

# Disorientation and emergent subjectivity: The political potentiality of embodied encounter

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**Disorientation and emergent subjectivity: The political potentiality of embodied encounter**

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**Abstract**

*Located in philosophical enquiry, this article considers ways to theorize and articulate the political significance of embodied encounter with the environment. Underlying this discussion is an interrogation of the relationship between presence, embodiment and intersubjectivity, with specific reference to Fisher-Lichte's proposition of 'the radical concept of presence'. In doing so, an affinity is proposed between Deleuzian<sup>1</sup> inflected corporeal feminism principally through the work of Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz, and somatic-informed movement practice in the environment. It is suggested that both offer a critique of the 'mind/body' dualism implicit within humanist understandings of subjectivity. Accordingly, each can be argued to recast subjectivity as an always embodied activity, an inter-corporeal exchange between 'self', recast as shifting and multiple, and 'otherness'. In arguing this point, the article proposes an alternative model of the audience–performer relationship theorized around notions of witness and transformation. Noting the political dimensions of this for issues of difference in performance, the article seeks to elucidate the extent to which existing approaches to performance studies, or that which Melrose terms 'expert writerly registers', themselves rooted in a disembodied spectatorship, arguably lack the apparatus to accommodate such understandings.*

**Keywords**

embodiment

inter-subjectivity

Body-Mind Centering<sup>®</sup>

deleuze

feminism

environment

performance

Through the performer's presence, the spectator experiences the performer and himself as embodied mind in a constant process of becoming – he perceives the circulating energy as a transformative and vital energy. I would like to call this the radical concept of presence. (Fisher-Lichte [2004] 2008: 99)

**Introduction**

Drawing on a philosophical frame and with reference to an ongoing collaborative performance project entitled Enter & Inhabit<sup>2</sup>, which amongst other practices is informed by Body-Mind Centering<sup>®3</sup> (BMC<sup>tm</sup>), this article offers a possible way to theorize embodied encounters with the environment within a western theatre dance context. In doing so, it will argue for a particular conception of the relationship between audience and performer and audience and environment, rooted in notions of witnessing and transformation. Pointing to its political significance to questions of identity and

difference, the closing discussion will consider the invisibility of this specific relationship within existing aesthetic frameworks. In making this point, a tendency to privilege 'disembodied spectatorship' within performance studies, as rationale for this, is suggested.

### **Enter & Inhabit**

*Embodied scoring/being*

*Underscore*

*Allowing the environment to reveal itself, acknowledge and integrate the 'conditions' of the moment to the dancing of the score, reinvest or leave your activity if you become disengaged with the moment, nurture your own Jouissance dance allowing yourself to relinquish to its emergence.*

*Phase 1: Landing*

*With choice to witness and join another's dance and awareness of the spaces between, meeting the environment through the cellular ground, connective tissues, and skin, settling in stillness until saturation spills into movement, offering the site that which it invites.*

*Phase 2: Bridge*

*Bringing that which has come before, becoming attentive to the architecture of the skeleton, meeting the environment with support of the bone layers, compact bone and bone marrow, remaining available to shared moments of stillness.*

*Phase 3: Heart*

*Meeting the environment with curious attention to: Circuits of Venus and arterial flow, Organ heart, Relational support of muscle yield and push, A leading and following heart, Leading through and with axial point of heart, remain with constellations of anchoring and circuiting.*

*Phase 4: Wall*

*With awareness of twoness, and currenting energies and traces journey towards completion with support of the bone layers, compact bone and bone marrow.*

*Performance score*

*Enter & Inhabit, Leave 2009: Multiples of Two*

*Summer Dancing, Coventry, UK*

As noted in the introduction, underpinning the Enter & Inhabit project is an investment in the somatic practice BMC<sup>tm</sup> as a means to generate scored durational improvisation and relatedly a commitment to the notion of embodied being in and with the environment at that particular moment in time. The project is also supported by an engagement with Authentic Movement Practices and the work of UK movement artist Helen Poynor, whose own practice is in part derived from her studies with Anna Halprin.

