

Breaths and Beats: Vibrating at the Borders of Memory

In memory of Shona Dunlop-MacTavish 1929-2019

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ABSTRACT

Writing out of dancing how do I address the dynamic, troubled, testing, transforming, vibrant and inventive work of dance through a dialogue with the past? How might the inter-corporeal transmission of learning to dance from a renowned teacher of a European style of modern expressive dance in Ōtepoti, Dunedin, Aotearoa instil lifelong values and principles of practice that can be returned to and reworked across times and places to reinvigorate dancing in the present? In this writing I attend to the foundational practices of respiration and expressivity in the teachings and choreography of modern dance pioneer Shona Dunlop-MacTavish. Developed from a Keynote Presentation for the Leap Symposium, University of Otago, Dunedin November 2019, I articulate through multiple registers the question of how to breathe life into her archives and what they offer as corporeal understandings of collective relations inscribed through dancing. Informed by Luce Irigaray's ontology of breath and written during a crisis of trust in dancing together due to a global pandemic, I call for an orientation to dance's histories that resists forgetting the patterns of breath that animate us. I ask what might the affective trace of these ways of knowing do for us in the political present?

Openings

History is undeniably something we carry with us, we wear it, and we habitually reproduce it in our gestures, but it also breathes through us. This mnemonic beats with the breath rhythms of other times and places, in particular the somatic legacy of New Zealand modern dance pioneer and my 'dancemother', Shona Dunlop-MacTavish (Brown, 2001). In calling attention to genealogies of difference through a materiality of breath, I return to the corporeal archive of Dunlop-MacTavish (b. 1919 Dunedin—d. 2019 Dunedin) to ask how breath might be sustained as a connecting force and politic. Informed by Luce Irigaray's ontology of breath (Škof & Holmes, 2013; Irigaray, 1999) and propelled by a desire to make sense of global and personal events, I write with the afterlife of dance's trace, its intangible heritage. A global pandemic that brought to a halt dancing together in 2020 followed the personal loss of a woman whom many regarded as a 'dancemother' in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2019ⁱ. In searching for a practical philosophy through dance's relationship to the

movement of breath and the medium of air, I am drawn to the temporal ghosting of one body by another. Reanimating breath patterns learnt in Shona's studio; I am reminded of how history courses through us.

History often writes the body through the shapes of the past as an affective and immaterial trace. In contemplating dance's histories, including my own, I am drawn to the measure of breaths and beats that precede me, in particular to how our beats and breaths fall in and out of time with each other, the places we are in, and the histories we are a part of. A history of breath is embodied in us. I dance between remembering and forgetting with a body marked by history. My kinesthetic memories of dance are inscribed with principles and practices of breath that were learnt in Shona's studio.

It starts with the breath, breathing into the space between the tailbone and the pubic bone and in a wave-like motion filling the interior of the torso so that the movement is carried by breath and heart.ⁱⁱ

So take a deep breath. My body is not so much an archive in this telling but a host and a medium. Writing at a time when dancing has taken on a reinvigorated urgency as a result of COVID-19, as our desire to breathe freely together is constrained by a duty of care to keep each other safe, I return to other critical moments of history when crises catalysed a reaffirming of dance's particular relation to the material and metaphorical significance of breathing. These moments remind us that dance is as much about what is happening in the world, as it is about the act of moving with attention to breath, time, space, atmosphere and place as well as ancestry.

