meaning. This study aims to explore how dance ideas and the perceptions unique to them can be reflected upon and represented through solo performance, writing and an artistic mode of bookmaking. I will ask questions such as, which styles of literature might dance writers draw from in order to extend what the field of dance studies is able to express of its practices? What potentials to meet the movement inherent in dancing might the book as a kinesthetic object, or language as a spoken rather than an exclusively written form, or treating writing as a form of drawing, contain?

As dance continues its becoming as an academic discourse, the writing structures created for disseminating, archiving, articulating and ordering practice will both enable and constrain what dance researchers are able to express. This study explores interrelationships between dance and writing in order to map out ways that language might fold and crease from dance experience. This involves creating methodologies for the practice of writing that begin with movement. It will discuss the creation of vocabularies of response to moving experiences such as sensation, internal processes such as compression and expansion, interoception or exteroception, spaces within a body and pathways of a body through space.

Auckland

It’s while she is completing this PhD that she finds herself flying over the Tasman Sea, to a job at The University of Auckland. As the plane coasts into the city, she knows she is at home by the intense sea blues and grass greens. This isthmus-city is framed by harbours, the land pencil slim at the city centre. She’s here to create and teach a first year dance course catering to diversity and difference, a course that can be taken by any student across the university as an interest paper. She develops the course, which becomes *Dance 101: Introduction to Dance and*

Creative Practices, around a series of modules: 1) Relationships between dance and everyday life 2) Introduction to somatic studies 3) Improvisation 4) Choreography 5) Interdisciplinary practice. This course becomes available to all students across the university, is taken by people who have never danced in a studio setting before and people who have danced all their lives.

By resisting the common assumption that ability in dance is predicated on the mastery of particular vocabularies of movement and focusing instead on somatic and choreographic techniques, the course seems to challenge each student equally. She watches as less confident students position themselves just slightly behind the surer ones, listening intently through proprioceptors for the map of a movement idea held in the body of another.

Soon her teaching at The University of Auckland ranges from first year through to postgraduate level. Her semesters are a blur of contextual studies, research methods, site-specific projects, dance writing, supervision and research. The numbers of students taking Dance 101 grows past her ability to teach it and new tutors are employed to teach the multiple streams of classes. Barbara Snook arrives to begin her PhD in the Dance Studies Programme and take up a position tutoring in Dance 101, fresh from her residency as the Caroline Plummer Fellow in Community Dance. The Caroline Plummer Fellowship in Community Dance was established by Caroline's family and mentors at University of Otago as a way of keeping Caroline's vision for dance alive (Plummer, 2001). As the Caroline Plummer fellow, Snook created

movement workshops with the cancer community, those diagnosed, in remission, bereaved, or a close family or friend of a person with cancer. The idea is that the workshops may allow those affected by cancer to take control of their lives by expressing themselves through movement. (Snook, 2008)

In every year since 2003, a dance practitioner has lived in Dunedin and developed a community dance project with the material resources to realise and write about their work—creating an extraordinary body of experimental sites where people, places and dances form each other. She's hoping she might be a Caroline Plummer Fellow one day but, for now, she's just glad to be working alongside Barbara, to have Barbara's insight from her work in Dunedin contribute to the Dance 101 course, which itself parallels many of Caroline Plummer's philosophies.

She's creating a series of artist books and stories, of performances and poems, of classes. She's carrying places and practices in her cells, each thing forming the ground of the next. Loss becomes inspiration, places are the ground for the creative forms that emerge from them, and homes emerge from belonging. Dancing is a permanent home—the practices of dancing and also writing accompany her wherever she goes, grounding friendships, allowing her to make sense of cities, as she maps them by the sites that keep movement and community alive.

Conclusion

The above narratives provide glimpses and snapshots of one dancer's experience in three different sites. They highlight the way in which ecologies of landscape, creative practice and community intersect, creating a sense of belonging as the author travels in different cities. This choreographic ethnography invites somatic awareness to flicker through its sentences in order for the logic of dancing to have some presence in this writing. Such awareness moves through affect, through attending to the tone or felt sense of a particular kinesthetic state and attempting to translate that state into the poetics of language. These are intimate stories. They do not claim to speak for any communities of practice or to map relationships between cities and dancers. Instead, they concentrate on a few specific moments out of many, in the hope that these moments may illuminate a sense of how ecologies of dance, place and community interweave, creating all manner of different kinds of dance-homes, bringing sensoriums of proprioception, touch, connection and listening to the worlds of our cities.

References

- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-music-text: Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath*. Glasgow, Scotland: Fontana.
- Barthes, R. (1985). *The grain of the voice, Interviews 1962-1980*. (L. Coverdale, Trans). London, England: Jonathon Cape.
- Bowman, W. (2006). Why narrative? Why now? *Research Studies in Music Education* 27(5), 5-20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X060270010101>
- Deleuze, G. (1995). *Negotiations 1972-1990*. (H. Tomlinson, trans.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Etchells, T. (1999). *Certain fragments: Contemporary performance and forced entertainment*. London, England: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203449639>
- Greig, M., & Seigworth, G. (2010). *The affect theory reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hamera, J. (2007). *Dancing communities: Performance, difference and connection in the global city*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230626485>

- Hicks, M. V. (2011). Making my narrative mine: Unconventional articulations of a female soldier. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17(5), 461-465.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800411405434>
- Longley, A. (2006). *Performance texts: Interweaving the practices of writing and dancing* (Unpublished PhD Proposal). Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.
- Longley, A. (2011). *Moving words: Five instances of dance writing* (Unpublished PhD thesis). Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.
- Longley, A., & Tate, K. (2012). Writing the somatic in the insomnia poems project. *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*, 3, 229-242. https://doi.org/10.1386/jdsp.3.1-2.229_1
- Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the virtual*. London, England: Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822383574>
- Plummer, C. (2001). Caroline's journal. Retrieved from www.carolineplummer.org.nz
- Richardson, L., & St Pierre, E. (2005). Writing, a method of inquiry. In Y. Lincoln & N. Denzin (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed. pp. 959-978). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Snook, B. (2008) *Barbara Snook: Caroline Plummer fellow in Community Dance 2008*. Retrieved from http://www.otago.ac.nz/otagofellows/previous_plummer.html