The project began in 2007, with Amy and me using our ongoing training in experiential anatomy and BMC<sup>tm</sup> to explore dance-making in outdoor spaces. This resulted in a duet that was performed in a series of underpasses on a Coventry ring road in 2008 as part of the Summer Dancing Festival at Coventry University. Christian and Niki joined the project in 2009 to develop the work in Coventry for a further performance at the Summer Dancing Festival and a performance residency at Aberystwyth University as part of the Living Landscapes conference. In 2010 the project was offered a commission by Dance in Devon dance development agency. This culminated in a performance event and artist-sharing in North Devon. Currently, Enter & Inhabit are developing their work in the woods and rivers of Kenilworth, Warwickshire.

For the purposes of this article, I do not seek to discuss the project in detail, but rather to identify and crystallize some of the salient characteristics of the project. Thus, the characteristics I (in discussion with my collaborators) currently understand to be significant to the Enter & Inhabit include the following:

- Coming to know site and other as cyclical and always an indeterminate activity (dance artist Anna Halprin's RSVP cycle)
- A durational relationship with the environment. An unfolding relationship over weeks, months and sometimes years
- An acceptance and play with disorientation and reorientation as an ongoing activity or 'becoming'
- A desire to re-engage with the familiar/everyday/detail
- Acknowledging the conditions of the moment when encountering environment
- The creative act as, to use performance scholar Susan Melrose's metaphor, an endeavour of 'Chasing Angels' and resting upon expert intuition
- A delight in trans-disciplinary process, multiple perspectives and mixed modalities
- 'Event replaces performance' and becomes an invitation into the environment for others, and continues the process of the practice and the project as having overlapping phases
- Characterized by a sensorial playfulness, the resulting images are not the place, the dancer or the dance, but are something parallel, folding back into collaboration with the site and each other and evolving from the ongoing project process, which involves inhabiting space and place
- Recognizes and explores an ethics of corporeal exchange and the collaborative relationship as inherently generative
- Co-making between invited witnesses, accidental audiences, artists and the environment

- Borders that shift, reconfigure and momentarily settle only to reconfigure
- An interest in the poetics of written scores, generated collaboratively and through accumulation.

For the purpose of the discussion here, I would like to focus on the aspect of the project that foregrounds an embodied sensing, perception and response to the environment facilitated by BMC<sup>tm</sup>. This, for us, offers a way in which to be simultaneously fully connected to the inner sensory information of the body while open to outside sensory stimulus, allowing the synthesis of these two to be an impulse for moving in and through space. Facilitated by collaboratively generated written scores, the meeting of these two stimuli becomes the initiation point for movement. In the process of developing this skill, we have spent time excavating, exploring and experiencing the dancing body via the specific mappings and morphological shift of the body offered by, in this instance, BMC<sup>tm</sup>. Therefore, in the moment of moving in the environment we have open to us an expansive range of embodied, sensory information. Consequently, our primary concern as movers is no longer exclusively shape, form or line, but instead becomes one of a constant reorientation to the sensory information being attended to, allowing this not only to move us in and through space, but also to be the stream of communication through which we connect with one another. Attending to the sensory perceptual feedback loop of the nervous system, our dance emanates from a play between staying with and shifting between inner and outer attention and stimuli.

Within this approach to outdoor movement practice, I would suggest that there is a particular audience experience that deprivileges the visual sense as the dominant mode of receiving and perceiving the dance. Through a blurring between the one who is doing and the one who witnesses through his or her corporeal embodied self, the notion of invited audience or 'spectator' is replaced with accidental participants who inadvertently join us in our process of coming to know sites, or who are recast as invited witnesses to an ongoing practice, meeting our moving through their own embodiment. Witnesses are often invited to find their own way to, or into, the performance sites, creating for themselves the edges and perspectives. At times they are invited to respond in the moment or latterly through movement, writing, drawing or dialogue, becoming co-creators of the event. Others may come to the project remotely, discovering traces, versions and iterations of the work through Web-posted scores, images and writings or photographic collections, as some of you reading this may have done during the conference.