Movement memories call attention to the importance of acts of transmission in sustaining personal and collective memories of dance as a relational practice. We transmit, share and sustain practices of dance through cycles of action, reflection and documentation that are intersubjective and inter-relational. After seven months of transmitting dance through the medium of a screen interface during the Melbourne lockdown, I have had pause to reflect on the absence of vitality that accords dancing remotely when the haptic, aural, proprioceptive and kinesthetic senses are divorced from palpable presence. In other words, when sensing breath is compromised. In dancing, somatic expressive logics come to be held in the bones and the patterns of breath-body connectivity that shape aesthetic legacies, these can be distributed across groups and ensembles of dancers as well as called up through processes of marking and making together. Vibrating at the borders of these

memories, I activate breath-body patterns to remember the lexicon of dance moves that were taught by Shona Dunlop-MacTavish from her Modern Expressive Studio in Moray Place, Dunedin from a bare studio in Melbourne during a global pandemic. The relationship between breath, body and air as medium was central to the principles of the Bodenwieser Method that Shona taught. As Bodenwieser described it: “breath animates the life of the torso, in which the heart – age-old symbol of love and pain—is embedded” (Bodenwieser in Cuckson, 1970, p. 81).

For Irigaray (1999), remembering air involves remembering our debt to the maternal body for it is our mothers’ bodies that breathe first for us, creating the ground for autonomy through our first breaths. A culture that remembers air is one in which exchanges between natural and cultural spheres are revealed as interconnected and mutually dependent. This figuring of breath-body-atmosphere problematises binaries that have traditionally structured Western notions of subjectivity between body and spirit, language and materiality, masculine and feminine, inside and outside.

Drawing attention to Shona Dunlop-MacTavish’s dance teachings through the lens of Irigarayan thought, I propose that her emphasis on breath-initiated movement that is musically and rhythmically dynamic supports the becoming of a breath-body-atmosphere matrix. This matrix offers contemporary dancers and researchers a corporeal logic for orienting dance as a resistive practice to the norms of the political sphere, resisting the forgetting of air and revitalising relations between past and present, nature and culture.

Step together stop,
Wind Unwind
Step Turn Schlinger
Breathe

You must keep going
Remember your body is not the same today, as it was yesterday
Be what you are becoming and not what you might have been.ⁱⁱⁱ

The above text was spoken live during *Acts of Becoming* created in 1995 and recreated 22 years later for *Dancing Sculpture* at the Ian Potter Centre, National Gallery Victoria and calls up the philosophy of Luce Irigaray as a critical dance partner. In this solo choreography, I reframe the teachings I encountered as a young dancer in Dunedin through creating a dialogue between teacher and student;

choreographer and dancer; there and here with Irigaray's philosophy of becoming through sexuate subjectivity. Returning to this work to re-enact it as part of the Leap Symposium at the University of Otago in November 2019, I recalled Shona Dunlop-MacTavish's classes in modern expressive dance in the 1970s-80s, reflecting upon how movement lexicons are carried on the breath patterns of acquired movement histories, informing the present with the past.

welle

A wave that goes right through you^{iv}

wellen

Sequential spine moving like a wave, an arc from tailbone to head and through to the ends of your hair, arms simultaneously reaching backwards then drawing up and over the head to suspend.

impuls

A sudden movement initiated through the diaphragm and sequencing through the shoulders and head.

ekstasis

Thrusting sternum forward, arms back in strong purposeful open movement, arching head backwards and opening mouth through a silent cry; a moment that takes you outside of yourself, projecting a depth into the outside.

die spannung

A sense of tension and tone that is distributed throughout the entire body, a sense of suspense and an intensification of sensation.

This lexicon reveals actions and practices underpinning the concept of the body that was central to the Bodenwieser legacy and that I argue align with Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference. Coming to know these movements through sharing breaths during class demonstrations, repetition and variation in Shona's Moray Place studio informed my choreographic imagination. Future performance research is entangled with the persistent trace of these teachings, contributing to the choreographing of a dance history transmitted through a syncopation of breaths.

Breath lines

In thinking with Irigaray on the history of a dance subjectivity that emerged through the primary activation of breath in Shona's studio, a feminist genealogy emerges that follows the indirect pathway of an exhaled breath. Irigaray invites us to imagine a future more hospitable to sexual difference. Feminist historians claim that we can track sexual difference through the rhythms of a corporeal historiography that is sensitive and attuned to Irigaray's framing of the genealogy of the maternal-feminine. This is not about essentialising sexual difference but acknowledging how lived difference creates 'rhythmically diverse bodies' (Stone, 2003, p. 60).

It is well known that the history of western theatre dance is characterised by ruptures instigated by women who sought to present alternative representations to those which were dominantly inscribed. The feminist project for dance history seeks not only to draw attention to individual women dancers and choreographers but addresses how their lives intersect with racial, cultural, sexual and class identities. New Zealand born, Pākehā and queer identified, Dunlop-MacTavish holds a distinguished position in the history of Australian and New Zealand dance and has been described as 'the mother of modern dance in New Zealand' (Wiebke Finkler in Edward 2019 n.p.). In briefly tracing her biography, I want to draw out some of the ways that events punctuated her story, developing different rhythmic shifts and beats throughout her life.

Born in Dunedin, she left in 1935 with her mother and brother to pursue the kind of arts education that was at the time perceived as only possible in the cultural capitals of Europe and, indeed, was only accessible to families with the resources and privilege to access it. Arriving at Viennese expressionist dancer Gertrud Bodenwieser's private studio in Vienna, she described feeling frightened, awkward and excited; however, 'the energy and passion of those flailing bodies, quickly assured me that here was a sort of dance I had dreamed' (personal notes S.D. archive). The experience of Vienna and Shona's encounter with Bodenwieser proved to be transformational. As Bodenwieser's position as an avant-garde Jewish artist in Vienna became untenable following the *Anschluss* in 1938, she contacted Shona and her friend Hilary Napier and invited them to join her company. In 1938, Shona boarded a train with the Tanzgruppe Bodenwieser as part of an exit strategy out of Austria, into Colombia where the company toured for the best part of a year.

So began the displacement of Bodenwieser's work and teachings from its cultural milieu, and the urgency of survival in exile. As the company looked for a new home, Shona and her family suggested New Zealand and arranged visas for the

company. After a brief pause in Wellington, the company, however, chose the more cosmopolitan city of Sydney, and in 1939 joined some of Gertrud's other dancers who had arrived there via New York with the J. C. Williamson revue. Following this migration, Bodenwieser became a pioneer of Modern Dance in Australia, establishing one of the first dance companies in the region. Shona continued to work with Bodenwieser in Sydney until 1948 when she married a Presbyterian minister, Donald MacTavish, whose first mission was to China. Although she continued to pursue her dancing through their various postings in Taiwan and South Africa, as well as through the birth of three children, it was not until Donald's death in South Africa in 1956 that she returned to Dunedin to establish her School of Modern Expressive Dance. Out of this school grew the Dunedin Dance Theatre in 1963. The company, comprising Shona's senior dancers, was a platform for her own choreographies, often with political themes. It presented many works, including *Hunger* (1970), *Requiem for the Living* (1980) and *Bars* (1983), as well as recreations of some of Gertrud Bodenwieser's repertoire, including *Demon Machine* (1924) and *Joan of Arc* (1947).

Dunedin Dance Theatre became the crucible for the emergence of a number of dancers who would go on to have significant careers as performers and choreographers in their own right, including Michael Parmenter, Simon Ellis (UK/NZ), Matthew Smith, Jan Bolwell, Terry McTavish and Bronwyn Judge. The wave of influence from Gertrud Bodenwieser and land-locked Vienna, Austria, 18,000 km away, was spread through Shona's teaching and transmission of that legacy to hundreds of dance students who trained in her dance studio in Dunedin^v.

Whilst there are many elements to Shona's multi-dimensional approach to dance informed by the Bodenwieser method that have instilled a deep appreciation of this legacy in me, it is to her teachings on how to breathe as a dancer that I return.