Thus casting accidental audience/invited witnesses as co-creators the project offers mediated traces of the artists' embodied experience as an invitation into public spaces and landscapes. And underpinned by an interest in the different modes of perception invoked for the audience by somatic-informed movement practices, I would suggest that this activity recognizes and foregrounds inter-subjectivity as a state of being. To refer to this another way, it explores how population of sites by honed and practice attention to the perceptual response cycle as found in BMC<sup>tm</sup> can invoke new and yet-to-be known encounters with familiar space and place.

### **Corporeal feminist theorization of emergent subjectivity**

To begin to explain a little what I mean by the term inter-subjectivity, I would like to propose an affinity between corporeal feminism and somatic-informed outdoor movement practices. I suggest that both offer a critique of the 'mind/body' dualism implicit within humanist or perhaps more conventional western everyday understandings of subjectivity. Accordingly, each can be argued to recast subjectivity as an always-embodied activity, an intercorporeal exchange between 'self' and 'otherness', both human and environment.

In order to extend this suggested relationship and unravel its significances, I will begin with a nod towards a Deleuzian corporeal feminist framework, working to summarize this through the writings of Rosi Braidotti (1991, 1992, 1994, 2002) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994a, 1994b, 1995, 2003).

In the early 1990s, Grosz and Braidotti resolved their initial concerns about Deleuzian philosophy and drew on his ideas to realize their vision of subjectivity. This version remains informed by the earlier insights of corporeal feminism and yet compatible with a postmodern sensibility. In particular, they refer to Deleuze's theory of becoming, borrowed from the writing of Henri Bergson, as a means to find a non-unitary subject no longer plagued by the model of marginalized versus dominant modes of being and structures of thought, a subjectivity that might thus be termed 'emergent'.

A rich body of work, Deleuzian thought offers a reconfiguration of subjectivity beyond the scope of the discussion here, but, notable for the purposes of this theorization, it

significantly challenges a humanist understanding of the body, specifically in its reworking of subjectivity in the particular way desire and pleasure are conceived to connect bodies. The body as a sealed, given, predetermined entity is undermined. A flow of sensation between individual bodies and within the body is recognized as integral to the creation of self. This understanding of the body cites it as an indeterminate phenomenon, in flux, forever in a process of becoming. To draw on Deleuze's own terms, the 'Molar' or social formation of the self is a non-linear process. Sensations and perception ebb and flow from multiple sources both inside and outside the body. Pleasure is experienced, and a desire to seek further pleasure from that sensation is created. The potential for possible pleasurable sensations that may be invested is infinite. Consequently, the manifestation of these into ideas, images and thoughts of the social self is not seen to occur within some greater scheme or plan. Rather, the pre-personal self is viewed as open to multiple 'lines of transgression' of which none are 'true' or more 'natural' than any other.

However, this is not to say that the body of difference is ignored. Conceiving of the formation of the body at a 'Molecular', corporeal level embraces all notions of difference as ongoing contributors to the social self, not only those between male and female. Acknowledging how the pre-personal 'Molecular' connection between bodies at the level of sensation leads to the organization of pleasure into 'institutions' by social machines enables a recognition of the cultural impact upon the formation of self at the Molar level.

Thus, by 2003 Grosz claimed that humanist notions of subjectivity that argued for a self-

contained, self-governed, self-sufficient, pre-given stable entity had been dissolved by Deleuze and others. Instead, subjectivity has been recast as multiple subjectivities that are created via the 'mind/body's continuous interrelation with dynamic structures of power. This I would argue brings about important shifts in understandings of representation in performance, for thinking from this position renders it no longer 'operational' to argue for the polarized view of subjectivity as grounded in being either male or female, for example, when creating discourses around the politics of identity. A focus on women's unique traits and characteristics as a means to gain equal recognition with men and the continuation of the 'victim' versus 'agent' understanding of subjectivity becomes at best redundant and at worst in danger of continuing the very structures sought to challenge.