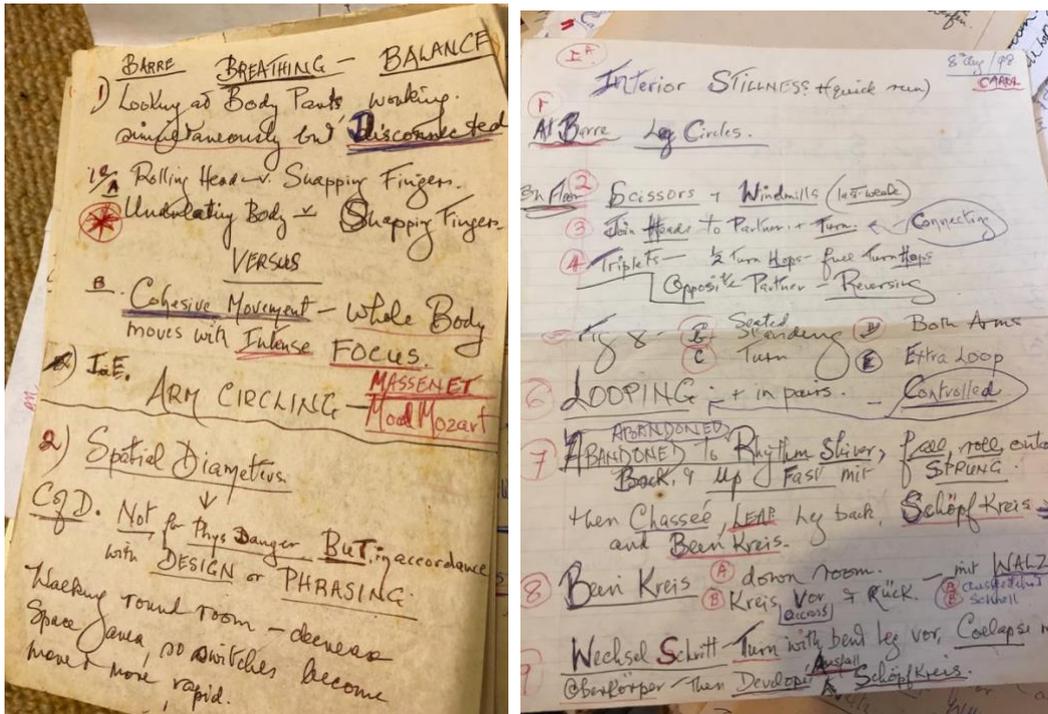


Figure 1: Dance Notebooks, Shona Dunlop-MacTavish Archive, Dunedin. Photograph by Carol Brown.

Although I have persistently traced the displacements of Bodenwieser and her dancers' histories since the late 1980s^{vi}, it is only recently since working on the 'somatic realism' of Bodenwieser's teachings with Thomas Kampe that the significance of a body schema organised around breath has come to the foreground (Kampe, 2017). Reinhabiting the affective traces of embodied and written archives (Figure 1), I worked with dancers from the New Zealand Dance Company to develop *Lost + Found [dances of exile]* (Brown, 2018) for Tempo Dance Festival 2018. Suturing embodied knowledge of the past into the contemporary present through a sustained process of research and development led by Thomas Kampe and myself, we sought to revitalise dance knowledge that is precarious and often hidden. In releasing the stale breath of archives through movement, we returned to a multiplicity of bodily forces that spoke to the resilience and survival of gestures of the past. Our workshops began with an introduction to *welle* (wave), in breath-initiated movement that sequenced through the torso in a wave-like motion and evolved into full-bodied movement arcs in the air. Dancers would practice the movement free standing and with the bar as support, and then in pairs, create concave and convex folds of movement that could be layered. Introducing dancers to the corporeal sequencing of Shona's classes, acquired through her trainings with Bodenwieser, I was not interested so much in reconstruction or re-enactment of the original movements, rather, through what Diana Taylor calls 'vital acts of transfer' (2003, p. 3), I sought

to develop a call and response pattern with this history. Grafting these patterns of breath and rhythm (breaths and beats) we gained a sense of their entangled relations.

The heterogeneity in Bodenwieser's approach to dance, together with the influence of the health reformer Bess Mensendieck's somatic teachings, informed Shona's teachings and choreography in Dunedin, but she also developed her own distinctive style by incorporating her Christian beliefs and emphasis on radical worship animated by a spiritual life. Growing up as a dancer with the Dunedin Dance Theatre, dancing in Presbyterian churches (*Danced Eucharist*, 1980), the Anglican Cathedral and on altars was a regular occurrence. Shona's persuasive personality tried to convince many a clergyman, and eventually woman, that dance was more powerful than any sermon. As Jonathan Marshall explained, 'MacTavish dedicated herself to bringing the experiences of the community back into a collaborative form of worship through dance' (Marshall, 2012, p. 33).

The Dunedin Dance Theatre emphasised the liberatory potential of the body and the collective through dance works that include *Bars* (1983) for Amnesty International and *Greening* (1990) concerned with climate change. Her work was also becoming a place where the feminine divine and feminist politics cohered in a spiritual relation to air. It was one of Shona's senior dancers, Jan Bolwell, who introduced me to feminist thought through the writings of Mary Daly (1973) and *Beyond God the Father: Towards a philosophy of women's liberation*. Shona's 'liberal and ecumenical approach to devotional practice' (Marshall, 2012 p. 35) planted the seeds for my own engagement with feminist philosophy.

As my re-enactment of Shona's solo *Joan of Arc* (1946) in 1992 reveals, Shona's Bodenwieser trained choreographic imagination expanded out into vortices of movement that amplified the space outside and inside the body. Through circular patterns, figures of eight and spirals as well as inward, folding and encircling movements our bodies were rendered through a circuitry of energy and desire. Amplification of intensities, ecstatic and theatrical representation and going beyond yourself were genre defining elements of her choreographic method. Dancers who worked with Shona in her studio felt they were part of a creative process that was critically engaged and creatively boundless. We were seen as individuals and encouraged to become artists who were intelligent, outward looking and physically strong. We felt that we were part of a community that had a global reach and that fostered an international outlook beyond the colonial-settler narratives of Dunedin.

Exchanging Breaths

Breath-flows and the beats of heart animated breathing are tacit markers of corporeal legacies, often unspoken and unmarked in canonical histories of dance. And yet, as material historiographical dance knowledges passed between generations in the rhythmic timing of a class, in the mimetic process of learning to dance, in the to and fro of attending to breath in rehearsal or performance, dancers participate in vital acts of exchanging breaths. For Laura Karreman ‘breath matters’ constitute a ‘vital feature of dance knowledge’ (2020, p. 95). Breath mattered in Shona’s dance practice and teachings. It was foundational to her technique and approach in dance, as her dance partner in the Bodenwieser Tanzgruppe, Magda Hoyos reminded us: ‘it starts with the breath and it moves right through you, like a wave’ (Brown, 2017).



Figure 2: Shona Dunlop in *Cain and Abel* (1941). Photograph by Margaret Michaelis (with permission from Shona Dunlop).

To engage in genealogy involves recognising the inscriptions and embodied legacies of the past in the present. The concept of the body, as an archive of memories and inter-corporeal presence, has a particular resonance within New Zealand where Māori are positioned through an order of relations generated through a sense of the world centred on whakapapa or genealogy. This sense is carried through *hau*, the breath of life that underpins reciprocal relations between all things (Brown & Reihana-Morunga, 2020). As a second generation Pākehā of Irish descent, my settler-colonial history truncates appreciation and understanding of deep time and a sense of that past that reaches into a primordial time of breath. However, through the writings of feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray, and reflection on the teachings of Shona Dunlop-MacTavish and Gertrud Bodenwieser, a renewed awareness of breath can, I argue, inaugurate a deeper ontology of corporeality for non-Indigenous dance subjects.

As dance-artists, breathing is essential to what we do. In Shona's dance classes, the air was palpable; it was the material for shape-shifting and gravity defying; it was the connective tissue between dancers. We were held in the air, sculpted by air and pressed into the air, creating atmospheres of tension and suspension. Being in Dunedin, a city known for the Southerly winds that seem to blow icy air from Antarctica, the movement of air as meteorological and metaphorical force was omnipresent.