Discussing Grosz's 1994 position, Braidotti notes that 'Grosz's reading of Deleuze focuses on the creative potential of his concept of difference as pure positivity disengaged from the dialectics of hierarchical ordering and negations' (Braidotti 2002: 104). In doing so, she recognizes that Deleuzian philosophy, rather than seeking to reverse the hierarchal relationship between dominant and subordinate, 'Molar/Molecular' rather proposes a flattening out of the terrain to move beyond a dialectical approach to being. This approach negates the rational, conscious, unified self upheld by the binary structure of same and other influenced by platonic notions of the real or original. Deleuzian difference is thus for Braidotti 'the affirmation of difference in terms of a multiplicity of possible differences; difference as the positivity of difference' (Braidotti 2002: 71). Thus, the model of dominant subject as original against which the 'other' is viewed as copy, fake, simulacrum, somehow lacking or inferior is sidestepped.

Subjectivity, from a Deleuzian perspective, therefore '[...] names the process that consists in stringing together – under the fictional unity of a grammatical “I” – different forms of active and reactive interaction with and resistance to these conditions' (Braidotti 2002: 75).

### **Dance scholar theorization of emergent subjectivity**

*BMC<sup>m</sup>/connectivity*

*All the fluids are essentially one fluid – largely made up of water – that changes properties and characteristics as it passes through different membranes, flows through different channels and interacts with different substances.*

*(Cohen 1993: 67)[Founder of BMC<sup>m</sup>]*

*Natalie briefly offered me BMC bodywork that encouraged my attention to my heart and arterial/venous flow. She then guided me to movement patterns that are supported according to BMC, by these physical structures and processes. The heart and arterial movement patterns felt initially unfamiliar and not within my repertoire of movement preferences [...]*

*Deliberately working with these somatic patterns on site, I was startled by how markedly my experiences of the site changed. When I moved, adopting these heart and arterial patterns, I experience moment-by-moment connections with the site in kinaesthetic modalities. Moving with a heart=flow sensitized embodiment, I perceived*

*myself to be meeting particular qualities of the site [...] as a secondary process, I could rationalize the nature of connection I was feeling between site and my embodiment (e.g. as a response to traffic sound, or to the sight of a crane's silhouette).*

(Pollard 2009; *Enter & Inhabit*)

**Comment [S1]:** Pollard (2009) has not been included in the Reference List, please supply full publication details.

I would suggest that the feminist notions of subjectivity outlined above resonate with that identifiable in BMC<sup>tm</sup> and arguably other somatic practices, in that they speak to the experiential understanding of subjectivity locatable within somatic practices such as BMC<sup>tm</sup> regarding the ongoing relationship between self and other understood. In this, self and other are comprehended not as discrete categories, but rather as entities in dialogue and communal emergence. Dance scholars writing from the position of practitioners who theorize have begun to tease out the significance of this, and arguably further illuminate these philosophical positions. For example, Cooper Albright uses 'Intersubjective space' as a metaphorical term to denote the shared physical space inhabited by dancers engaging in duet forms of Contact Improvisation and/or Capoeira. For her, the term also operates on a conceptual level to name the possibility of corporeal exchange within the moment of dancing a duet form that is somatically informed. In making this point, Albright elicits an experiential understanding of subjectivity as mobile through physical exchange that thereby negates the notion of difference as fixed and determinate.

**Comment [S2]:** It is unclear how 'understood' connects to the rest of the sentence. Please confirm whether it can be deleted.

Using the imagery of Contact Improvisation, Albright argues that we must 'launch ourselves across that metaphysical slash between self/other' (2001: 2). Beginning from her own experience as a dancer, teacher and improviser and drawing on the work of Grosz and others, she proposes that these two dance forms offer a means to destabilize and shift through fixed identities, thereby erasing a hierarchical understanding of difference in part because they embrace a somatic approach to the body. For Cooper Albright, 'Contact Improvisation has refined precise skills that constitute a foundational somatic experience that remains consistent despite individual priorities and regional differences' (2001: 3). Thus, Cooper Albright's discussion not only recognizes the interrelationship between Contact Improvisation and specific somatic practices such as BMC<sup>tm</sup>, but also moves to frame first-person experiential notions of the self as implicit within the teaching and form of Contact Improvisation. As such, her work can be understood to evoke the possibility that somatically informed dance practice creates an intersubjective space, a shared third space in which a series of momentary meetings, mergings and interrelations between self and 'other', conceptualized as individual or environment, offers subtle shifts and changes in the individual's first-person perspective [from the soma] of self. And in doing so, experientially demonstrating subjectivity to be a process of becoming, non-monolithic and wholly embodied.

Considering for a moment BMCs<sup>tm</sup> conception of the different body systems, taking the fluid system as an example, we begin to see how Cooper Albright's ideas on the relationship between inner and outer realms, and thus the potential for an emergent notion of subjectivity might be experientially manifest. Underlying the body systems identified

by BMC<sup>tm</sup> is an emphasis on the molecular level of the body, which is thus seen to provide the potential for a cellular merging of all the systems. As Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, founder of BMC<sup>tm</sup>, notes, 'The fluids begin and end in the cell; it is within the cell that life exists. All the other fluids in the body support the life system of the cells' (Cohen 1993: 67). BMC<sup>tm</sup> brings attention to the high proportion of fluids that form the material body, thereby challenging muscle and bone as the major substances of the body. The fluid system is seen to consist of cellular, intercellular, blood, lymph, cerebrospinal (CSF) and synovial fluids, all distinguishable but fully interrelated in terms of their function and physical properties. Fluids are understood to move through the different systems of the body, merging, transforming and intersecting as they fulfil their function within the whole.

This allows for an acknowledgment of how the fluids of the body can flow through the permeable membranes of the skin and openings of the body via bodily secretions and the intake of water.

Bringing this tacit or given knowledge with us, we can perhaps see why Cooper Albright might assert that 'by shifting our somatic imagination, we can reorder our cultural notions of selfhood [...] the self becomes an interdependent part which flows through and with the world' (2001: 3).

*Emergent subjectivity/political potential*

*If the world is already inside one's body then the separation between self and other is much less distinct. The skin is no longer the boundary between the world and myself, but rather the sensing organ that brings the world into my awareness. In this intersubjective space in which one can be penetrated by sensations both external and internal, the heretofore unquestioned separation of individual and the world (or me and you) becomes more fluid. What I am talking about here is the possibility of reconceptualizing the physical borders of bodies through attention to sensation.*

*(Cooper Albright 2003: 262)*

*In a model of consensual politics, the citizen cannot have an unstable body, for that body would challenge the organization of the body-politic [...] The body, every body, and most certainly the 'non-existent' body at the borders of the state, threatens the state's strict dichotomy between inside and outside. These deviant bodies emphasize the porosity of their mobile, sensing fleshiness.*

*(Manning 2007: 70)*

My proposition is therefore that somatic practices such as BMC<sup>tm</sup> offer dancers one means to hone an embodied relationship with the environment through a doubling of attention to inner and outer sensory awareness. Within Albright's Contact Improvisation examples, the pull of gravity, and the dancer's inner sensory experience of his or her own corporeality, for example the leverage of the muscular skeletal system in relation to the

floor, or the relationship between his or her pelvis and gravity, provides the tools to prevent the collapsing in of one entity onto another. This doubling of attention is also alluded to in dance scholar and practitioner Erin Manning's description of her simultaneous connection with partner and dance floor when 'improvising' tango when theorizing an inter-subjectivity.

As we have seen, in foregrounding the sensorial realm, both somatic-informed dance and corporeal feminism undermine the 'given' and 'naturalized' status of humanist subjectivity. Emphasizing this, Manning (2007) suggests that attention to soma perceptions experientially demonstrates that we have always been 'posthuman'. Developing this idea, she states that 'To touch is a prosthetic gesture' (Manning 2007: 155), and thus as one dancer reaches out to touch another, 'I navigate from a subject position (an imagined stability) to an in-betweenness where the line between you and me becomes blurred' (Manning 2007: 156).

For me, Manning's discussion is particularly pertinent as it theorizes the political significance of this. For her, this creation of a third shared subjective space has a political dimension, for it stands against the version of space and time manifest within the institutions and policies of those that govern.