Whilst we are surrounded and interpenetrated by air, I argue that the breath-air-body-atmosphere matrix that was so central to my encounter with Shona's studio practice has shaped my values and politics as a dancer and is central to my coming to know through dancing. Such a view aligns with Luce Irigaray's ontology of breath. Irigaray asks "Can man live elsewhere than in air?" It cannot be possible, if we consider that air is "the place of all presence and absence" (Irigaray, 1999, p. 7). According to her, air is breath, and the place of no breath is the place of disappearance. Dancers cannot forget how to breathe because air is our medium and strenuous dancing also demands conscious breathing (Irigaray, 1999). Engaging in inspiration and expiration we share a living archive of breaths. Embodied movement histories are brought into close proximity and become attuned by breathing together but never fused:

Something has happened—an event, or an advent—an encounter between humans. A breath or soul has been born, brought forth by two others. There are now living beings for whom we lack the ways of approaching,

the gestures and words for drawing nearer to one another, for exchanging. (Irigaray, 2008, p. 31)

Irigaray's radical subjectivity calls for us to become two, to resist appropriating each other and yet to breathe-with. Breath is core to her ethics of sexual difference. As sexuate subjects, men and women have different access to maternal genealogies and the rhythms of nature. We breathe the same air, but we breathe it differently. Only by respecting our differences in an intersubjective and intercultural sense can we acknowledge each other's humanity. Through self-affection we return to our own body through breath (Skôf, 2017).

In many bodily practices, breath is central to technique, for example pranayama (breathing exercises) are essential to asanas (postures) in yoga. The psycho-physical body animated by breath can be automatic and subject to the sympathetic nervous system or it may be consciously controlled, for example, through holding, gasping, slowing down or panting. In teaching Bodenwieser and Dunlop-MacTavish methods, I start with the breath. Drawing upon memories of an upsurge in breath, the vital wave of breath that sequences through the torso from the base of the spine and out through the top of the head, dancers learn to sculpt movement and to ride breath-flow. This foundation is built upon in the method through the incorporation of breath variations—staccato, punctuating, expelling, laughing—that play with accents and timing, generating whole body integration. The lexicon of breath patterns calls up distinct movement memories but also evokes the pattern of life stories.

Whilst performances and choreographies transmit 'knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity' (Taylor, 2003, p. 3) what lies behind these performances—the training, practice and corporeal stylisation of the dancers whose movements instantiate the choreography—is less considered as an object of analysis in dance studies. Situating the archive within an inter-generational, inter-corporeal relational field, that includes touch, voice, kinesthetic perception and breath, we are drawn into its tacit and unspoken history. A history that exceeds the boundaries of the dance subject.



Figure 3: Katie Rudd and Lucy Lynch New Zealand Dance Company, *Releasing Her Archive* 2017. Photograph by Carol Brown.

In considering the corporeal knowledge of breath as always in circulation in dance, we are drawn to consider how dance archives illuminate understandings of not only the past but also the present and the future. Whilst much of the work in performing dance archives has focused on choreographic signatures, my research concerns the potential held in dancers' embodiment of their somatic expressive logics, in particular 'breath as dance knowledge' (Karreman, 2020, p. 95). How can the kinaesthetic effects of dancing bodies of the past, rather than the choreographies they instantiate, be not only archived but mobilised for future iterations? What issues do these re-embodiments of breath stories activate for dancers today? Breath initiated expression and emotion underpinned Shona's dance pedagogy making the genre of modern expressive dance something of a challenge for shy schoolgirls raised in the Pākehā suburbs of Dunedin where overt expression was not encouraged.

Political Breathing

inspiration and expiration

16 breaths a minute, 960 breaths an hour, 23,040 breaths a day; oxygen saturating your cells, breathing, our most immanent action.