Thus, bodies joined in this space might be argued to propose a challenge to the body politic of state sovereignty, which rests upon a delineation between self and other.

Manning argues that state politics requires a stable body – one that is accountable as legitimate and appropriate, as well as responsible within the organizing principles and

practices of the dominant order. Bodies of difference might claim to threaten and undermine this, their material excess a reminder of an embodied resistance to the body contained by boundaries.

Somatic-informed dance not only removes the subject/object distinction between performer and audience via a denial of the visual as primary mode of engagement, but also offers an intersubjective space for the audience through the employment of a dancing subject in transition, and transformation rather than one which assumes an objectified hermetically sealed dancing body. This allows for the proposition that the particular dancer–audience relationship invited by somatic-informed dance can offer a means to transgress binary representations of other, thereby recasting difference, and replacing the comparison between authentic and fake with a multiplicity of differences.

In witnessing the emergent subjectivity of the dancer through a corporeal exchange, the becomingness of my own being is reinscribed. As a return to Cooper Albright's claim referred to earlier reminds us, the effect of this extends beyond the moment of performance. To experientially know the possibility of intersubjectivity is to radically shift my perception of my being in the world.

### **Somatic-informed outdoor movement practice as emergent subjectivity**

*Two audience responses, two writing positions, two experiences*

*... by your presence you transformed the space – your intervention into it denied the space its neutrality and made it a transformative space....so simultaneously, the site exists as a double non-place, a site of double transit, and here it was entirely appropriate that the work we saw moved – the work embodied transit internally – but because the piece never leaves the site it is also about stasis – so the work is circular – it encourages consideration of the space as a site of transit, but cycles back at the boundaries of the site, thus maintaining its liminality...*

*I am still and all around me moves quite fast with different rhythms of necessity and leisure. A wind blows and flowers and scarves give colour to the day....slowly I leave my wall and follow... on the bridge you move and cars zoom below you, I follow again and you speed, a solo just for me of you tilting and jumping and yielding and then disappear....*

*Enter & Inhabit (2008)*

*Scored meditations for site, Summer Dancing Festival, Coventry.*

While there are clear differences in the breadth of dance performance informed by somatics, and likewise amongst the outdoor movement practices that might be considered to have a somatic approach, a not uncommon characteristic, I would argue, is the somatic image as catalyst for movement or score initiation.<sup>4</sup> With this in mind, I suggest that somatic-informed dance practice dissolves the privileged position of ‘spectator’ reading for representation within a discrete art object because the point of entry to such

performance is no longer purely the visual. Rather, a corporeal response is also invoked through the dancers' sustained orientation and reorientation to the ever-emerging sensorial interplay between an ever-emerging 'self' and 'otherness'. The emergent quality or, to return to Deleuze, the 'becoming' of the dancers and performance event thus serves to dissolve the subject/object divide of conventional humanist subjectivity, bringing into play a particular audience–performer relationship and also a specific audience–site relationship. This is something I would argue is present in the Enter & Inhabit project, and by extension other artists' outdoor work that is somatically informed.<sup>5</sup> To use Niki Pollard's words when writing about the Enter & Inhabit River Walking project in Devon,

When we touch one another in the dancing or doing the somatic work, it may look like one gives the touch and the other receives, although it is felt as a duet a giving and receiving of co-presence.

**Comment [S3]:** Please confirm whether any text is missing from this quote in the part 'although it...of co-presence'.

When you see our dance, it can look like we are giving you a dance, which it is, but is also about what you are receiving and giving more widely. Your noticing of a twig on the water surface, the sound of someone's laughter, the feel of moss where you stand. This also is where 'the thing' is – and which Christian might photograph, which I might write – or which we might dance. (Niki Pollard, Enter & Inhabit, River Crossing 2010, Devon, original emphasis)

**Comment [S4]:** Please confirm the change made to the true quote.

**Conclusion: New aesthetic frameworks**

This kind of close consideration of the ontological status of somatic-informed dance practice, and the particular audience or witness experience this offers, brings us to a fundamental debate within dance studies concerning the reception and perception of performance. Marked by dance scholars such as Banes (1998), Banes and Lepecki (2007), Carter (1999), Dempster (2004), Holledge and Tompkins (2000), Manning (1997) and Melrose (2005), an emerging discourse critiquing the privileged position of the visual can be identified. Central to this project is a cross-cultural and historical situating of the visual as the primary mode of engagement, to reveal the socially constructed ideologies that shore up ocularcentric formulations of the audience–performer relationship, and a reassertion of the possibility of a kinaesthetic or embodied response to dance. Revealing the privileging of the visual to be habitual rather than a ‘given’ releases the possibility of corporeal exchange, thereby offering an experiential understanding of intersubjectivity to the audience.

In excavating the ontological status of somatic-informed dance, a recurring theme emerges regarding the contention that, in part, the political potency of somatic-informed dance performance resides in the challenge it poses to the dominant order through a foregrounding of the corporeal dimension of being. To do so, I argue, dissolves binary understandings of difference. Through a corporeal witnessing of the dancers’ becoming, as they attend to the sensorial moment, the audience, recast as witness, become aware of their own emergent subjectivity. However, for critics and dance scholars to legitimize this process, it has been suggested that the focus of dance studies requires a twofold shift.

First, transparency and self-reflectivity of the historical and cultural visual bias contained within is sought. Second, an invitation is extended to develop new approaches that recognize the emergent dancing subject as a feature of the work.

As performance studies scholar Susan Melrose's theorization demonstrates, dominant models of dance scholarship propagate an ontological understanding of performance that colludes with humanist subjectivity. Unveiling this relationship brings forth a call for writing to be transparent and articulate about the particular ideological position it moves from. In naming the ontological understanding, it propagates, for example, the practice of spectator viewing, and the related search for an authentic original discrete artwork object is no longer neutralized as the norm against which all other understandings of dance performance are judged.

Predicated from a third-person perspective, performance studies perpetuates the dominance of visual readings for signs, symbols and representations over corporeal engagement. Acknowledging the theories of Melrose, the discussion here has demonstrated the ways in which meaning-making in performance is wrongly aligned with the cause-and-effect logic of the written word. These work to close down meaning rather than offering intuitive understandings of artists' creative practice understood to be 'multi-dimensional theorizing'. To rely on dance writing as the means by which to locate choreographic intention has been shown to be a futile endeavour. As such, the privileged position writing often assumes in knowledges about a work is dismantled. Ocularcentric readings of performance become just one of many instances of the artwork. Relieved of its role as meaning-giver, dance scholarship, suggests Melrose, might more usefully

concern itself with excavating and articulating the creative process as a means to comprehend the ‘suchness’ of the resulting performance. Doing so offers a means to recognize that which is specific or singular about a performance mode or event, rather than subsuming its sub-semiotic possibilities into predetermined categorizations.

Drawing on Melrose’s theories, my contention is therefore that the ontological status of somatic-informed dance and the experiential knowledge of those practising these forms can probe and effect change within dance studies. The ontology of somatic-informed dance offers interventional leverage with which to dismantle the authority of spectator knowledges.

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#### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> In using this term I refer to the Continental Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and his shared philosophical projects with Felix Guattari (1930–1992).

<sup>2</sup> Enter & Inhabit is a collaborative project that began in 2008 principally as a site-responsive movement project in the city landscape of Coventry, by dance artist Amy

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Voris and me. Subsequently it has evolved to include photographer Christian Kipp and, until her recent passing, dancer/writer Niki Pollard, [www.enterinhabit.com](http://www.enterinhabit.com)

<sup>3</sup> For an introduction to this practice, see Cohen (1993) and/or Hartley (1989).

<sup>4</sup> I use the term somatic image here to refer to one derived from sensation mined through a variety of activities including somatizations as found in BMC<sup>tm</sup>, movement explorations, and reference to western and/or eastern classifications and knowledges of the body.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see the work of Hilary Kneale, Sandra Reeve, Jenifer Monson, Andrea Olsen and Helen Poynor.