The history of modern dance is premised on the rediscovery of the role of breath as the initial impuls for dancing. Women pioneers, their ribs and torsos freed from corsetry, were able to expand their breaths, opening three dimensionally into the space around them. For Isadora Duncan it was the discovery of the solar plexus from a point of stillness that animated her dancing; for Bodenwieser it was the emancipated pelvis; and for Mary Wigman (1966), breath was the master behind everything. The 20th century dance studio became the site for attending to breath as the initial impuls for dance. But though I recover a culture of breath in the studio through conscious awareness, how might this translate into politics? As I write, the pernicious effects of diseased breath are stopping dancing, and we are performing public choreographies of avoidance, sensing the contours of changing breath forms that extend beyond the skin (Elswit, 2020).

As we approach a tipping point in human history, with global warming, human population growth and a rapid decline in biodiversity, now more than ever is a time to assert the value of dance as a way of becoming connected, of energising and activating our capacity to feel with each other, of offering up the extraordinary capacities of human movement to remember our histories and ancestral connections to land and each other. In Shona's studio we engaged in the politics of an elemental pedagogy. She invited us to learn from the elemental qualities of earth, air, light, and water. But also, the elemental passions of relation between humans with their differences, their desires. These elements teach us that, in the face of climate change and with all the difficulties of addressing environmental and racial injustices, we might have a chance of being attentive; caring for one another and the earth.

Politics can be understood as an ongoing process of negotiating power relations. It is often thought of in terms of identities and positions, from a place of ground. In considering the political potential of dance, an emphasis on corporeal creativity, dislocates agency as the property of a discrete, self-knowing subject. Because bodies communicate with other bodies through their gestures and breaths together, we arouse visceral responses and prompts. Conceiving our presence as premised upon the aerial dimension of moving in 360 dimensions of space, with a changing relation to gravity, shifts awareness into the space between us and around us and potentially around the world. When we attend to breath and atmosphere, its multi-directionality, we are confronted with an ambiguity of presence, an indirectness.

Working *with* the invisible flows of energy that swirl beyond the edges of my body as entanglements of breath and air, I propose that the breath-body-atmosphere

matrix I learnt in Shona's studio may also offer a basis for a political orientation through dance practice; a politics located in our commitments, values and actions; in the movements we are towards. Expressed through the freedom to initiate movement in any direction that rides upon breath patterns, the political in dance is not self-expression. Bodenwieser "tired of boundless revelations of the ego" and believed dance should be concerned with a "world full of problems and fight" (Bodenwieser, 1940, n.p.). Shona developed and adapted Bodenwieser's philosophy into her own conception of a corporeal body politics:

I think artists represent the moment in time, really We embody the life around us ... I feel that life's bitter moments nourish and enrich creativity more than peace and quiet. I went through a few disasters, without which I am sure I would never have discovered the depths that lie within men, dance needs to be biting into life, expressing the needs of our time. I think that very often dance speaks more eloquently than any sermon. (Dunlop-MacTavish, 1986, n.p.)

Philosopher Elizabeth Grosz builds upon Irigarayan thought by elaborating the centrality of corporeal experience for any understanding of political subjectivity. She looks beyond rights, reason and recognition to the operation of forces—social, cultural, or identificatory—that are outside the subject. A politics of breath aligns with Grosz's concept of 'bare life' where freedom is conceived not as the elimination of constraints on the body or the subject or the coercive forces of power, but more positively, 'as the condition of, or capacity for, action in life' (Grosz, 2010, p. 140). Grosz shifts the debate away from the pessimism of a 'freedom from' (as the elimination of constraint and coercion), to freedom understood as a 'capacity for action'. In this way, she calls for the opening up of the present through the freedom to invent new varieties not of self, but of life.

This reframing of freedom may be helpful in thinking through the politics of breath in the open dance studio or open air as it is concerned with what we are capable of making and doing in creating the conditions for 'action in life'. I close with a call to build critical-creative relationships and collaborations through embracing the studio as a site of political engagement that resists forgetting the air of those who danced before us.

Closings

For Shona and her dance students, the studio did not exist apart from politics. Following the teachings of Bodenwieser who declared that the art of dance ‘brings to our notice facts of the greatest ethical value’ (Bodenwieser, 1926, p. 169); dance, politics and corporeal knowledge were intertwined. Political theory was introduced to Bodenwieser’s students through lectures and work that emphasised ethical, collective engagement in the ‘great problems for humanity’ (Bodenwieser, 1926, p. 169). At the same time her studio was subject to political forces which ultimately annihilated its presence in Vienna, disappearing its radical avant-garde offers for dance but spawning future dance movements—in New Zealand, in Colombia, in the UK, in the Philippines and Australia—in the diasporic traces of her practice as dancers from her company fled and migrated. For the Dunedin Dance Theatre, dance was activism; it was joining street protests against the Springbok Tour; it was writing letters for Amnesty International; it was making interventions in the civic sphere for same-sex relationships. It was also concerned with the feminine divine. In 1985, dancing with Dunedin Dance Theatre, I performed with Jan Bolwell, Terry MacTavish and Sue Malthus, *Moon Goddess*, a feminist dance drama concerned with matrilineal histories and the divine. Breathing life into these activations matrixial relations between body, breath and air were foregrounded in movement and as a feminist poetic and politic.

The open studio I experienced could be considered a place of events where the world entered and where a reworlding through remaking could happen. The studio, understood as a potential space through the medium of air, became an exposed field, a place of events. In dancing-with patterns of breath-body, through *welle*, *impuls* and *upsurge*, we drew on modernist legacies of dance from Central Europe to reworld our contemporary context in Dunedin.

Dancing operated as a gathering force activating feminist conscious awareness through the performance of joyful, anarchic and open-ended disruptions. The dance studio prepared us not just to meet the world but to be part of its transformation. Dancing the political through joyful acts of rebellion meant making space for chaotic and insistent practices and ways of understanding the body from the periphery to the centre and from inside to outside. It meant celebrating inspired, mobile, fluid, surprising, queer, and feminist approaches to dance making.

Through considering what Shona taught me in a context of cultures of breath, I have proposed breathing-with, breathing to remember, and breathing to open living relations on a personal, civic and planetary scale. I encourage you to take a deep

breath, to open your heart and mind to the potential space that is cultivated in our breathing together, in an atmosphere that is shared, porous and that can resist appropriation. I suggest that we direct our breaths—*aroha*—towards the things we love and are passionate about. But that we do so with care and conviviality through an ethics of paying attention and raising awareness of the histories and contexts through which we live, so that when our hearts stop beating physically and our lungs and diaphragm no longer pump oxygen through our veins, traces of the rhythmic effect of our breathing-actions and pulsing lives continue to circulate in the air around us and between us. I propose remembering how to struggle, resist and collectively empower the present with our breaths, voices and movements, past, present and future. Shona's dance life connects in this way with other dancing lives, reminding us as dance philosopher Erin Manning describes it that 'we are always more than one' (2013). We are living archives performing movement traces resonating with a past that oxygenates the present.

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ⁱ Shona Dunlop-MacTavish died at the age of 99 on 18th June 2019 in Dunedin.

ⁱⁱ Instructions for dancing, School for Modern Expressive Dance, Dunedin, n.d.

ⁱⁱⁱ Text spoken in *Acts of Becoming* (1995) solo performed and choreographed by Carol Brown.

^{iv} Class material taught by Shona Dunlop-MacTavish based on the technique of Gertrud Bodenwieser.

^{vi} In 1987-88 I reconstructed and performed *Death and the Maiden* (1940) and *Slavonic Dance* (1946) with former Bodenwieser Ballet dancers, Evelyn Ippen and Bettina Vernon who were living in London and Surrey respectively as part of my MA Dance Studies research in Dance Studies at the University of Surrey, Guildford.